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THE RAPACKI PLAN AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

In the course of defining military power from an international relations' perspective, the conclusion can be made that the military is an important instrument of foreign policy. Apart from functioning as means of influence and violence, it can be also subject of competition and cooperation between allied countries.¹ In addition to conventional weapons, in the age of rapid scientific and technological development, weapons of massive destruction and especially nuclear weapons, are gaining importance. Nuclear weapons can cause significantly more damage than traditional explosives, to the extent of destroying whole cities - Hiroshima and Nagasaki can serve as an example. Willingness to possess the nuclear weapon is increasingly visible among countries – it results from real or imagined dangers of any given country. Attempts at strengthening a country's position in the international context to be on par with neighboring countries that already possess such a weapon is strong motivation for obtaining nuclear weapons. With spread of nuclear weapons, the threat of possible nuclear conflict and the ensuing catastrophe dramatically increases.

With the development of all kinds of weapons, but especially nuclear ones, there are more proposals concerning the reduction of military potential in order to keep peace in the world. Taking a glimpse at history, it turns out that initiatives for peace in the world were a part of international politics over centuries. The greatest philosophers made their point about this issue – among them are Jean Jacques Rousseau, Immanuel Kant, Charles Montesquieu. There are also two modern examples: the Russian initiative from 1929 about universal and full disarmament, and the American proposal from 1932 about the reduction of military potential. More attention was paid to such a reduction after World War II. The main forum of discussion was the United Nations, consisting mainly of special sessions devoted

¹ A. Ciupiński, K. Malak, *Bezpieczeństwo polityczne i wojskowe*, Akademia Obrony Narodowej, Warszawa 2004

only to reductions.² There were also numerous bilateral or regional talks and proposals concerning the reduction of military potential. Such regional security is the context in which the Rapacki Plan – an initiative put forward in the United Nations in 1957 – should be considered.

Adam Rapacki was the Minister of Foreign Affairs in the government of Józef Cyrankiewicz between 1956 and 1968. He underlined the peaceful character of his foreign policy in his expose. The following sentence is especially important in this context: "...Only the conscious cooperation of all the powers fighting for peace can reduce the tensions and the danger of the conflict."³ Rapacki considered the Federal Republic of Germany to be the biggest threat to international peace:

"The Federal Republic of Germany did not learn its lesson from the history and chose again the way that in last fifty years already twice led to the war and defeat of Germany. This is ... the fact that poses the greatest threat to the peace and the main obstacle on the way to détente and peaceful coexistence of nations. For ten years the government of chancellor Adenauer is creating the policy intending to rebuild the imperialistic, militaristic German empire ... In spite of détente and the beginning of talks about disarmament, the development of German military power is not stopping... The German army is reaching for the nuclear weapon, it wants to be the strongest army in western Europe... Universal and full disarmament is the condition for permanent and truly peaceful coexistence of the nations."⁴

Rapacki literally explains the roots of his initiative. It is worth, however, to first outline the main ideas of the plan and then evaluate why it was created at all. Adam Rapacki put forward in the United Nations initiative to create a denuclearized zone in the Central-Eastern Europe. It was supposed to include Poland, Czechoslovakia and both parts of Germany. These countries were supposed to declare that they would not produce, store, obtain or allow others to store nuclear weapons or the machinery to transport them.⁵ Moreover, using any nuclear weapon against these countries would be absolutely forbidden. Four powerful countries – the United States, France, Great Britain and the Soviet Union would declare that they would not keep or install any mechanism connected with nuclear weapons within the denuclearized zone. The

² ibidem

³ *Polityka zagraniczna PRL – polityka pokoju*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1960

⁴ ibidem

⁵ J. Zając, R. Zięba, *Polska w stosunkach międzynarodowych 1945-1989*, Adam Marszałek, Toruń 2005

plan included an international system of control – both on the ground and from the air. The denuclearized zone was supposed to be 796,000km², from which 249,000km² included territory under NATO and 547,000km² under the Warsaw Pact.⁶ The first time that the plan was put forward was the 12th session of the United Nations on October 2, 1957. On February 14, 1958 the initiative was put forward again by the government of Poland. November 4, 1958 is an important date because on this day Adam Rapacki stated during a press conference in Warsaw that his plan would occur in stages. First, nuclear weapon production was supposed to be frozen, meaning that no new weapon would be produced on the territory of the denuclearized sphere and no new countries would be provided with such a weapon if they did not already possess it. The second stage would include negotiations about reducing conventional weapons; such reductions would accompany denuclearizing the territories of the agreed zone.⁷

