

The Washi

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NATO in a Settlement

Secretary McNamara's assurance that the United States would be willing to recommend a reduction in NATO forces in West Germany if the Soviet Union would withdraw some troops from East Germany casts the objectives of the Western Alliance in a positive mold. Both Mr. McNamara's statement to Senator Jackson's Subcommittee and separate testimony by McGeorge Bundy before the Foreign Relations Committee recognize that the ultimate purpose of NATO, beyond defense, is settlement. This constructive emphasis is the way to overcome some of the lethargy and status quo negativism that have gripped thinking about the Alliance.

Neither presentation wasted much time bemoaning or arguing about the separate role of France. Both viewed the increasing participation and initiative by a democratic Germany through the Alliance as quintessential. "It is the Alliance that has kept the Federal Republic of Germany free," said Mr. McNamara, "and it is through the Alliance that the Federal Republic has resumed a peaceful and harmonious role with her neighbors in Europe." The Secretary of Defense calmed apprehensions by asserting that the United States has no plan to reduce combat capability in Europe. Mr. Bundy, while noting the importance of German self-confidence and self-respect, also gave some polite but pointed nudges.

He called upon Germany to acknowledge publicly what is now said off the record about willingness to accept the Oder-Neisse Line as the border with Poland. He also stressed that Germany is wisely and permanently out of the nuclear weapon business. Mr. Bundy is ready to sign a burial certificate for the multilateral nuclear force in return for Soviet agreement to a nuclear nonproliferation treaty—though he added prudently that Soviet objectives may also be to encourage dissension in the West.

Both authorities see NATO as having more than a mere military function, though that remains basic. Part of NATO's strength, in Mr. Bundy's estimate, has stemmed from the fact that the Supreme Commander in Europe is responsible both to the NATO governments and to the President, thereby guaranteeing action. This is true, but there are other ways of providing this close liaison without locking NATO into the prospect of a

permanent American commander. For his part Mr. McNamara would like to see national governments assume more political responsibility for NATO. He also urges that NATO become more of a forum for discussion of policy toward the East and not be considered a brake upon reconciliation.

Properly Mr. McNamara acknowledges that the integrated institutions of the Alliance are not immutable; but, he insists, "any lasting settlement in Europe which provided security and freedom for all the peoples of Europe would inevitably require the intimate participation of the U.S. and of the Soviet Union." It is by no means sure that the Soviets, despite their cooing noises toward President de Gaulle, are ready to concede this, even less to talk seriously and realistically of settlement. Nevertheless the essential point is to understand fully the part of NATO in providing the base for a settlement. This requirement of the future is as much a part of its mission as present defense.

"The basic policy of the United States," said Mr. Bundy, "should be to combine great firmness in the pursuit of unity and strength in the West with great generosity in seeking to meet the legitimate concerns of the East." That is a formula that ought equally to appeal to our Allies.