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Soviets Offer Nuclear Inspection Plan

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A Soviet version of a compromise to break the deadlock on the key inspection section of a treaty outlawing the spread of nuclear weapons will be put before the North Atlantic Council in Paris today.

The proposal, on the complex subject of conducting inspections, is regarded by American officials as a step forward. But agreement is not anticipated at this meeting of the NATO Ambassadors. Several nations, notably West Germany, already have registered reservations on the Soviet language.

Soviet willingness to present a more flexible formula on who will inspect whom during

the initial operation of the treaty was counted on the American side as a significant development in itself.

The draft of the proposed nuclear nonproliferation treaty that the United States and the Soviet Union submitted three weeks ago to the 18-nation disarmament conference at Geneva left blank the section on inspection, Article III.

The disagreement has centered on whether inspection to a safeguard against the development of nuclear weapons by non-nuclear nations will be conducted wholly by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), or shared with the six-nation (Western) European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM).

The Western Europeans

have opposed that as "self-inspection." The problem has been to inter-relate IAEA and Euratom inspection.

While U.S. officials declined to make public the new proposal, it was described as dropping what became known as a Soviet "guillotine clause." That would have required IAEA inspection exclusively after a brief period of years, whether or not IAEA and Euratom worked out a compromise.

An earlier Western proposal suggested that for three years Euratom inspection of Euratom nations could be continued while an inspection arrangement with IAEA was devised. It did not say what would happen if those negotiations failed. The Soviet offer now proposes a shorter interim arrangement, reportedly two years or less, but it also is now said to be ambiguous on what occurs if no accord is reached within that time.

From Bonn, West Germany,

Dan Morgan of The Washington Post reported that the United States is circulating to its allies a new Soviet draft dealing with inspection. The newspaper Frankfurter Rundschau said the new Russian "draft" would require inspection of not only individual nations, but of Euratom itself. Euratom, in addition to holding ownership of member nations' nuclear fuel, operates three major nuclear facilities.

U.S. officials in Washington denied that inspection of Euratom itself is required under the Soviet language. They said that this issue has not arisen.

The U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA) also took issue with the description of the new Soviet language as a "draft." A spokesman aid: "We are consulting with our Allies about possible formulations for Article III which we have discussed with the Russians. There is as yet no agreement, however, between the United States and the Soviet Union on Article III."