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MEMORANDUM TO HOLDERS

NATIONAL
INTELLIGENCE
ESTIMATE

Soviet and East European Attitudes
Toward MBFR

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NIE 11/12-73
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MEMORANDUM TO HOLDERS OF
NIE 11/12-73

SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN
ATTITUDES TOWARD MBFR

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THIS MEMORANDUM TO HOLDERS OF NIE 11/12-73 IS ISSUED BY THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE.

THE UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD CONCURS, EXCEPT AS NOTED IN THE TEXT, AS FOLLOWS:

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of the estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency, the Intelligence organizations of the Departments of State and Defense, and the National Security Agency.

Concurring:

The Deputy Director of Central Intelligence representing the Central Intelligence Agency

The Director of Intelligence and Research representing the Department of State

The Director, Defense Intelligence Agency

The Director, National Security Agency

The Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Treasury representing the Department of the Treasury

Abstaining:

The Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Assistant General Manager for National Security representing the Atomic Energy Commission, the subject being outside of their jurisdiction.

ALSO PARTICIPATING:

The Assistant Chief of Staff for Intelligence, Department of the Army

The Director of Naval Intelligence, Department of the Navy

The Assistant Chief of Staff, Intelligence, Department of the Air Force

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SOVIET AND EAST EUROPEAN ATTITUDES TOWARD MBFR

PRÉCIS

The basic judgments set forth in NIE 11/12-73 remain valid, although the Soviets have taken a somewhat more active approach to the negotiations than we had anticipated in that Estimate. They moved quickly to table a draft treaty on November 8. In the weeks prior to the recess in April, Soviet negotiators used the informal sessions of the conference to hint at areas of potential flexibility in their proposal.

The Soviets have shown particular concern about the reduction of West European forces, notably those of the FRG. Formally, they remain committed to the inclusion of these forces as well as air and nuclear units in all stages of the reductions. We believe, however, they would settle for only token reductions in the first stage and may ultimately accept a freeze. Soviet opposition to Western proposals that would involve substantial asymmetries in reductions remains strong. The USSR has a stake in keeping up the momentum of the talks, but this subject remains of lower priority for Moscow than other areas of its detente policy.

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DISCUSSION

1. Since NIE 11/12-73 was issued, the USSR has submitted a comprehensive proposal for the reduction of forces and armaments in central Europe and engaged in some six months of negotiations exploring many of the crucial aspects of the subject. This process has shed additional light on the Soviet attitude toward force reduction, but it has not altered the judgments in that Estimate about the premises and aims of Soviet detente policy and the part force reduction plays in that policy. Those judgments were:

- The USSR considers an atmosphere of detente with the West as the most favorable setting for avoiding war and advancing its international position. Its involvement in the MBFR negotiations stems primarily from this broader interest in detente.
- The USSR perceives the West and especially the US as being under greater pressure to achieve fairly rapid results in the negotiations and it has no intentions of seeing an attenuation of its authority in Eastern Europe. It will, therefore prove a tough negotiator.

- At the same time, the Soviet interest in sustaining the general process of detente will discourage Moscow from conduct that could lead to a stalemate or breakdown of the talks.
- Western proposals involving substantial asymmetric reductions will be negatively received.

2. One area of Soviet concern that came through more strongly during the negotiations than was suggested in the Estimate is the desire to reach a force reduction agreement that sets limits on West European military forces. The Soviets have shown a particular sensitivity about the present and potential strength of West German forces. They recognize that NATO's present nuclear capability is built largely on US-supplied weaponry and they fear that a precipitate withdrawal of those forces could lead to a European nuclear force that may ultimately be dominated by the West Germans. They are also concerned about Bonn's ability to increase rapidly the size of the Bundeswehr by drawing on its large pool of trained reservists—over 1,700,000 men. Moscow is seeking, therefore, force reduction

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agreements which would ultimately channel West European military developments away from these contingencies.

3. There is also in the Soviet stance on force reduction at least the implication that the USSR would not like to see a rapid and large-scale unilateral withdrawal of US forces. Not only might such a withdrawal give impetus to European defense cooperation arrangements, but the US would not be constrained by agreement from reintroducing troops it had withdrawn unilaterally.

The Proposal of November 8

4. Within two weeks of the opening of the substantive talks in Vienna, the Soviets, on behalf of the Warsaw Pact, proposed a comprehensive plan for force reduction. By offering the plan early in the talks, Moscow apparently hoped to define the limits of the negotiations and present the Western representatives—and ultimately the public and parliaments of the West—with a reductions program that could reasonably be defended.