After establishing the terms of the initiative, it is worth evaluating the reasons why Adam Rapacki came up with such idea at all. Analysis of the official papers of Rapacki himself and other politicians from that time lead to the conclusion that the plan was the result of Polish concern about the international peace, especially in the region of the Central-Eastern Europe. Undoubtedly, there is a grain of truth in such a hypothesis – the entire world was affected by the Cold War and was slowly realizing the need for reductions of nuclear weapons in order to prevent a serious conflict. The idea about creating a denuclearized zone in this part of Europe was to aim at improving the prestige of Poland in the international context. Too much importance cannot be attached to this reason, however, as in those times Poland was under enormous influence of the Soviet Union as a satellite country. This meant that Poland's own prestige did not have the priority in foreign policy. Apart from these humanitarian reasons and prestige concerns, the security of Poland can be pointed out as the most important reason for the Rapacki Plan. It was not a coincidence that the initiative came up exactly when the authorities of West Germany were considering supplying the army (Bundeswehra) with nuclear weapons. On the August 3, 1958, Chancellor Konrad Adenauer issued a public statement about these plans. After creating two German countries, Polish diplomats viewed the remilitarization in West Germany as the main threat to international peace and the balance of Europe.

⁶ ibidem

⁷ ibidem

It is curious that Poland did not oppose the remilitarization of East Germany (also a satellite country of the Soviet Union). In an official paper to the government of the United States from November 25, 1953, the Polish government believed that a “remilitarized West Germany is regaining the position of the main aggressive power in Europe.”⁸ The United States did not agree with this opinion, proved by the signing of an agreement of mutual defense with the Federal Republic of Germany, on December 27, 1955. It should also be emphasized that in the time when the Rapacki Plan was coming to its finality, the opinion that east Central Europe was the place where the eastern and western block meet was gaining popularity.⁹

Every initiative put forward on the international forum invariably causes reactions by other countries. The Rapacki Plan was a subject of discussion between supporting and opposing countries. The idea was fully supported by the governments of the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and the Democratic Republic of Germany. The government of both Belgium and Canada agreed that the initiative enriches the discussion about the reductions of weapons and contributes greatly to the idea of universal disarmament. The government of Great Britain, the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany strongly rejected the plan; the authorities of France and Denmark did not give any clear response. Apart from socialist countries, among the strong supporters of the idea were the prime minister of Sweden, Tage Fritiof Erlander, the minister of foreign affairs of Norway, Harvard Lange, and the prime minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru.¹⁰ The opponents of the idea, especially Great Britain and the United States pointed out a few reasons why they were against it. First, the initiative concerned only part of Europe, not the entire continent. Second, it did not plan for the reunion of Germany, in order to remove the greatest threat to European security. Third, the plan did not solve the problem of a balanced and fair reduction of military potential in Europe.¹¹ It was said that introducing the Rapacki Plan would upset the balance of power in Europe to disadvantage NATO, mainly because of the numerous and powerful conventional forces on the side of the Warsaw Pact. Western, especially American experts, kept emphasizing the fact that introducing the plan would give the Soviet Union great strategic advantages. The Soviet army, not in any danger of nuclear attack would be located in the center of

⁸ red. G. Labuda, *Historia dyplomacji polskiej X - XX wiek*, Wydaw. Sejmowe, Warszawa 2002

⁹ *ibidem*

¹⁰ A. Albrecht, *Plan Rapackiego Dokumenty i opinie*, Zachodnia Agencja Prasowa, Warszawa 1964

