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USSR-U.S.-West Europe

Gorbachev Assails U.S. Policy, Stresses Adherence to Dialogue

General Secretary Gorbachev's 8 April speech sharply condemning U.S. and West European arms control policies appears to reflect growing Soviet frustration with the absence of substantive progress in East-West relations. However, while contending that improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations is unlikely without a change in Washington's attitude toward the Soviet Union, Gorbachev gave no indication that he intends to reverse his public commitment to a continuing dialogue with the United States.

In a speech in the industrial city of Togliatti, Gorbachev voiced frustration with the state of East-West relations and expressed dissatisfaction with the lack of progress, particularly on arms control issues, since the Paris and Geneva summits. In addition to repeating familiar criticism of specific U.S. positions on nuclear testing, SDI, and INF, he accused the Administration of staging a series of provocative actions that he characterized as designed to undermine the "spirit of Geneva":

- The U.S. demand that Moscow reduce its UN staff by 40 percent.
- The dispatch of U.S. naval forces off the Crimean coast in the Black Sea.
- An attack on Libyan forces "to demonstrate America's might."
- A "provocative" nuclear test on the eve of the expiration of the unilateral Soviet test moratorium and Washington's prompt rejection of Moscow's proposal for an urgent summit to discuss a test ban.

Gorbachev argued that the Reagan Administration's approach to U.S.-Soviet relations rested on basic misperceptions and that any significant improvement in bilateral ties depends on a reassessment in U.S. thinking. At a time when the world situation demands an "entirely new way of thinking," the U.S. leadership, he claimed, "cannot yet drop old habits." He added that "to all appearances" the Administration "does not want to reckon with the reality of the Soviet Union."

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Despite his negative assessment of U.S. policy, Gorbachev reaffirmed Moscow's commitment to pursuing a policy of dialogue with Washington. Consistent with the position he elaborated at the party congress in February, he stated that Moscow is seeking "a way out of confrontation," arguing that "we have no alternative." Recognition of the necessity of accommodation, he noted, is what motivated Soviet arms control initiatives, led to the summits in Paris and Geneva, and gave impetus to Soviet efforts to implement the accords reached at Geneva.

[Worker] About your meeting with President Reagan in the near future—when is it to take place, or . . .

[Gorbachev, interrupting] We put the question like this—the meetings must continue, we must meet, we must converse, we cannot let things reach collision-point. But it must be done in such a way that these meetings bring some sort of benefit, that there is some sort of progress. If we just meet like that, exchange pleasantries and handshakes, while all the military programs are implemented—who needs meetings like that? It would be a fraud. We have said this quite plainly.

Gorbachev, conversation with automotive workers in Togliatti, Kuybyshev region, Soviet television, 8 April 1986

On the question of a "new meeting" with President Reagan, Gorbachev said that he wished to make "absolutely clear" that he favored holding such a meeting and that the Soviet Union attached "no preconditions" to it. At the same time, however, he reiterated past pronouncements linking the next summit to specific results, noting that such a summit should mark a "step forward" and produce "practical results" toward curbing the arms race. However, Gorbachev did not repeat earlier suggestions that INF and a nuclear test moratorium represented areas where agreement could be reached quickly. Adding "one more thing," he asserted that the next summit "can take place if the atmosphere of Geneva is preserved, or it would be more correct today to say revived."

Gorbachev's statement represents his most forceful expression of Moscow's public commitment to a second summit. His discussion of the summit question in his 25 February report to the party congress was characterized by an

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apparently deliberate ambiguity that seemed intended to cast doubt on the utility of a second summit in the absence of substantive progress on arms control issues. This ambiguity, subsequently reinforced by statements from a number of lower level officials, appeared calculated to press the Administration for progress on arms control without openly threatening to a special summit in Europe to discuss the question of banning nuclear tests, but Moscow signaled that this was not intended to substitute for a Washington summit in 1986 as agreed in Geneva.