5. The Soviet proposal had three essential elements: reductions would apply to stationed and indigenous forces from the beginning; reductions would be of comparable units from each side and would involve air and nuclear-armed forces in addition to ground forces; reductions would begin with 20,000 men from each side in 1975 and involve 5 percent from each side in 1976 and another 10 percent in 1977. In addition, the Soviet proposal called for the withdrawal of equipment associated with stationed forces and the destruction of equipment associated with disbanded indigenous forces. It showed little interest in the collateral constraints or non-circumvention measures of interest to the West. The draft treaty made no mention of verification, al-

though the chief Soviet negotiator said in presenting it that national means of verification would be adequate.

6. The implications of the various elements of the Soviet proposal are clear. By applying reduction to both indigenous and stationed forces at all stages, Moscow would achieve major reductions in West German forces, hinder the development of a European defense force, meet the desires of some of its allies, and ease some of the pressure for the reduction of its own forces in Eastern Europe. A reduction of "like" units on each side is intended primarily to avoid a reduction of Warsaw Pact units in return for a thinning out but not removal of NATO units although Soviet negotiations have said it would also simplify verification. The proposal for equal numerical and percentage reductions would preclude asymmetrical schemes, including the Western proposal for a common-ceiling ground force manpower that would mean larger reductions for the Warsaw Pact. Additionally, equal percentage reductions applied to all forces in the area would maintain existing force ratios between the Warsaw Pact and NATO and between the stationed and indigenous forces of the direct participants. Implicitly, the proposal would set ceilings on each national force and its components. The emphasis on the reduction of air and nuclear forces would have the military advantage of getting at one of the most important elements of NATO strength and the political advantage of fostering doubts about the US commitment to the defense of Western Europe. Underlying the Soviet proposal is the belief that the ratio of military forces that now exists in Europe is satisfactory to them and should not be disrupted by any force reduction negotiations. The consistent Soviet position at the negotiations has been that the present overall ratio should be maintained, albeit at a lower level.

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Reaction to Western Proposals

7. As forecast in NIE 11/12, Moscow has been flatly opposed to the Western proposal that first stage reductions involve a Soviet tank army and its equipment in return for a 15 percent reduction of unspecified US ground forces. Moscow has also reacted negatively to the allied concept of a common ceiling applied to Warsaw Pact and NATO ground forces in a second phase of the negotiations. Because of the way Eastern delegates have challenged Western data and categories of forces to be reduced, however, we believe that Eastern opposition to the common ceiling might soften if the numbers and types of forces to be reduced were redefined in a way that would make reductions about equal. We believe that the Western proposal for first phase reductions as presently formulated will continue to be unacceptable to Moscow. The common ceiling concept would be acceptable only if Soviet conditions were met.

8. The Soviets are aware of at least the possibility of a US proposal—not approved by NATO and not formally broached in Vienna—involving a reduction of US tactical nuclear forces in addition to ground forces in return for the withdrawal of the Soviet tank army. The concept runs counter to Moscow's proposal for the reduction of similar units, but the Soviets might see an opportunity to negotiate reductions of US nuclear capable systems in the MBFR forum as well as in SALT. Pact officials thus far have not reacted formally, but as suggested in NIE 11/12, Moscow may be prepared to bargain on this subject. In the meantime, knowledge of a possible "nuclear sweetener" has probably strengthened their negative reaction to the original western proposal.

Areas of Flexibility

9. Soviet negotiators have shown almost no flexibility in any of their formal statements in plenary sessions since their proposal was put forward. This hard-line position has been backed up by leadership and press statements critical of the Western stance and especially of the West Europeans for their negative attitude toward a reduction of their forces.

10. Eastern negotiators have not, however, been entirely negative. Pact diplomats used a series of informal meetings held between February 27 and the recess in April to suggest modifications in their proposal of November 8 that would bring it somewhat more in line with Western preferences. Tactically, this show of flexibility has allowed the Soviets to probe Western positions and project an image of reasonableness and sincerity about force reduction without formal commitments. To some extent these talks have brought the Western and Warsaw Pact positions closer and we believe there is a reasonable prospect that some of the compromises offered by the Soviets in the informal sessions will be acknowledged formally when the talks resume.

11. Soviet flexibility has been most apparent in the variants they have suggested for the first stage reduction. In plenary sessions, the Soviets have held that each direct participant in the talks must reduce its force during this stage. They continue to prefer reductions that would be proportional to the number of troops each nation has in the reductions area. In informal sessions, however, the Soviets have suggested that each side could reach the 20,000 figure as it chose as long as all direct participants were involved. This would permit token reductions in indigenous forces with the bulk of the reduction coming from US and Soviet forces.