¹¹ *ibidem*

Europe while NATO could not put any nuclear weapon closer than 1,000 km from the western border of the Soviet Union.¹² Paul Henri Spaak, speaking on behalf of the NATO countries, stated that the Rapacki plan was “full of hypocrisy” and that it should not be accepted. Otherwise the West would be disposed of the possibility of real defense.¹³

In answer to this criticism, Rapacki decided to modify his plan, dividing it into two previously mentioned stages. Again, the Soviet Union was the biggest supporter of the idea. Prime Minister Nikita Khrushchev on September 18, 1959 stated at the forum of the United Nations that the Soviet Union fully supports the idea of denuclearization of east Central Europe as the first main stage on the way to universal disarmament.¹⁴ The modified Rapacki Plan gained some supporters from the Western side as well, for example in October 1961, American Senator Hubert Humphrey made a public statement in favor of the plan.¹⁵ It was subject to further modifications and in its third version, which included the idea of joining other European countries in the denuclearized zone, was presented on March 28, 1962 at the Disarmament Committee in Geneva. Again it was rejected both by the government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States.

When it comes to the Federal Republic of Germany, the official paper issued by the government on June 13, 1960 clearly stated the attitude of the authorities towards nuclear weapons, “Who[ever] wants [to] efficiently defend the country cannot close [their] eyes to the necessity of supplying the army with the nuclear weapon. The Bundeswehra is partially responsible for the defense of the Federal Republic. It cannot give up either universal military service or being a part of NATO or being armed with the nuclear weapon.”¹⁶

Talking about Germany, it is worth mentioning that Polish worries about the remilitarization of its western neighbor had reasons. The policy of Chancellor Adenauer was based on tensions between the western and eastern blocs. The idea of two German countries was rejected. Signing any agreements before creating one German country, incorporating East Germany into the Federal Republic of Germany, was also rejected. With such differences in policies, the conflict was very probable to occur in the near future. Arming Germany with nuclear weapons in such a tense

¹² J. Zając, R. Zięba, op.cit.

¹³ ibidem

¹⁴ A. Albrecht, op.cit.

¹⁵ ibidem

¹⁶ ibidem

situation could have catastrophic consequences and carried the risk of the crisis in a European scale. Joining two German countries could only be done in a peaceful way. Providing one of the countries with nuclear weapons could slow down or even make it impossible to reach any compromise and agreement. That is another reason why the reduction of military potential was such an important issue in Europe.

The Rapacki Plan was never realized. Nevertheless it had very far-reaching consequences. There were new initiatives – the issue of European security was invariably on the agenda. Some of the ideas were directly or indirectly connected with the Rapacki Plan. The first one was presented by Polish politician Władysław Gomułka on December 28, 1963. He proposed to freeze the nuclear weapon armament agreement in east Central Europe. He wanted to prove that his aim was not to disturb the military balance in Europe to disfavor the countries of NATO. Instead, contrary to the Rapacki Plan, there would be partial disarmament in order to keep the existing balance. When it comes to territory, the idea was exactly the same as Rapacki Plan – the zone of frozen nuclear weapon production was supposed to include Poland, Czechoslovakia and both German countries.¹⁷ This plan was similarly rejected, mainly by Great Britain, the United States and the Federal Republic of Germany; they supported the idea of multilateral nuclear power in Europe.

There were numerous initiatives concerning the creation of denuclearized zones in chosen regions of the world. The Kennan Plan, explained in the book *Russia, the Atom and the West*, or the Healey Plan, explained in the book *A Neutral Belt for Europe*.¹⁸ Liddle Hart proposed creating the “security belt” which was supposed to include 33 countries from Spitzbergen to Japan. There was also reaction from Germany; the public opinion caused politicians to present their own initiatives. In response to the Rapacki Plan, the German minister of defense presented his own plan, on February 21, 1958. The idea was to create a denuclearized zone which would include all the countries of Eastern and south Eastern Europe. Following this, the military potential of these countries would be made equal with the Federal Republic of Germany. In reality, it would be to the advantage of Germany that their military potential was on a lower level. Strauss also stressed that there should be one Germany, by incorporating the Democratic

¹⁷ J. Zając, R. Zięba, op.cit.

