

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. ...

on Aug. 25, 1977. The inventor of this doctrine was James Schlesinger, the former Defense Secretary, Falin said. He pointed out that plans for "modernization" of NATO forces were devised as far back as 1975, before the Soviet SS-20 missiles were ever deployed in the western part of the U.S.S.R.

Writing in the Soviet military daily *Red Star* Nov. 14, commentator Z. Mirskii quoted a West German magazine that the U.S. "believes its NATO partners must 'decouple' from the American nuclear deterrent, since it is possible to limit nuclear war to the boundaries of Europe." Mirskii added: "There you can see what tree the dog is barking up. ... The Pentagon does not want to defend Western Europe but to turn it into the target for a nuclear response strike to turn it into a theater for 'limited nuclear war'."

Gromyko warns Schmidt

There is no question that Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of West Germany rejects this limited nuclear war doctrine as a threat of thermonuclear annihilation of the Federal Republic. However, the issue on which world peace now hangs is whether Schmidt's efforts to slalom through the Dec. 12 NATO ministerial meeting, okaying the missile modernization program and still keeping detente intact, can succeed.

This is the question that Gromyko raised in his surprisingly strong remarks during the Nov. 23 press

conference. If NATO goes ahead with the modernization program and "if our proposal for immediate negotiations is rejected, the basis for negotiations would be destroyed. It would cease to exist," he said. Gromyko said that he first thought that West Germany's call for negotiations would help break the deadlock, "but a clarification followed which showed that the negotiations which we propose and the negotiations which are proposed to us are completely different. We propose to begin negotiations immediately. ... But we were told: no, first we will take the decision on producing this missile and on its deployment. And only then will we begin negotiations with you. ... We declared openly that such a posing of the issue means a political condition. This destroys the basis for negotiations. I repeat, such a position of certain NATO countries destroys the basis for negotiations.

"If anyone contends that this is not the case, that there are de facto no differences between our proposal for negotiations and that proposal, then don't believe this. These are different concepts of negotiations."

Gromyko traced the impulse for the NATO missile program to "the Pentagon or circles close to it." But in an unusual afterthought he noted that "however, if someone proves that these impulses came from different sources, and if he finds convincing arguments, we will agree with this."

Gromyko countered Western accusations that the

Gromyko communiqué

Following is the text of the official communiqué released by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko at the conclusion of his visit to Bonn, West Germany.

In the course of the meetings and discussions, there occurred a thoroughgoing exchange of views on questions of further cooperation, on the basis of documents agreed upon during the visit of the General Secretary of the CPUSSR and chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., L. I. Brezhnev, to the Federal Republic in May 1978.

At the center of discussions on problems of today stood the necessity to make peace and security in Europe and the world more firm. Both sides affirmed anew that they see no reasonable alternative to the policy of detente. They expressed their resolve to develop the process of detente, to deepen it and

assure it progress and lasting character.

... The importance of the section of the joint declaration of May 6, 1978 was stressed wherein it is stated that no one should strive for military superiority, that approximate equality and parity suffice for defense, and the appropriate measures in disarmament and arms limitation in the nuclear and conventional areas which correspond to this principle would be of great importance.

The ministers expressed their conviction that the treaty signed between the U.S.S.R. and U.S.A. on limitation of strategic offensive weapons represents an important step in efforts for securing peace. The ministers discussed the state of negotiations on reduction of armed forces and armaments and measures connected with that in Central Europe. They both expressed their desire that the efforts for effective solutions in Vienna be continued, corresponding to the goal of achieving stability at a lower military level than today on the basis of the unreduced security of the participants. The ministers affirmed the importance of the final act of the CSCE conference of Helsinki. They promote further concrete

Soviet Union is using its unilateral disarmament offers, such as those made by Soviet President Brezhnev in Berlin on Oct. 6, to "Finlandize" West Germany. "We do not want to drive a wedge between the Federal Republic of Germany and NATO," he said. "We do not have such a wedge in our arsenal even if we wanted to use it."

Instead, the Soviet Union insists that a situation of approximate military parity now exists between the Warsaw Pact and NATO globally, and that for NATO to begin production of missiles which for the first time could reach Soviet territory from West Germany represents a serious upset in the balance of power. This would require a Soviet response, he said, which would set off a new spiral in the arms race and make progress at the Vienna troop reduction talks more difficult.

Gromyko's warnings to Schmidt cap a process of marked hardening of the Soviet line since Brezhnev's Oct. 6 speech announcing Soviet readiness to begin negotiations on medium-range missiles and a unilateral withdrawal of Soviet troops and tanks from the German Democratic Republic. Central Committee official Vadim Zagladin warned in an Oct. 23 interview to the Italian Communist Party daily *L'Unità* that a NATO decision to station the new missiles would substantially change the U.S.-Soviet weapons balance and thereby circumvent the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT II). The Soviet press denounced the fact that

Brezhnev's offers were dismissed in Washington and London as "a propaganda ploy" and a "clever maneuver to split NATO."

