

March 26, 1954

Molotov's Proposal that the USSR Join NATO, March 1954

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Summary:

In this memorandum to the Soviet Presidium, Foreign Minister Molotov proposes that the Soviet Union publicly state its willingness to consider joining NATO. He explains that the proposal is intended to disrupt the formation of the European Defense Community and the rearmament of West Germany, and also limit the United State's influence in Europe.

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Presidium, CC CPSU To: Comrade G.M. Malenkov and Comrade N.S. Khrushchev

According to reports from Soviet embassies and missions and in the foreign press, the Soviet draft of a General European Agreement on Collective Security in Europe has provoked positive responses from quite broad public circles abroad, including such French press organs as *Le Monde*... At the same time, the Soviet draft has, for understandable reasons, provoked a negative reaction from official circles and from supporters of the "European Defense Community" in France, England and other West European countries. It should be noted that official circles in France have also taken measures to mute the Soviet proposal. Among opponents of the European Defense Community there are also those who don't support the proposal for a General European Agreement. In this regard the main argument advanced against our proposal is the thesis that the Soviet draft is directed at dislodging the USA from Europe so that the USSR can take its place as the dominating power in Europe. Especially broad use of this thesis is being made in France. Meriting attention in this connection is a conversation between our ambassador in Paris, comrade Vinogradov, and the Gaullist leader [Gaston] Palewski, who said the Soviet proposal is unacceptable in its present form because it excludes the USA from participation in the collective security system in Europe. According to Palewski attitudes to the Soviet proposal would change if the Soviet government declared the USA could take part in the system of collective security in Europe in its capacity as an occupying power in Germany, bearing in mind that the occupation of Germany would not last forever. From this statement of Palewski's it follows that the USA's participation in the General European Agreement on a system of collective security would be of a temporary character and limited to the period until the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany.

The thesis of the dislodgement of the USA from Europe is also being used against the Soviet proposal by supporters of the European Defense Community in England and other countries, by official circles that support the plan for the creation of such a "community" and its so-called European army.

Taking this into account, the Foreign Ministry considers it advisable to limit the possibilities of using this argument against the Soviet draft by sending the governments of the USA, England and France a note which states that on its part the Soviet government sees no obstacle to the positive resolution of the question of the USA's participation in the General European Agreement on Collective Security in Europe. In the Foreign Ministry's view it would be inadvisable to declare that the participation of the USA would be of a temporary character. In this regard the Foreign Ministry proceeds from that fact that from the point of view of the interests of the struggle against the European Defense Community it would be inexpedient to indicate the temporary character of the USA's participation in the General European Agreement.

In introducing a proposal for the participation of the USA in the General European Agreement, the Foreign Ministry considers it advisable not to change the previous proposal that the Chinese People's Republic would participate in the system of collective security in Europe as an observer

It is necessary to consider another argument deployed against the Soviet proposal, namely that it is directed against the North Atlantic Pact and its liquidation. In order to limit the use of this argument against the Soviet proposal the Foreign Ministry considers it advisable that simultaneously with our proposal about the participation of the USA in the General European Agreement we should, in the same note, pose, in an appropriate form, the question of the possibility of the Soviet Union joining the North Atlantic Pact. Raising this question would make things difficult for the organizers of the North Atlantic bloc and would emphasize its supposedly defensive character, so that it would not be directed against the USSR and the people's democracies.

The simultaneous posing of the possible participation of the USA in the General European Agreement and possibility of the USSR joining the North Atlantic Pact would be advantageous for us because it would be perceived as demanding a concession in return for the USSR's agreement on the participation of the USA in the General European Agreement... However, the Foreign Ministry's view is that our agreement on the admittance of the USA into the General European Agreement should not be conditional on the three western powers agreeing to the USSR joining the North Atlantic Pact.

Most likely, the organizers of the North Atlantic bloc will react negatively to this step of the Soviet government and will advance many different objections. In that event the governments of the three powers will have exposed themselves, once again, as the organizers of a military bloc against other states and it would strengthen the position of social forces conducting a struggle against the formation of the European Defense Community. Such a negative attitude toward the initiative of the Soviet government could, of course, have its negative side for us in so far as it affected the prestige of the Soviet Union. Taking this into account, the Foreign Ministry proposes that the Soviet note should not state directly the readiness of the USSR to join the North Atlantic bloc but limit itself to a declaration of its readiness to examine jointly with other interested parties the question of the participation of the USSR in the North Atlantic bloc.

Of course, if the statement of the Soviet government meets with a positive attitude on the part of the three western powers this would signify a great success for the Soviet Union since the USSR joining the North Atlantic Pact under certain conditions would radically change the character of the pact. The USSR joining the North Atlantic Pact simultaneously with the conclusion of a General European Agreement on Collective Security in Europe would also undermine plans for the creation of the European Defense Community and the remilitarization of West Germany.

The Foreign Ministry considers that raising the question of the USSR joining NATO requires, even now, an examination of the consequences that might arise. Bearing in mind that the North Atlantic Pact is directed against the democratic movement in the capitalist countries, if the question of the USSR joining it became a practical proposition, it would be necessary to raise the issue of all participants in the agreement undertaking a commitment (in the form of a joint declaration, for example) on the inadmissibility of interference in the internal affairs of states and respect for the principles of state independence and sovereignty.

In addition the Soviet Union would, in an appropriate form, have to raise the question of American military bases in Europe and the necessity for states to agree to the reduction of military forces, in accordance with the position that would be created after the USSR's entry into the North Atlantic Pact.

At the present time, however, it will be sufficient, taking into account the above considerations, to include at the end of the note a statement of a general character: "the Soviet Government keeps in mind that the issues arising in connection with this question must be resolved in the interests of strengthening world peace and the security of peoples."

The draft resolution for the CC of the CPSU is enclosed

I ask you to examine it. V.M. Molotov 26 March 1954