
Conference Report

'Wehrkunde' meeting swallows INF pact, debates myriad ways to wreck NATO

by George Gregory

Under the shadow of the questionable assumption that the U.S. Senate will ratify the INF Treaty between Gorbachov and Reagan, this year's annual Wehrkunde Conference in Munich, West Germany, over the weekend of Feb. 6-7, became a nest of dazed killer hornets. The target for assault: the Atlantic Alliance itself.

Some 300 took part in the Wehrkunde meeting, named for the defense institute that sponsors it. The Wehrkunde is not a decision-making meeting, but has a semi-official status and is always a barometer of directions in NATO strategic thinking, usually hosting a scrappy debate. Participants included eight NATO defense ministers, 16 U.S. senators, the German federal chancellor, the leaders of the major West German parties, and a sizable corps of journalists, together with considerable representation of the American-European "strategic community" and military professionals.

This year, the gathering was the first major Alliance get-together since the Dec. 8, 1987 signing of the INF Treaty. The issues in Munich, all revolving around the insoluble paradoxes generated by the treaty will also be at center stage in March at the NATO summit in Brussels.

A number of salient issues were uppermost in the minds of the European participants, who were in the majority, which would have shed light on the INF question. They were not addressed. Among them:

- The fact that U.S. budgetary crisis is overshadowed by the demise of U.S. financial power, and the rapid shrinkage of U.S. productive economic power was not mentioned—even though this is known to be the underlying motivation for America's decoupling from Western Europe.

- The Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), seen by Europeans as the strongest evidence that the United States might in fact be capable of asserting its own and NATO's interests. Perhaps deferring to Defense Secretary Frank Carlucci, who treated the Strategic Defense Initiative as so much a dead letter to not be worthy of mention, the Europeans let the debate ride on INF alone.

- Dramatic changes in the Soviet order of battle under the intellectual guidance of Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov. This too was ignored, despite intelligence flowing into the United States and NATO on the enhanced priority assigned to stra-

tegic-level operations of spetsnaz (Soviet special forces) and development of electromagnetic-effect weapons and an associated array of "new physical principles" systems.

Given those omissions, not much credibility hung on the Europeans' promises to themselves to courageously set about building European unity.

'A good deal for the Soviets'

French Defense Minister Giraud used visual aids for his remarks on the INF Treaty. The treaty is a "very good deal for the Soviets," he remarked, as he projected two maps onto the screen. The left-hand map showed the areas of Western Europe, colored in dark red, covered by the threat of Soviet nuclear missiles now, with the SS-20 missile launchers which would be removed if the treaty is ratified; the areas of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union covered now with the Pershing II, Pershing Ia, and the cruise missiles, were shown in dark blue. The right-hand map then showed the changes once the INF Treaty is implemented. In the area threatened by Soviet missiles, there was no change. In the area threatened by U.S. missiles, the blue area shrank to a tiny strip along the border of East Germany.

Another larger area in yellow showed the area in Eastern Europe and a tiny part of the Soviet Union covered if the remaining U.S. nuclear weapons in Western Europe are modernized. The yellow covered only about one-third of the previous blue area!

Before Giraud's graphic demonstration of the effects of the INF Treaty, a brawl had broken out between the West German and American "teams," on the issue of whether to modernize the remaining nuclear artillery, the Lance missile, and to develop other systems such as a stand-off air-to-ground nuclear missile. Both sides manifested extreme symptoms of clinical schizophrenia, not surprisingly, since as Giraud later showed, no "modernization" will make up for the strategic disaster of the INF sell-out.

Modernization of nuclear weapons?

Chancellor Kohl started off with praise for the "numerous advances in all spheres of East-West relations, particularly fundamental reconciliation of differences on arms control

. . . the signing of the INF Treaty in Washington,” praise for Mikhail Gorbachov’s “willingness to compromise and his call for ‘new thinking.’ ” Kohl appealed to the U.S. Senate to “ratify this treaty as soon as possible.”

Unfortunately without the opportunity to examine Minister Giraud’s maps, the chancellor went on to insist that there be no “zones of differing security.” But he also said he does not want to embark on modernization, but rather proceed on negotiations with the Soviets to also achieve a reduction of these nuclear systems, below the range of 500 kilometers, to “common ceilings.” But, then again, the chancellor does not support a “third” zero option which would denuclearize the Federal Republic, and thus fulfill the wildest dreams of the Soviet political and military leadership. “Any aggressor” must still “consider the risks of war to be incalculable and excessive,” so that “under the present circumstances, nuclear weapons are indispensable to effective deterrence.”

