

Soviets Make MBFR Offer To Carter

Proposal bolsters calls for joint U.S.-USSR fusion research

A new Soviet proposal made June 8 at the Mutual Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks in Vienna recognizes for the first time the principle of equal NATO and Warsaw Pact troop strengths in Central Europe — a shift from previous Warsaw Pact insistence that troop reductions must be by percentage to maintain the existing strategic balance. This initiative, combined with recent formal Soviet proposals for the United States to join in a crash program to develop controlled thermonuclear fusion power, constitutes a powerful offer to President Carter to join in the cooperation agreements reached by West German Chancellor Schmidt and Soviet President Brezhnev last month.

The Warsaw Pact offer strengthens Schmidt's hand for the July summit meeting of western leaders in Bonn, where he will try to bring the other NATO countries in behind his cooperation agreements with the Soviets. Following his May meetings with Brezhnev, Schmidt announced that the USSR had agreed to the principle of "parity" in Central Europe, and that a "new impetus" to the MBFR talks could be anticipated. He is now substantially bolstered against charges that West Germany is "self-Finlandizing," that the Soviets' intent

is to "split off" Western Europe from the United States—a battle cry led by U.S. National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and picked up with a vengeance by Schmidt's domestic opponents.

The Soviet press has backed Schmidt's efforts in daily coverage. *Izvestia*, June 11, counterposed Schmidt's address to the United Nations General Assembly special session on disarmament with recent anti-Soviet ravings of Brzezinski. *Pravda*, June 10, quoted Schmidt that "we are not among those who imagine they can improve their position in Europe by flirting with the Peoples Republic of China." On the MBFR talks, *Pravda* cited Schmidt's statements that "we must especially not forget that Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 'still leaves its mark on the Russians' security demands today.'"

NATO has not yet made an official response to the Warsaw Pact proposal, and is expected to raise a series of questions at the June 15 negotiating session in Vienna. A statement by the Bonn Foreign Ministry June 8 called the proposal an "important step," while noting points requiring further clarification. State Department spokesman Tom Reston said June 13 that the proposal is under careful study, and that many questions remain,

The Soviet View of the MBFR Talks

April 19: NATO put forward a new proposal to the Vienna talks, based on a draft circulated by West Germany nearly a year before. According to the April 15 London *Financial Times*, the Western side wants phase one reductions of 68,000 Soviet troops and 1,700 Soviet tanks in return for 29,000 U.S. troops and 1,000 U.S. nuclear weapons, plus 90 missiles and planes. The West is willing to have two-thirds of the U.S. troops come from "specifically designated units," which means West Germany. NATO is also willing to offer more specific commitments by all direct participants in phase two. NATO will allow the Soviets to withdraw troops from Czechoslovakia and Poland, not just the German Democratic Republic.

April 25: Brezhnev in a speech to the Communist youth organization (Komsomol) called the new NATO proposal "one-sided," but added that "we are prepared to do everything in our power to find mutually acceptable solutions to reduce military tension in the region of the world where it is especially great and dangerous."

May 3: Brezhnev in an interview to the West German Social Democratic Party paper *Vorwaerts* before his visit to Bonn said the USSR is ready for any

percentage cut the other side would like: "5, 10, 20, or even 50 percent."

May 10: Schmidt, following his talks with Brezhnev, said that the Soviets are now willing to negotiate on the basis of "parity," and are also willing to discuss the "grey zones" not covered by either the MBFR or SALT discussions—notably intermediate range missiles. Schmidt noted that this would give "new impetus" to the MBFR talks.

June 1: The Soviet Union's formal proposal to the United Nations General Assembly special session on disarmament, titled "On Practical Ways to End the Arms Race," declared that success in the MBFR negotiations "would serve as an example and a model for practical steps to reduce armed forces and armaments in other parts of Europe as well as in other regions of the world." The statement said that the April NATO proposals are "to a significant degree one-sided, but the Soviet Union is ready to do all in its power to reach mutually acceptable solutions."

