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Soviet Attitudes Toward Confidence-Building Measures in European Arms Control

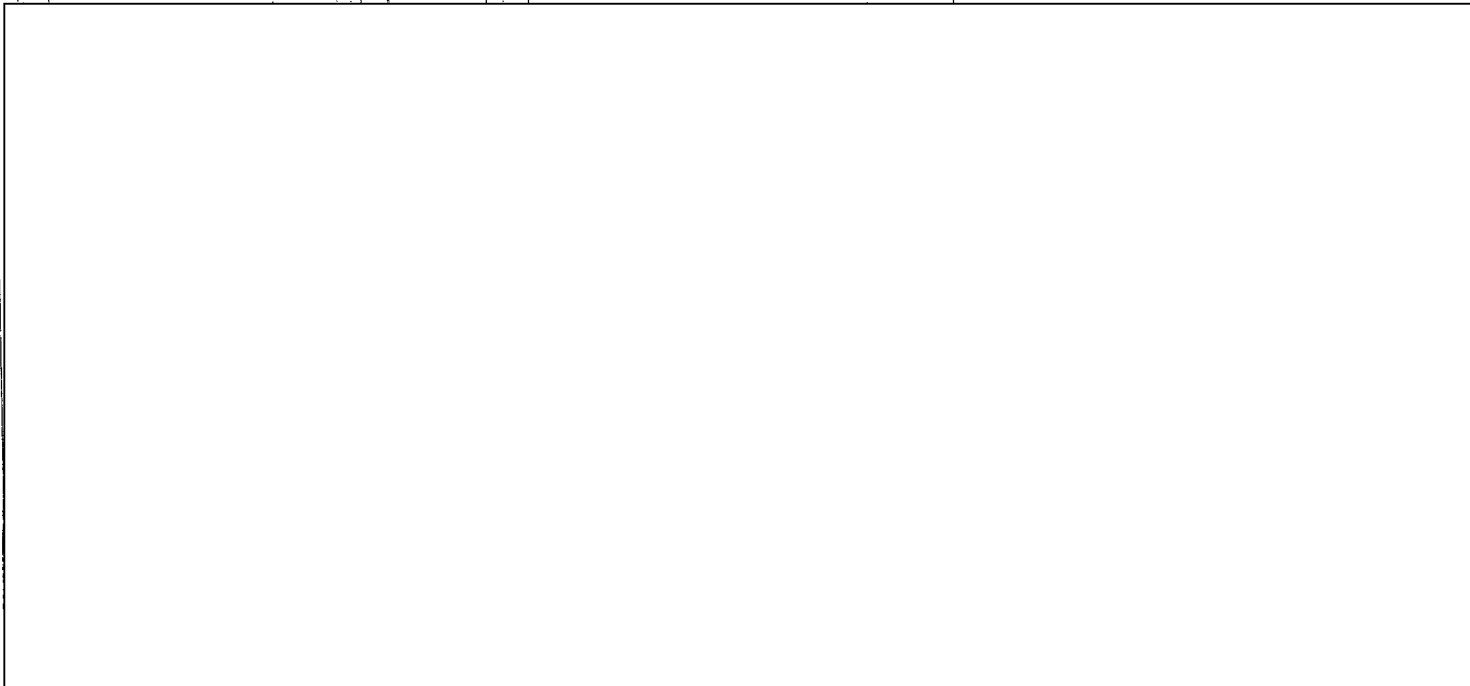
An Intelligence Memorandum

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**Soviet Attitudes Toward
Confidence-Building Measures
in European Arms Control**

Summary

Soviet goals for an expanded agenda on confidence-building measures (CBMs) are fundamentally political.

The Soviets see in the West European desire to engage the USSR and its allies in a broadened discussion of arms control in Europe an opportunity to accentuate asymmetries between US and West European security concerns. They also see it as a means of undermining NATO's efforts to reach consensus on security issues and of highlighting the "divisibility" of detente in Europe from the US-Soviet relationship.

The Soviets probably will continue to emphasize measures designed to restrict NATO's military exercise and training activities and to dilute Western proposals that might constrain Warsaw Pact military flexibility. They might be willing in a broad forum related to the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) to accept an extension of the geographic zone for voluntary use of CBMs.

Under certain circumstances, they might even be willing to accept mandatory CBMs such as maneuver ceilings and advance notification of exercises and troop movements at levels that have greater military impact on the West than on the East. But they would continue to insist that any "intrusive" inspection measures be restricted to verification of actual troop reductions and therefore be confined to the Vienna talks on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR).