¹⁸ red. W. Nagórki, M. Tomala, *Plan Rapackiego*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1959

Republic of Germany into the Federal Republic of Germany. The plan was unreal and never accepted but was still successful in opposing the Polish initiative.¹⁹

Having mentioned the initiatives that followed the Rapacki Plan, it would be a great mistake to omit the plan that inspired the Rapacki Plan. The initiative of British Prime Minister Eden was presented in Geneva in 1955. His idea was basically to create a “zone of diluted armaments” where the eastern and western blocs meet.²⁰ Eden thought that creating such a zone on a limited territory could be the kind of experiment which would demonstrate the effectiveness of the plan. Eden’s Plan did not become reality as the British government itself decided not to adopt it. However, it promoted the idea of disengagement (military disengagement in limited zone).

Another initiative presented by the Polish government called for a European conference, which would be the forum for discussion about the disarmament and keeping peace in Europe. Again, the person who came up with this idea was Adam Rapacki – it was presented on December 14, 1964 during the 19th session of the United Nations. This initiative was strongly supported, possibly even inspired by the Soviet Union. Russians wanted to use the crisis in the West and the war in Vietnam for strengthening its international position – that is why they started to act diplomatically in a spirit of political détente.²¹

The idea was again presented at the conference in Bucharest, from June 4-6, 1966 and then by the Soviet Union with a “budapestian appeal”. It was supported by Finland (under the influence of the Soviet Union at this time) which came up with the proposal of hosting such a conference in Helsinki. The conference took place between June 1973 and August 1975. As a result, the Final Act of the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe was signed on August 1, 1975 which aimed at the development of cooperation between the European countries.²²

Creating a denuclearized zone prevents the spread of nuclear weapons on a given territory. It eliminates the threat of both accidental explosion and planned attack. On December 1, 1959 such a zone was created in Antarctica.²³ The Rapacki Plan could also (indirectly but strongly) influence the Moscow agreement from 1963

¹⁹ ibidem

²⁰ Z. Artymowska, *Plan Rapackiego – czyli inicjatywa Polski na rzecz odprężenia*, Zachodnia Agencja Prasowa, Warszawa 1962

²¹ red. P. Żurawski vel Grajewski, *Liga Narodów ONZ NATO KBWE/OBWE organizacje pozarządowe*, Wyd. Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2004

²² ibidem

²³ A. Albrecht, op.cit.

which aimed at nuclear experiments in the atmosphere, under water and in space. Additionally, the ideas about denuclearized zones spread all over the world – for example in Balkans, on the Mediterranean Sea, in Europe, Middle East, on both oceans, in southeast Asia and in Africa.²⁴ It would not be far-fetched to say that Rapacki Plan influenced the theoretical background of creating denuclearized zones, mainly in the context of commitment of the countries inside such a zone towards nuclear weapons. In 1967 the agreement was signed – it banned placing nuclear weapons around earth and on the moon. In the same year in Tlatelolco in Mexico, 18 countries of Latin America officially agreed to create the denuclearized zone on their territories. A similar zone was created in the southern Pacific in 1985. It is worth pointing out that there are over 400 cities all over the world which were declared to be denuclearized zones by the local authorities – mainly in Japan, Holland, Belgium, Ireland, Norway, United States, Australia, Portugal, Spain, Germany, and Greece.²⁵

The signing of the Treaty of the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) on July 1, 1968 (enacted on March 5, 1970) can be considered very important, even if it was only an indirect consequence of the Rapacki Plan (inspired not as much by the initiative itself as by the discussion that followed). The main idea of NPT is that it divides countries into two groups – those which have nuclear weapons and without them. Those countries without nuclear weapons declare that they will not make any attempts to acquire them. Nuclear materials can be used only for the purposes of peace; the Agency of Nuclear Energy has the responsibility of controlling nuclear weapons. The countries that already have nuclear weapons declare that they will not transfer nuclear weapons to other countries or encourage production by other countries.²⁶ During the conference in New York in 1995, the treaty was prolonged for an undefined time. Currently, 189 countries have already signed it. During the same conference, an additional document was signed – countries of the NPT declared to “develop, respect and help denuclearized zones”.²⁷ In New York, Belarus presented an initiative, very similar to the Rapacki Plan, concerning creating a denuclearized zone in Central Europe.

