

The NATO 'modernization' debate

Gromyko in Bonn warns against limited war doctrine

The real issue in the current strategic debate in NATO around the so-called modernization of theater nuclear forces in NATO—the deployment of U.S. Pershing II and cruise missiles in West Germany and other allied countries—is whether or not Western Europe will accede to the doctrine of theater nuclear warfare as the basis of its military and foreign policy. This is the conclusion to be drawn from an analysis of the full text of an extraordinary press conference given by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in Bonn Nov. 23, other Soviet press commentaries, and statements by leading West European officials.

In seeking deployment of the new missiles in Western Europe, the United States and Great Britain are not as they claim “defending Western Europe.” As the *London Times* frankly admitted in an editorial on Nov. 26, the goal is to make possible “limited nuclear war” in a Europe militarily decoupled from the United States.

The “limited nuclear war” doctrine was developed by James Schlesinger and his cothinkers (who were termed utopians) during the early 1970s, to replace

NATO's deterrence doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction. Schlesinger, then the U.S. Defense Secretary, had the idea that “limited” wars can be fought even in Europe, and can be gradually escalated step-wise to force the Soviet Union to back down over key strategic and political issues. The Soviet leadership and particularly its military command totally reject this doctrine as have most West Europeans. The Soviets have stated on many occasions that the only nuclear war that could ever occur is full-scale thermonuclear confrontation between the strategic forces of the United States and the U.S.S.R.

For the two months that the NATO debate has been raging, the Soviet press has stressed again and again that the doctrine of limited war is the real issue. On Nov. 22, Valentin Falin, the head of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee's Information Department and a former ambassador to Bonn, wrote in the government daily *Izvestia* that the missile program comes in the context of the new military doctrine of “regional little wars” and “first preventive strikes,” as it was expressed in a Presidential Review Memorandum

London Times: arm for limited nuclear war

The lead editorial in The Times of London on Nov. 26, titled “NATO's Nuclear Cover,” frankly described the purpose of the proposed new NATO missiles.

The military case for modernization is very strong. NATO strategy is based on the doctrine of flexible response. This means having the ability to make a controlled response to any level of threat from the smallest border incident to full-scale intercontinental warfare. In recent years a gap has been opening in the middle range of the scale. The Soviet Union has been deploying a new generation of nuclear weapons for the European theatre, notably the SS-20, which is an accurate,

mobile missile with three warheads, and the “Backfire” bomber. Both these systems have ranges of over 3,000 miles and could reach Western Europe from the Urals. Yet they themselves cannot be reached from Western Europe except by obsolete and increasingly vulnerable aircraft. They have a sort of sanctuary status, uncontrolled by the SALT agreement and out of reach of European weapons.

In an escalating conflict Europe could, therefore, find itself having to jump straight from battlefield nuclear weapons to intercontinental annihilation. While this could frighten the Russians it could also tempt them to calculate that the United States would not risk its own cities for the sake of Europe. Dr. Kissinger confirmed in a recent speech that this might not be a wholly irrational calculation.

Hence the NATO plan to deploy 108 Pershing II missiles and 484 ground-launched cruise missiles in Europe. ...