

The Rapacki Plan (Warsaw, 14 February 1958)

Caption: On 14 February 1958, the Polish Government sends a memorandum to the representatives in Warsaw of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the USSR, as well as to the Swedish representative for forwarding to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), regarding its proposal for the establishment of a nuclear-free zone in Central Europe.

Source: The proposed European security conference 1954-1971. Brief prepared by Mr. E. Nessler, Rapporteur. Paris: Western European Union Assembly, December 1971. 99 p. (General Affairs Committee. Seventeenth Ordinary Session).

Copyright: (c) WEU Secretariat General - Secrétariat Général UEO

URL: http://www.cvce.eu/obj/the_rapacki_plan_warsaw_14_february_1958-en-c7c21f77-83c4-4ffc-8cca-30255b300cb2.html

Publication date: 05/09/2012

The Rapacki Plan(1) (14 February 1958)

On 2nd October 1957 the Government of the Polish People's Republic presented to the United Nations General Assembly a proposal to establish a denuclearised zone in Central Europe. The Governments of the Czechoslovak Republic and the German Democratic Republic declared their readiness to accede to this zone.

The Government of the Polish People's Republic proceeded on the assumption that the establishment of the proposed denuclearised zone might improve the international atmosphere and promote broader talks on disarmament and the solution of other outstanding international problems, whereas the further growth of nuclear armaments and their extension to other countries would further perpetuate Europe's division into opposing blocs and aggravate the situation, particularly in Central Europe.

The Government of the Polish People's Republic repeated its proposal through diplomatic channels in December 1957.

In view of the broad repercussions caused by the Polish initiative, and also the conclusions drawn from the debate on this proposal, the Government of the Polish People's Republic hereby presents a more detailed statement of its proposals, which may facilitate the opening of negotiations and agreement on this subject.

I

The proposed zone should embrace the territory of Poland, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. No nuclear weapons would be produced or stored and no equipment or plant for their delivery installed in this territory ; the use of nuclear weapons against the territory of the zone would be prohibited.

II

The commitments arising from the establishment of a denuclearised zone would be based on the following principles:

1. The States of this zone would undertake not to produce, stockpile, import for their own use, or allow the deployment in their territories of any types of nuclear weapons, and also not to install, or allow to be installed, in their territories equipment or installations for delivering nuclear weapons, including rocket launching ramps.

2. The four powers — France, the United States, Britain and the USSR — would undertake :

(a) not to maintain nuclear weapons among the armaments of their forces in the territory of the States comprising the zone ; not to have or install in the territory of these States equipment or installations for the delivery of nuclear weapons, including rocket launching ramps ;

(b) not to provide, in any way or in any circumstances, the governments or any other agencies in this territory with nuclear weapons, or their associated equipment or installations.

3. The powers possessing nuclear weapons should undertake that these weapons would not be used against the territory of the zone or any targets within it. Thus these powers would undertake to honour the status of the zone as a denuclearised territory against which no atomic weapons would be used.

4. Other States whose forces are stationed in the territory of any of the States comprising the zone would also undertake not to maintain nuclear weapons with the armaments of these forces and not to transfer such

weapons to governments or other agencies within this territory. Nor would they install any associated equipment or installations, including rocket launching ramps, in the territory of the States belonging to the zone, or transfer them to governments or other agencies within this territory.

Detailed agreements could be mutually agreed for the method and procedure for carrying out these commitments.

III

1. To ensure the effectiveness and implementation of commitments set forth in paragraph II, items 1, 2 and 4, the countries concerned would undertake to establish a system of extensive and effective control in the territory of the proposed zone and would submit to it.

This system could comprise ground as well as air control. Control posts with rights and facilities for action ensuring effective inspection could also be established.

The details and forms of exercising control could be mutually agreed upon on the basis of the experience acquired in this field and the proposals submitted by various States in the course of disarmament talks held heretofore, in the form and to the extent applicable to the territory of the zone.

The system of control established for the denuclearised zone might serve as a useful experiment for putting into effect broader agreements on questions of disarmament.

2. An appropriate control machinery should be established to supervise the implementation of the proposed commitments. It might include, for instance, representatives appointed (possibly by name) by bodies of NATO and the Warsaw Treaty. It might also include citizens or representatives of States which do not belong to either of the military groupings in Europe. The procedure for the establishment, operation and reporting of the control organs could be the subject of further agreements.

IV

The simplest method of establishing the commitments by States belonging to the zone would be the conclusion of an appropriate international treaty. However, to avoid complications which some States might discern in such a solution it would be possible:

1. to embody these commitments in the form of four unilateral declarations in the nature of an international undertaking deposited with a country chosen by agreement ;

2. to embody the commitments undertaken by the great powers in a joint document or in unilateral declarations, as indicated above ;

3. to embody the commitments by other States, whose armed forces are present on the territory of the zone, in the form of unilateral declarations, as indicated above.

On the basis of the above proposals, the Government of the Polish People's Republic suggests negotiations to elaborate in detail a plan for the establishment of a denuclearised zone, the documents and guarantees connected with it, and the methods of putting the commitments into effect.

The Government of the Polish People's Republic is convinced that acceptance of the proposals for the establishment of a denuclearised zone in Central Europe would facilitate agreement on the restriction of conventional armaments and reduction of the foreign troops stationed in the territories of States belonging to the zone.

Annex
Summary of notes accompanying the memorandum

To the three major western powers :

France

The Polish Government recalls its views on the tendency of nuclear weapons to become widespread in Europe and the growing armaments in Western Germany, and supports the Soviet proposals for a conference between the major powers with the participation of Heads of Governments. The Polish Government hopes that France will study the more detailed proposals for creating a denuclearised zone in Central Europe.

United Kingdom

The Polish Government states that it has paid great attention to the interest shown by the United Kingdom Government in the Polish proposals, as expressed in the letter of 16th January 1958 from the Prime Minister, Mr. Macmillan, to the President of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, Mr. Bulganin, and that the statements by several British statesmen and politicians and the expressions of public opinion in Great Britain on this subject are being studied in Poland with the attention due to them.

United States

The Polish Government expresses the hope that the Government of the United States will examine the detailed proposals for the creation of a denuclearised zone in Central Europe which is contained in the memorandum.

To those States other than the major western powers which have military units stationed on the territory of the Federal Republic of Germany :

Belgium, Denmark and Canada

The Polish Government expresses the hope that the more detailed Polish proposals on the creation of a denuclearised zone in Central Europe will be welcomed by these governments.

Federal Republic of Germany (through the intermediary of Sweden)

The Polish Government proposes that representatives appointed by the Government of the Polish People's Republic and the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany should hold conversations on problems raised in the memorandum.

To the countries of Eastern Europe concerned :

USSR

The Polish Government expresses its conviction that the Government of the USSR, which has supported the Polish proposal, will view with favour the detailed proposals contained in the memorandum and will continue to support the creation of a denuclearised zone in Central Europe.

Czechoslovakia and Eastern Germany

The Polish Government expresses its satisfaction at the fact that these governments have previously declared themselves ready to accede to the denuclearised zone in Central Europe, and its conviction that the Polish Government can count on the full co-operation of these governments.

⁽¹⁾ Text of the memorandum handed by the Polish Government on 14th February 1958 to the representatives in Warsaw of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Czechoslovakia, the Eastern German Democratic Republic and the USSR, and to the representative of Sweden for transmission to the Federal Republic of Germany — these recipient countries being those to be included in the proposed denuclearised zone and those with forces stationed therein. The memorandum was accompanied in each case by a note to the recipient government ; those notes are summarised at annex.