²⁴ M. Dobrosielski, R. Frelek, B. Sujka, *Wybitni dyplomaci XX wieku [w:] Adam Rapacki*, Wydawnictwo Projekt, Warszawa 1996

²⁵ ibidem

²⁶ red. K. Żurawska, M. Grącka, *Bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe. Teoria i praktyka*, Oficyna Wydawnicza Szkoły Głównej Handlowej, Warszawa 2006

²⁷ M. Dobrosielski..., op.cit.

In 1996 a new treaty, called the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) was signed in Geneva which did not yet come into power since only 32 out of 44 countries possessing nuclear weapons signed it. This treaty is supposed to reduce the technological development when it comes to nuclear weapons.²⁸

It is interesting to point out the social reactions to the discussed ideas. There is a worldwide movement fighting for peace and the world without nuclear weapons called "Pugwash". The leader of this organization, Józef Rotblat, is from Poland and in 1995, he was awarded the Noble Peace Prize.²⁹ This movement strongly supported Rapacki's idea, going even further to demand creating a denuclearized zone all over the world, not only in one region. In 1994, "Pugwash" issued a statement in which they demanded "finalization of treaties about the denuclearized zones, strengthening the existing ones and negotiating new ones as crucial steps were on the way to creating a world free from nuclear weapons".³⁰

Assessing the Rapacki Plan is a difficult task, especially because it has never been enacted. The only measures of judgment can be the indirect consequences and ideas which were popularized because of the Polish initiative. However important they may be, there are no direct consequences. How a denuclearized zone in east Central Europe would work remains an unanswered question; it is unknown also if member countries of such a zone would truly respect its rules. On the other hand, as the Rapacki's initiative played such a great role in later developments for the reduction of nuclear weapons, a judgment of this initiative must be made. Communism in Poland is not a source of pride, but the plan presented by Adam Rapacki is one of the brighter sides of politics in that time. Whatever the reasons, there is not even a shadow of a doubt that the plan was important and enriched the discussion about disarmament, reductions of nuclear potential and the dangers carried with the spread of weapons of massive destruction. Adam Rapacki appeared as a supporter of peace and détente. What is also important is that the plan was presented by Poland – politically not an important country and not one of the main players of the Cold War. It showed to some extent, at least, that powers in modern international relations are evolving ceaselessly and that the monopoly of big empires over Europe is ending. The Rapacki Plan was a partial solution – and as history shows, all the universal solutions are preceded by the partial ones; in this context the

²⁸ ibidem

²⁹ M.Dobrosielski., op.cit.

³⁰ ibidem

Polish initiative can be seen as a compromise. The idea of creating the denuclearized zone in the regions of Europe can be seen as a step forward on the way to eliminating nuclear weapons on larger territories. However impossible the idea of eliminating weapons of massive destruction in international relations can be, it is not a reason to give up attempts at limiting it as much as possible. Adam Rapacki, in both his initiative and all his speeches, emphasized that the only way to reach a compromise between countries are peaceful negotiations. Rapacki realized the global aspect of the problem but he focused on the regional solutions, as a more practical method.³¹

The Rapacki Plan was rejected mainly because of political reasons and has never been enacted. Adam Rapacki, however, because of his initiative, became a respected partner of talks for numerous European governments. He became a popular person in mass media, and there were countless interviews and commentaries. Albert Schweitzer³² called the Rapacki Plan a “ray of light in the darkness” and in the New York Times, “the initiative was considered to give honest and intellectual face to Polish diplomacy”.³³ The Polish minister`s initiative caused many discussions and this turned out to be the most important consequence. By beginning this discussion about regional denuclearized zones, Rapacki greatly contributed to the increase of security in Europe and then also indirectly all over the world. Even though only some of the later initiatives were connected with the Polish one, Adam Rapacki was one of the first diplomats to discuss this issue on the international forum.

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³² Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965) – German Lutheran theologian and philosopher

³³ M. Dobrosielski., op.cit.

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