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**Soviet Attitudes Toward
Confidence-Building Measures
in European Arms Control**

The Helsinki Legacy

During the negotiations leading up to the signature of the Helsinki Final Act in August 1975, the three principal issues relating to CBMs were the zone of application, the threshold for the advance notification of military maneuvers, and whether CBMs should be mandatory or voluntary. After initial reluctance to discuss CBMs at all, the Soviets proposed that they apply to a 100-kilometer (km) zone of territory contiguous to other CSCE signatories, that the threshold for maneuver notification be at the "army corps" level, and that they be voluntary.

Western positions varied, but in general the NATO countries favored a "European" zone of application covering the USSR west of the Urals, a numerically specified notification level for maneuvers and troop movements, and mandatory CBMs.

As it became apparent to the Soviets that the price of Western cooperation at CSCE on the key political and economic issues involved a more forthcoming Soviet position on CBMs, Moscow's intransigence began to wane. A proposal by the neutral and nonaligned participants in late June 1975 that the maneuver parameters be 300 km, 25,000 troops, and 21 days' advance notification was seized upon by the Soviets as the basis for an East-West compromise.

The Soviets remained adamant, however, that CBMs be voluntary in nature, and the basic Soviet negotiating tactic became an offer to accept more explicit limits on the size and advance timing of maneuver notification as well as an extension of the zone of application in return for Western assurances that CBMs would indeed be voluntary. The eventual Soviet compromise position was reflected in the Final Act: a 250-km zone including the Baltic and Black Sea coasts, a maneuver notification level of 25,000 troops, and 21 days' advance notification. The Soviets also agreed to provide notification for "major" troop movements within the CSCE-defined zone.

**From Helsinki
to Belgrade**

Moscow's initial reluctance to discuss CBMs prior to and at Helsinki probably flowed from Soviet uncertainty as to how MBFR would evolve relative to CSCE, and from a Soviet desire to limit the CSCE exercise as a whole to a discussion of all-European political and economic cooperation. The Soviets hoped not only to legitimize the political-ideological division of Europe but also to avoid encumbering the process of enhanced Soviet interaction in Western Europe with a potentially divisive exchange on issues directly relating to the European military balance.

The Soviets were probably satisfied with the outcome of the Helsinki discussion on CBMs. They were able to capitalize on neutral and nonaligned sentiment in favor of an incremental process of mutual military confidence-building to blunt the more intrusive CBMs proposed by the NATO countries that related in part to enhanced intelligence and warning.

After Helsinki, the Soviets apparently began to see some utility in CBMs as a means of inhibiting NATO's exercise and training flexibility. This was reflected throughout late 1975 in a series of harsh Soviet media commentaries on NATO's practice of conducting maneuvers that were much larger than those of the Warsaw Pact. In particular, the Soviets charged that NATO's adoption of a new practice of integrating Allied Command Europe exercises into a single program (Autumn Forge) was incompatible with the spirit of the CBMs envisaged at Helsinki. The Soviets also recognized that West European interest in an expanded CBMs dialogue with the East might be exploited not only to shift the focus of subsequent CSCE discussions away from Basket III measures concerning humanitarian issues but also to play upon West European sympathies in favor of promoting "Eurocentric" arms control talks in which Moscow would play a key role.

This shift in Soviet attitudes toward CBMs was signaled in President Brezhnev's speech on 21 October 1977. Brezhnev raised the possibility of a separate forum for the discussion of CBMs in the form of "special joint consultations" among CSCE participants to be held "parallel" to the MBFR talks. In retrospect, this proposal can be seen as the genesis of what became the May 1979 Warsaw Pact proposal for a Conference on Military Detente (CMD) in Europe.

Other proposals voiced then by Brezhnev were formally introduced into the 1977-78 Belgrade CSCE Review Conference as a so-called "action program on military detente." The "action program" reiterated previous Warsaw Pact proposals for a treaty on nonfirst use of nuclear weapons and the nonexpansion of military alliances. It also proposed a maneuver limit of 50,000 to 60,000 troops and the extension of the Helsinki CBMs to "the countries of the southern Mediterranean."

Largely because of the sharp East-West confrontation over human rights, the Soviet "action program" did not receive extensive attention at Belgrade. During the later stages of the conference the Soviet press charged that the West Europeans—particularly the French and West Germans—believed that the United States had overemphasized the human rights issue to the detriment of a potentially more fruitful exchange on CBMs.

**The Conference on
Disarmament in Europe
and the Post-Belgrade
Agenda**

The French proposal for a two-stage Conference on Disarmament in Europe (CDE)—which first appeared in preliminary form during the Belgrade conference and aimed at agreements on CBMs in the first stage and conventional weapons reductions in the second—reinforced the Soviet perception of West European dissatisfaction with the US approach to CSCE and CBMs. In their conversations with the French, the Soviets objected to the proposed zone of application for the CDE, "from the Atlantic to the Urals," and to the proposed exclusion of nuclear weapons and naval forces from consideration. Nevertheless, the Soviets were careful not to reject the French idea, seeing in it a political opportunity to accentuate the commonality of Soviet-West European security concerns independent of the course of US-Soviet relations.