June 8: The Soviet delegation to the MBFR talks proposed reduction of the forces of both sides to 900,000 men, including 700,000 land troops. In the first stage, the USSR would withdraw 30,000 troops and 1,000 tanks in return for 15,000 American troops and 1,000 U.S. nuclear warheads.

and "it is not yet clear that the way is open to move forward."

British Tory circles, bent on forcing U.S.-Soviet confrontation, have reacted with dismay. The London *Daily Telegraph* headlined its June 13 coverage "NATO Wary on Troop Cut Offer," and said that observers in Vienna were "surprised" by the Warsaw Pact proposal "given the chill in other fields of East-West relations." The Tories fear that an MBFR accord will have a sobering effect on the Chinese leadership in particular, since if the USSR's "western front" is stabilized, Peking will be left to face the Red Army with no help from anyone but the British aristocracy.

"A Constructive Approach"

The Warsaw Pact proposal is a response to an offer made by NATO in mid-April, on the initiative of West Germany. A TASS news agency release, published in all the Soviet press June 9, said that the Warsaw Pact proposal "reflects the businesslike, constructive approach" of the socialist countries, and specified that the Warsaw Pact is willing to reduce troops on both sides to 900,000 men, of which 700,000 would be land troops. In addition, "selective reductions and limitations in weapons" would be carried out, following the outlines of Western proposals.

Information made available to U.S. reporters by Carter Administration sources fills in some of the details of the Soviet offer. In phase one of the accord, according to the *New York Times* June 13, the USSR would withdraw 30,000 troops and 1,000 tanks in return for 15,000 American troops and 1,000 U.S. nuclear warheads. NATO had proposed larger initial withdrawals: 29,000 U.S. troops, plus 1,000 U.S. nuclear weapons and 90 missiles and planes in return for 68,000 Soviet troops and 1,700 Soviet tanks. In phase two, according to both the NATO and Warsaw Pact drafts, all the countries participating in the talks would withdraw sufficient troops to reach a total of 700,000 for each side.

While both sides have abandoned earlier rigid positions, there are issues which remain to be solved. First is the so-called "data question"—how many troops does each side presently have? The Soviet proposal maintains that "the numerical strength of the armed forces of the NATO countries and the Warsaw Treaty countries is approximately equal in central Europe." This implies that reductions should be "approximately"

equal. NATO on the other hand insists that the Warsaw Pact has 950,000 ground troops in central Europe, rather than the 805,000 admitted by Moscow. The communiqué of the May 31 NATO summit stated that "the discussion of the data in Vienna is an essential element of the efforts towards a satisfactory result, and the clarification of the matter of the data basis is, accordingly, determinant of substantial progress in the negotiations."

The second issue remaining is the question of the West German army, the Bundeswehr. NATO has long held that troop reductions should be on a bloc ("collective") basis, which has meant that the U.S. would withdraw ground forces from West Germany but the Bundeswehr would be left intact. Addressing this issue, the current Warsaw Pact proposal states that "all states directly involved in the talks should take a concrete and definite part in the reduction of armed forces and weapons, in other words, every one of them should make its individual contribution to the reduction commensurate with its military potential."

Bonn's reaction to this, in the June 8 Foreign Ministry statement, is that "the Eastern points conflict materially with the Western proposal of April 19, in that the Eastern proposal anticipates national obligations—rather than collective ones—to reduce military strength. . . . We continue to attach major significance to the principle of unequivocal collectivity."

There are indications however that discussion of compromise formulae is well underway, and it is likely that Schmidt and Brezhnev reached a substantial degree of understanding during their Bonn meetings. A climate of improved U.S.-Soviet relations, and especially a Strategic Arms Limitation (SALT II) agreement, would do much to resolve the remaining difficulties at the MBFR talks. NATO, which previously insisted that Soviet troops withdraw exclusively from the German Democratic Republic, is now willing to allow more flexibility, such that the Soviets could withdraw from Poland and Czechoslovakia as well, according to the London *Financial Times* April 15. NATO has agreed that the second stage of reductions can include some "specific commitments" for reductions by all participants — including West Germany. The new Warsaw Pact proposal in turn is reported to be vague on the question of what separate sub-ceilings would be required for the different national sectors.