

'If NATO is deprived of French territory' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (14 March 1966)

Caption: On 16 March 1966, the German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung analyses the financial and military repercussions of the withdrawal of French troops from the integrated military structures of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Dürrmeier, Hans ; Herausgeber Proebst, Hermann. 14.03.1966, Nr. 62; 22. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Wenn der Nato Frankreichs Boden entzogen wird", auteur:Riedmiller, Josef , p. 3.

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Last updated: 06/07/2016

If NATO is deprived of French territory

French policy may result in losses worth billions for the Atlantic partner states

From our editorial correspondent, Josef Riedmiller

Paris, 13 March

When French workers in the Parisian suburb of Rocquencourt started their day's work on 9 September 1965, it was an act that gained symbolic value in the eyes of the onlooking crowd of officers of various nationalities. Outside the headquarters of the NATO Commander-in-Chief for Europe (SHAPE), in front of which the flags of NATO and its 15 Member States are hoisted day after day, the workers were busy concreting the flagpoles into the French soil. They had been blown over by a storm a few weeks before, and a stronger anchorage therefore seemed appropriate.

On the very same day, however, France's President de Gaulle pointed out during a press conference that, 'In 1969 at the latest, as far as France is concerned, the subordination that the NATO pact calls integration and that hands over our destiny to a foreign authority will end.' Those targeted by this declaration did not take it seriously, cherishing the hope that de Gaulle would not destroy what first the Americans and then NATO had built in 15 years out of shared resources on French territory for the defence of Western Europe. De Gaulle therefore had to make a second attempt, on 21 February 1966, to make himself understood to his alliance partners. It was again during a press conference that he said, 'It is basically a matter of recreating a normal state of sovereignty in which everything that is French on the ground, in the air, at sea and in power, as well as every foreign element resident in France, will be exclusively under French authority.'

The final doubts

There could no longer be any misunderstanding, even if the concreting of the flagpoles outside the NATO Headquarters might have raised hopes that the integrated NATO staff and infrastructure could continue to remain in France or would be at the unlimited disposal of the user states. Any final doubts were wiped out by de Gaulle's letters and the French memoranda to the allied governments: the NATO staff, as tools used for joint planning and troop management, had to leave France, and the logistical installations had to be put under French command if they were to remain at the disposal of the users.

With regard to the integration of the armed forces, no exaggerated pictures should be drawn as to their extent. It is only the NATO command posts that are integrated. Assigned to them, and therefore at the disposal of their command, are only a few air defence units as well as the Bundeswehr, whose incorporation into Western defence capacity was at the origin of the integration system in the first place. All other armed forces would come under NATO command only in the event of an emergency and with the approval of the national governments or else are *earmarked* as armed forces that could, in the distant future and, again, with national approval, be assigned to NATO. The NATO Commander-in-Chief, however, is responsible for the training of these units even during peacetime.

The fact that the majority of Allied armed forces stationed in Western Europe are under national command — including the German troops, as far as their administration and supply are concerned — is best illustrated by the fact that the American NATO Commander-in-Chief Lemnitzer is at the same time Supreme Commander of the American forces in Europe, with his own headquarters (US-EUCOM) in St Germain. The legal status of the American troops (currently 26 000 men) and military installations in France is based on an agreement, dated 19 June 1951, on the 'Status of Armed Forces' as well as on bilateral agreements between France and America. In these agreements, Washington has secured for itself certain rights that it deems necessary for the unlimited freedom of movement of its troops and their supply. While, for example, American airfields in England have a British commander, the Americans enjoy full sovereignty in their facilities in France — to the annoyance of the French who had to stand by and watch as their territory was used by the Americans to maintain airlifts to the Congo and India.

The Americans, however, do not want to settle for anything less. They fear that a French commander on their bases would, in the event of a crisis, hinder their forces' capacity to operate. This is not so far-fetched, given that de Gaulle's policy is basically aimed at freely deciding whether France should participate in conflicts or not. He must therefore not participate indirectly in conflicts by putting French territory at the disposal of a belligerent party. This also concerns the German supply depots in France which are under French command and guard. Although the corresponding treaty signed between Bonn and Paris allows the Germans to use these depots in any situation, this confirmation nevertheless seems to be problematic if France wants to keep out of problematical situations into which the Federal Republic of Germany is drawn.