Chancellor Schmidt sharply differentiated his own views from those of the Carter administration in the United States and the Thatcher government in Britain. He repeatedly welcomed Brezhnev's speech as an impulse to new negotiations and an embodiment of the spirit of the historic May 1978 Schmidt-Brezhnev agreements that were signed in Bonn. Those accords recognized the principle that neither side would seek military superiority, and instead would seek to further economic, political and cultural-scientific cooperation for the next 25 years, to the end that never again would Germany and the Soviet Union find themselves at war with one another.

From this standpoint, Schmidt has insisted that NATO adopt at its Dec. 12 meeting a two-pronged resolution to begin the production of the Pershing II and cruise missiles for deployment in Europe some three to four years hence, and to also put forward an arms control offer to the Warsaw Pact. "In the ideal case," Schmidt has said on many occasions, successful arms negotiations could make it unnecessary actually to produce or deploy the new missiles. He has urged that NATO adopt a decision for the United States to unilaterally withdraw 1,000 tactical nuclear weapons from Europe as a gesture of good faith, and that NATO

measures toward realization of all the principles and determinations of the final act as a unified whole. In this connection, questions relating to the meeting of participant states of the CSCE November 1980 in Madrid were discussed.

There also occurred an exchange of views on a series of other present problems, among others concerning the situation in the Middle East, certain areas in Africa and Asia. The ministers also dealt with questions presently being considered in the context of the United Nations.

In the course of the discussions, both sides stressed as they have done previously the importance of the strict adherence and full application of the four power agreement of Sept. 3, 1971.

In the course of discussions, the present standpoint and perspectives of bilateral cooperation on the two nations in various areas was discussed. Both sides are for the further development on the basis of the treaty of Moscow (Aug. 12, 1970) and other treaties and agreements between the Federal Republic of Germany and the U.S.S.R. The ministers also spoke about the economic relations so important for

both nations, and noted with satisfaction the positive developments. They praise the useful work of the Commission of the Federal Republic of Germany and work of the U.S.S.R. on economic and economic-technological cooperation, and noted that the working out of the long-term program is proceeding for the chief focal points of that cooperation.

The ministers expressed their satisfaction over the positive development of cultural exchange of views on humanitarian questions also occurred. The ministers proposed that meeting at high political levels between the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic be continued. They are convinced that such contact is of high importance for the development of relations between the two countries, and represent an important instrument for deepening these relations. This holds especially for summit meetings.

A. A. Gromyko confirmed the invitation made earlier to Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt to make an official visit to the Soviet Union. An invitation to Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher was also extended, the invitations were accepted with open spirit and were termed useful by both sides.

put forward a new initiative at the Vienna troop reduction talks (MBFR).

Gromyko and other Soviet spokesmen and press commentators, while recognizing Schmidt's desire for detente, reject his solution to the NATO problem. Numerous Soviet commentaries have criticized Schmidt's Foreign Minister Hans Dietrich Genscher and his Defense Minister Hans Apel for their support of NATO "modernization" and their expectation that weapons once produced, could somehow remain on the shelf without being deployed. In an interview to the West German weekly *Der Spiegel* Nov. 5, Central Committee official Zagladin compared such a naive hope to a 1922 conference on naval armament-to-be-followed-by-disarmament. "The result was Pearl Harbor," he said. "That is my answer."

NATO decision not wrapped up yet

Despite efforts of the U. S. press to portray as a foregone conclusion a NATO decision to go for the whole "modernization" package, there remain significant obstacles to this. The Nov. 19 issue of *Der Spiegel* reported that at a meeting of the NATO Nuclear Planning Group in the Hague, West German Defense Minister Hans Apel "shocked" his U.S. and British counterparts by repeating that it is quite possible that if negotiations with Moscow are successful, a NATO

decision to begin production of the new missiles could still be revoked.

Reports are circulating in the European press that the Soviets may spring a new unilateral initiative to persuade West Germany not to vote for acceptance of the missiles. The Italian daily *Corriere della Sera* reported Nov. 24 that Gromyko may offer to partially withdraw Soviet SS-20 missiles from the western part of the Soviet Union if NATO agrees to negotiate before adopting its modernization decision. The Italian Communist Party daily *U'nità* had previously cited "rumors" that the Soviets are preparing a surprise move for one or two days preceding the NATO meeting—a possible unilateral withdrawal of some SS-20s.

Pope John Paul II called on NATO not to adopt the modernization plan. *L'Unità* reported Nov. 27 that the Pope met with Italian Premier Francesco Cossiga and told him that "if the governments decide to take measures for rearmament, everything will become more difficult afterwards."

The Danish government is pushing for a delay in the NATO decision, pending investigation of what arms limitation measures the Soviets are willing to take. This formula will probably be supported by the Dutch government, which has opposed the modernization program.

—Susan Welsh