12. Even the 20,000 figure for first stage reductions probably is not sacrosanct. On several occasions, Soviet negotiators have suggested that first stage reductions of 1 percent or ½ percent might be acceptable. (Using NATO figures, a 1 percent reduction would mean about 8-10,000 men per side.) Soviet negotiators have said the 1 percent figure should apply to all forces—stationed and indigenous—in the reductions zone.

13. On occasion, Soviet negotiators have alluded to the possibility of a first stage "freeze" on non-US or non-Soviet forces with all reductions taken from stationed forces. This approach would go far toward meeting Western preferences for first stage reductions limited to US and Soviet forces although, of course, Soviet insistence that equal numbers and similar units make up the reduction package leaves the two sides far apart on these issues.

14. If the Soviets were to settle for a token first stage reduction of non-Soviet and non-US forces or even a freeze on those forces, they would do so to establish the principle of West European force reduction and would, therefore, be especially interested in negotiating a tight link between first and second stage reductions when meaningful cuts would be made in the indigenous forces. If they could be satisfied on this latter point, we believe they would accept very modest first stage cuts in the West European forces. A simple first stage freeze on these forces is obviously less attractive. It might be acceptable, however, if the Soviets were satisfied that movement to a second stage of negotiations would be swift and certain, and if the West acquiesced in other aspects of the Soviet proposal such as the inclusion of nuclear and air forces.

15. Since advancing this proposal, the Soviets have shown similar flexibility on the inclusion of air forces and nuclear weapons

in the first stage reductions. Again, both token reductions and a freeze have been suggested as acceptable compromises in the first stage, and establishment of the principle that these forces should be included in later—more meaningful—reductions has been the Soviet goal. As with the reduction of non-US and non-Soviet forces, we believe the Soviets would accept only token first stage reductions and might accept a freeze if they felt they were sufficiently compensated by other elements of the negotiated package.

Moscow and its Allies

16. NIE 11/12 foresaw little difficulty for Moscow in managing its allies once the substantive talks got under way and that appears to have been borne out over the last six months. As expected, Romania has been the Soviets' most difficult problem. In early February, Bucharest reportedly was ready to introduce amendments to the Soviet proposal that would have broadened considerably its provisions on notification of troop movements and verification. The Romanians were said to have come under a "barrage of criticism" and have not formally presented the amendments. They have, however, spoken out strongly against the informal sessions with the West from which they are excluded and have expressed their displeasure with Warsaw Pact caucusing procedures. The latter reportedly consist of monthly meetings which the Romanians attend, and weekly meetings of the Warsaw Pact direct participants—the USSR, Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia—to which Hungary and Bulgaria are sometimes invited, but from which Romania is excluded.

17. While not all the other Warsaw Pact allies see eye-to-eye with Moscow on every issue, there has been no sign of serious difference of opinion and the other Pact nations

have been loyal—sometimes aggressive—in carrying out their assignments to present aspects of the Pact position. For example, Polish and, to some extent, Czechoslovak spokesmen have taken the lead in emphasizing nuclear issues and the Poles have pressed for the reduction of indigenous forces. Attendance at the informal negotiating sessions—where each side is limited to three direct participants—has caused only minor selection problems for Moscow.

Over the Longer Term

18. The Soviets have not been reticent about expressing their disapproval of the “inequitable” Western proposal, but their overall treatment of force reduction shows that they would like to see the negotiations succeed. Even in one of his more pessimistic public comments on the prospects for detente, Brezhnev said in Havana in late January that force reduction was necessary to “ensure for the peoples of Europe concrete fruits of detente” and he lumped force reduction and the Soviet-favored European Security Conference together as “two very important initiatives.”

19. NIE 11/12 acknowledged that the implicit linkage between Soviet engagement

in the force reduction talks and progress on CSCE was important in getting the Soviets to Vienna. NIE 11/12 also pointed to the gains Moscow might achieve from the force reduction talks themselves. We believe Moscow still considers those gains to be both important and achievable. As long as Moscow sees force reductions as buttressing the climate of detente in Europe, not weakening its hold on Eastern Europe or its military position relative to the West, working against new West European defense arrangements, limiting or reducing West German forces, and creating additional strains in NATO, it will have sufficient incentives to continue the negotiations. We believe this will be true even in the post-CSCE environment when that particular leverage is lost to the West.

20. These incentives do not make it urgent for Moscow to reach an agreement and Soviet negotiators have not seemed to be acting under time pressures. They do have, however, an interest in sustaining the momentum of the negotiations, and during the next session they will actively probe Western positions in an effort to reach an agreement that meets the fundamental aims of their proposal.

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