The Americans are therefore determined to give up their French bases if they were to fall under French authority — something which can no longer be doubted. Most sensitively affected by this will be their fuel supplies for the 7th US Army in southern Germany and for their air bases in the Federal Republic and in France. A pipeline, financed and operated by America, runs from the French Atlantic port of Donges to Hüttenheim, near Mannheim, with branches to airports and storage tanks. This 880 km-long oil pipeline cost 260 million marks and took five years to build. A 140 km-long stretch between Metz and Zweibrücken was financed by NATO. An American oil company, one of the pipeline's operators, also uses it to transport fuel to meet civilian requirements in France and Germany. Large fuel depots for military use are in Donges, Melun, Chalon and Metz. A dedicated intelligence network ensures the transmission of orders and surveillance along the mainly underground oil pipeline. If it is closed — an eventuality already dreaded by the Americans since the operating staff mostly consists of Frenchmen — the US forces in the Federal Republic will literally dry up.

Huge depots

It is also over French territory that the majority of supplies for the 7th US Army — 20 000 tonnes per month — are moved. The American Air Force still operates four air bases in France, with further bases holding reserve status. Reconnaissance aircraft are stationed in Laon, Toul-Rosières and Chambley; Toul, above all, being of great importance because it accommodates a flying orders and intelligence transmission centre responsible for maintaining intelligence connections for the entire European, Middle Eastern and North African theatres in the event of a failure of terrestrial transmissions. But the most important military airport for the Americans and, at the same time, the largest in France is Chateauroux, where air transport units are stationed. Huge depots and logistic installations have been constructed in its vicinity. This base is the most important storage and supplies centre for the US Air Force in Europe. What the Americans therefore have to give up in France are an essential pipeline, storage tanks, depots, spare parts stores, four active as well as several reserve airfields, important intelligence transmission installations, some Navy bases and, last but not least, their European headquarters.

The outcome for NATO looks no better. Although nobody in the affected camps wants to admit anything, and while nothing is known officially about alternative solutions, the NATO Headquarters (SHAPE) in Rocquencourt and the Armed Forces Command for Central Europe (AFCENT) in Fontainebleau will sooner or later have to be moved out of France. NATO also operates a jointly-funded pipeline in Central Europe with a total length, including all branches, of 4 800 kilometres and around a hundred pumping stations. Its construction cost totalled nearly 1 000 million marks. The NATO pipeline is connected to the American one through a branch line between Cambrai and Chalon. NATO's fuel storage capacity in Central Europe amounts to over a million cubic metres. Most of these installations, especially the tanker terminals, are on French territory. The joint infrastructure — airfields, intelligence services, command posts, depots and pipelines — has cost NATO 12 000 million marks, of which a large part was spent on installations in France.

NATO's spare parts organisation (NAMSO), which has depots on French territory, will also be affected by expulsion from France. The joint air reporting and control system, together with the *Forward Scatter* intelligence transmission system, also have technical installations as well as relay stations and command posts in France. As far as active air defence is concerned, however, their units, radar stations and command posts are mostly stationed in the Federal Republic of Germany. To date, France has subjected only a small part of its eastern territory to joint air control. After the withdrawal of its armed forces and officers from

NATO, France will, however, have to abandon an instrument that is essential for the operational capability of its 'force de frappe': the advance radar early warning system and its reporting and data processing organs.

The NATO staff officers' imperturbability, however, cannot hide the fact that the French policy has made the entire Central European defence system totter. Can the ports in the Benelux and in Bremerhaven supply the armed forces that are standing with unprotected flanks vertically to the supply bases? Will the Americans move their 7th Army north and leave southern Germany to the Bundeswehr? Given that supply is a purely national affair, it should be up to the Federal Republic to ensure that it has its own rear supply installations in France. At all events, it is considered impossible to supply variously equipped armed forces with different supplies from north to south. 'Total chaos' is the unanimous opinion of logistics experts.