**Criticism of
West Europeans**

Gorbachev's Togliatti speech also signaled unhappiness with the West European reaction to his 15 January disarmament proposals and apparent pessimism about the prospects for West European support for the Soviet plan. For the first time since offering the proposals, he specifically accused the British and French governments of failing to display a "serious abandon the summit. In his 29 March television address Gorbachev called for approach" on the INF issue. London and Paris, he charged, are falsely claiming that acceptance of the Soviet proposals would, on the one hand, allow Moscow to shift its Europe-based intermediate-range missiles to Siberia from where they could be "promptly carried back" to Europe and would, on the other hand, leave West Europe exposed to superior Soviet conventional forces. In fact, Gorbachev insisted, Moscow is proposing both the "elimination" of Soviet intermediate-range missiles based in the European USSR and "reductions in conventional weapons and armed forces."¹

Gorbachev's speech also seemed aimed at putting pressure on the West European governments that have recently signed agreements with the United States for cooperation on SDI. He warned that through involvement in that "disastrous plan," West European governments were becoming "participants in a new, even more dangerous round of the arms race." His comments followed the delivery of a "statement" from the Soviet Embassy in Rome to the Italian Foreign Ministry at the end of March criticizing the Italian Government's recent agreement with Washington concerning Italian participation in SDI and the presentation of a much stronger statement to FRG Foreign Minister Genscher by the Soviet Ambassador in Bonn on 4 April in connection with the 27 March signing of the U.S.-West German agreement on SDI cooperation.

¹ In his 28 February address to the 27th CPSU Congress, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze chastised "statesmen from NATO countries" for "losing their enthusiasm" for removal of U.S. and Soviet INF from Europe and for "resorting to more and more reservations" following the presentation of the Soviet proposal, but he did not mention any West European state by name.

Soviet pressure on West Germany over Bonn's participation in SDI was also apparent in Premier Ryzhkov's 8 April remarks to visiting FRG Economics Minister and Free Democratic Party leader Martin Bangemann. By signing "secret agreements" with the United States on SDI the Bonn Government, Ryzhkov declared, is assuming "grave responsibility for the escalation of the arms race," and this, along with its participation in Western trade embargoes "cannot but burden the FRG's relations with the Soviet Union."

Domestic Concerns Gorbachev's remarks appeared intended, in part, to allay domestic concern over Soviet arms control policies. He observed that the Central Committee had received "numerous letters" from Soviet citizens who he said had expressed concern that the West is using talk about peace and "fruitless negotiations" to outstrip the Soviet Union in developing arms. This, he stated, "is not going to happen." Washington, he said, is not dealing with "faint hearts" in the USSR. Despite all U.S. pressures, he emphasized, "the arms race will not wear us out, we will not be removed from space, and we will not be overtaken in technology."

Gorbachev stressed that SDI posed neither an insurmountable military nor technological threat to the Soviet Union. If the United States pushes ahead with its plans, he said, the Soviet Union will find a "convincing answer and not necessarily in outer space." Moscow's call for a ban on "space strike weapons," he added, rests not on a "fear of lagging behind" but on an understanding of its "responsibility."

Gorbachev's remarks appeared to reflect sensitivity to the need to maintain domestic support for Moscow's arms control policies, whose unilateral aspects appear to have generated domestic concern and, possibly, opposition, particularly among the military. His speech in Togliatti, which was broadcast in full on Soviet television, came less than two weeks after his nationally televised 29 March address to the Soviet people to announce the latest Soviet proposal on nuclear testing. On that occasion as well he responded to letters to the Central Committee by pledging that the Kremlin would not neglect the security interests of the country. In the past, Gorbachev had been careful to point to popular support for Moscow's arms control policies and to stress that Soviet policy is made by the political leadership and is not based solely on military concerns.²

² Gorbachev's efforts to stress the collective nature of Soviet arms control policies, together with evidence of domestic concern, particularly on the question of Moscow's unilateral test moratorium, are discussed more fully in the *Trends* of 2 April 1986, pages 1-4.

Recent Soviet media commentary on Western reaction to Moscow's arms control proposals has underscored the Kremlin's apparent concern over the possible faltering of domestic support for Gorbachev's disarmament program. For example, in a discussion of European reaction to Gorbachev's proposals broadcast by Moscow radio's English-language service to the United Kingdom on 5 April, a journalist from the Russian republic newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya* observed that his newspaper's readers are worried about the prospects for detente in Europe and "can't begin to understand why West European governments are refusing to give a positive reply" to the USSR's 15 January disarmament proposals. This, the journalist added, is a "repetitive theme in our mail." (U/FOUO)