

'Dismantling: the pace quickens' from L'Humanité (15 February 1991)

Caption: On 15 February 1991, the French Communist daily newspaper L'Humanité comments on the efforts made by Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary to speed up the dissolution of the Warsaw Treaty, a prerequisite for the development of tripartite regional cooperation.

Source: L'Humanité. Organe Central du Parti Communiste Français. 15.02.1991. Paris.
http://www.humanite.fr/1991-02-15_Articles_-LE-DEMONTAGE-S-ACCELERER. "Le démontage s'accélère",
[url:http://www.humanite.fr/1991-02-15_Articles_-LE-DEMONTAGE-S-ACCELERER](http://www.humanite.fr/1991-02-15_Articles_-LE-DEMONTAGE-S-ACCELERER).

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Last updated: 05/07/2016



Dismantling: the pace quickens

The Polish, Czech and Hungarian leaders, Lech Wałęsa, Václav Havel and József Antall, are to meet in Visegrád, north of Budapest, this Friday to speed up the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and lay the foundations for three-way regional cooperation.

The proposal from Mikhail Gorbachev to bring the date for the dissolution of the military structure of the Pact forward to 1 April — instead of 1 July — was welcomed in Budapest, Prague and Warsaw, the capitals of three countries run by right-wing governments. All three countries want to take part in the process of European integration and move closer to NATO, the only military bloc there still is on the old continent. The document to be signed in Visegrád will, in fact, be called an agreement for cooperation ‘in striving for European integration’. Hungary paved the way at the end of 1990 by becoming a member of the Council of Europe, which Czechoslovakia will join on 21 February and Poland after the forthcoming general election has been held. All three want to become associate members of the EEC as soon as possible.

Last Wednesday in Brussels, where he was the guest of the North Atlantic Parliamentary Assembly, Soviet General Vladimir Lobov, the Warsaw Pact chief of staff, confirmed that the organisation’s military structures would be dissolved by April. He expressed the hope that in the future the Western side would follow the example of the Eastern bloc countries and dismantle NATO. That is something none of the governments, whether in Washington, London or Paris, has the slightest intention of doing. ‘I am sorry,’ the Soviet General explained, ‘that NATO’s leaders have not displayed the wisdom and political sense shown by the Warsaw Pact leaders.’ ‘Ask Galvin and Wörner when they are going to dismantle their organisation,’ was his challenge to the Western members of parliament.

During his address, which could be described as a farewell speech, General Lobov rejected accusations that the Socialist countries’ military alliance, which was founded in 1955, several years, that is, after NATO, had been the cause of East-West antagonism. On the contrary, he said, the purpose of the Warsaw Pact was to ‘make sure there was no war’, a role it carried out throughout its history, notwithstanding, as General Lobov put it, ‘certain errors’.

The first stage in the dismantling of the Pact, which hardly exists any more in reality, will involve its military structure. As for its political bodies, they will stay as they are ‘as long as the members deem it necessary’. In practice, the second stage should follow shortly after the first.

There are differences of opinion between Moscow and some of its partners in the break-up of the alliance — particularly Warsaw, which threatens to obstruct the transit of Soviet soldiers repatriated from East Germany if the Soviet Union does not speed up the withdrawal of its troops stationed in Poland. The Soviet authorities announced that the removal of the 50 000 soldiers would take place in stages up to 1994, whereas the Polish Government is calling for the withdrawal to be completed by the end of this year. According to Moscow, some of its units need to be kept in place temporarily to take charge of the logistics of moving the 380 000 or so men (900 000 people including their families) who are still based in the former GDR. The rapid withdrawal of all units would also create social problems in the Soviet Union, where there is a serious housing shortage. Already all the Soviet military personnel living in Hungary and Czechoslovakia will have returned home by 30 June this year.