Subsequent to Belgrade, the Soviets became increasingly explicit in their willingness to engage in an expanded European discussion of CBMs:

- In November 1978 the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee reiterated the "action program" and proposed that CSCE signatories conclude an agreement on nonuse of force, nonfirst use of nuclear weapons, and nonexpansion of alliances.
- In March 1979 Brezhnev proposed that CSCE signatories give advance notification of "major" naval exercises when these were to be held near the waters of other CSCE participating countries.
- In May 1979, the Warsaw Pact Foreign Ministers added prior notification of "big" air force exercises to the Eastern agenda. They reiterated Eastern proposals for the nonexpansion of political or military groupings in Europe and, more generally, stated Pact support for measures such as "the nonincrease of troops and arms on the territory of other states," and the renunciation of the threat of using nuclear weapons against states that renounce both the use and the basing of nuclear weapons on their territories. The Pact Ministers called also for the convening of a European conference on military detente to discuss these and other measures.

- In October 1979, Brezhnev proposed that the CSCE maneuver notification threshold be lowered from 25,000 to 20,000 men and that CSCE participants give "timely notification" of ground force movements involving more than 20,000 men. He also proposed a reciprocal maneuver ceiling of 40,000 to 50,000 men.
- In December 1979, the Pact Foreign Ministers proposed that prior notification of troop movements and exercises be extended from 21 days to one month.

One of Moscow's reservations about a CDE is that it might conflict with Soviet objectives in MBFR. In MBFR, the Soviets apparently accept the fact that any negotiated troop and equipment reductions would require certain verification-related measures, including on-site inspection. In late March the Soviet Ambassador to MBFR indicated that an exchange of lists of units to be withdrawn from the MBFR area and of temporary observers at designated entry-exit points might be acceptable to the USSR and its allies. The Soviets apparently wish to avoid in a CDE, however, the inclusion of the more substantive issue of armaments reductions (as proposed by the French for the second stage) because this could lead to Western demands for more intrusive CBMs related to verification and inspection.

As a confluence of Soviet and French views on CDE has become less likely, Moscow has pressed its advocacy of the Warsaw Pact's own CMD proposal. This may to some extent represent a diplomatic tussle between Paris and Moscow for pride of authorship. It is also likely, however, that the Soviets see the CMD proposal as a means of outmaneuvering the French for the support of other CSCE participants for an agenda more conducive to Soviet thinking.

Although France's European Community partners have generally supported CDE, many—most notably West Germany—share Moscow's reservations with respect to the potentially adverse impact of CDE on MBFR. Moreover, substantial disagreement exists among West European states over the extent to which specific CBMs should be discussed at the Madrid Review Conference itself—a link that the French wish to limit to a simple mandate—and over the utility of voluntary measures.

Soviet Options

In bidding against the French for West European support on the agenda question, the Soviets have several options open in their search for a trump card. They could express willingness to discuss extending the CSCE-defined zone of voluntary CBMs. During the negotiations over the Helsinki Final

Act, they at one point seemed to be considering an extension of the CSCE zone to 300 km in exchange for Western agreement to voluntary CBMs. Militarily, an extension of the CBMs in the Final Act, or of those proposed by the Warsaw Pact, to a 300-km zone (or even to the Urals) would have only a marginal impact on Soviet training and exercise practices.

The question, of course, is what Moscow would ask for in exchange for such a concession. In return for extending the zone, the Soviets would probably want the zone to include portions of US territory (including US Atlantic coastal waters under any naval CBMs). The Soviets might also ask for the inclusion on the conference agenda of such Pact declaratory proposals as nonuse of force, the nonexpansion of alliances, and nonfirst use of nuclear or conventional weapons. They could even advance such measures as a freeze on the military forces of any participating state on the territory of another or a limit on the introduction of major naval surface combatants of nonlittoral states into the Baltic and Black Seas.

Although it is less likely, Moscow may be willing to consider accepting certain CBMs on a mandatory basis. Once again, whether Moscow would be willing to take such a step would depend upon the anticipated political trade-off and upon their potential impact on NATO's military flexibility. Such measures could include notification of all troop movements involving more than 20,000 men, a maneuver ceiling of 40,000 to 50,000 troops, and notification of combined maneuvers involving more than 40,000 to 50,000 troops.

Accepting mandatory CBMs, however, would be a sharp departure from Moscow's past policy, and any Soviet consideration of binding measures would probably be accompanied by demands for Western concessions of disproportionate political and military significance.