American senators who voiced the suspicion in the hallways, that this rhetorical salad was likely produced in some kitchen in the Bonn Foreign Ministry under Hans-Dietrich Genscher, were undoubtedly on the mark. The next speaker, Hans Jochen Vogel, chairman of the Social Democrats, was far easier to understand: His party is drooling over the power bequeathed by the INF treaty, to chop up any representative of the government coalition who dares to suggest that Mikhail Gorbachov is not the archangel of peace. The Social Democrats, with the imprimatur of the INF Treaty backing them up, proclaim a 300 kilometer nuclear-free zone as their policy, and denuclearization as their goal. They will refuse to vote in favor of any modernization of the shorter-range nuclear weapons at all.

One beleaguered Christian Democrat, the chairman of the CDU parliamentary faction, Dr. Alfred Dregger, therefore protested, “We just have this INF agreement, and now we hear about modernization! . . . We do not want to compensate in the 0-500 kilometer range for what is being taken away in the 500-5,000 kilometer range. . . . How are we supposed to explain to our population that the double-zero option, which removes a threat to the adversary, is good, but the triple-zero option, which would remove weapons which are a threat to us, is bad. We would have no chance to stand up to Mr. Vogel’s arguments on that!” A point well taken, which would rationally lead to an appeal to the U.S. Senate not to ratify the INF Treaty, but Dregger did not make that appeal.

If the treaty is *not* ratified, there will be at least a fighting chance to stand off the Social Democrats and the overtly pro-Moscow peace movement. If it is ratified, Dr. Dregger suggested there is no fighting chance. Franz Josef Strauss, the Minister-President of Bavaria and chieftain of the CSU, who has just returned from Moscow, stated point-blank that, since his earlier warnings against the INF Treaty were ignored, it should not surprise anyone to learn that there is no chance for a majority in favor of modernization of the shorter-range

systems in the German parliament. The population, Strauss said, has been too impressed with Gorbachov’s supposed desire for peace. He should know.

U.S. hypocrisy

Following the Social Democrat Vogel, the other schizophrenic team went into action. U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Republic Richard Burt spent weeks trying to win the German political world to the INF Treaty. Burt told the U.S. Senate just before the Wehrkunde meeting, that not to ratify the treaty would be to betray the confidence of those like Chancellor Kohl, who had fought to implement the NATO “Two Track Decision,” which supposedly compelled the Soviets to negotiate away the SS-20.

Yet in Munich, Burt complained bitterly about the German “tendency to denuclearization,” and complained that nowadays “Americans are very concerned about what they are hearing from all sides of the German political spectrum,” whereas before INF, Americans could align with one side or another. Something clearly went wrong. Far be it from Burt to admit that INF Treaty itself is wrong.

Outgoing Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle followed, repeated the same complaint, and added the blackmail threat that, without modernization, American troops would be withdrawn from Europe. Perle, who never wanted the Pershing II and cruise stationed in the first place, and has been dead set on cutting SDI to the bone from the outset, was backed up on the second day of the conference by Sen. Sam Nunn, who played the role of vocal proponent of the INF Treaty. Nunn, notorious for his troop pull-out schemes, proposed U.S. troop withdrawal from two standpoints: Either the “chronic” (i.e., presumably incurable) U.S. budget deficit would force a withdrawal, or the pretext of arms-reduction negotiations with the Soviets could be used to achieve “negotiated withdrawal of about half of the U.S. and Soviet ground forces . . . or by reduction in both NATO and the Warsaw Pact to common ceilings.”

The remains of NATO “strategy” was left in shreds. The entire debate raged inside the INF Treaty fishbowl, and the lid on the bowl was the *Discriminate Deterrence* report of The Commission on Integrated Long-Term Strategy, the so-called Iklé-Wohlstetter report. *Discriminate Deterrence*, which foresees the end of the U.S. nuclear umbrella in Europe, was widely distributed at the Wehrkunde conference “by the Americans,” according to the conference administrative office.

Defense Secretary Carlucci’s single remark that the Iklé-Wohlstetter report should not be understood as official policy was not credible. His focus on an upcoming oil crisis in the Persian Gulf, Libya and the southern Mediterranean, and Caribbean future hot spots was right in line with the premises of the Iklé-Wohlstetter report. This, said, Carlucci, would mean diversion of U.S. armed forces to the “southern flank,” thus reducing the “direct support available to the allies.”