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THEATER NUCLEAR FORCE NEGOTIATIONS:
THE INITIAL SOVIET APPROACH

Summary

The Soviets may try to preempt the anticipated NATO proposal for theater nuclear arms control, due this December, with a prior initiative of their own. Their aim will be to rally West European opposition to NATO plans to deploy new long-range theater systems. Moscow likely will calculate that, to have the desired political appeal, the initial Soviet proposal should be simple in content and focus on first steps, not ultimate outcomes.

Moscow might open with a proposal to freeze deployment (but not production) "in Europe" of all new types of missiles of more than, say, 1,000-km. range. This freeze might be agreed by the conference of all CSCE participants on "military detente" that the Warsaw Pact has already suggested should meet this year. After taking this concrete first step, the participants should then, in Moscow's view, negotiate comprehensive reductions of nuclear weapons in Europe.

The impracticality of this proposal (impossibility of serious negotiations among 35 participants; likely NATO rejection) would be irrelevant to Moscow's immediate purposes--to throw sand in NATO's decisionmaking machinery by offering negotiations as a plausible alternative to new nuclear deployments in Western Europe. And NATO could decline the invitation only at political cost, given its likely appeal to many smaller prospective participants, inside and outside the Alliance.

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RES-1 8/10/99 (Packman, M.)

Report No. 117
August 10, 1979

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United States Department of State
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Review Authority: FLEISHER, ERIC
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- ii -

If this postulated opening gambit failed, Moscow likely would fall back fairly promptly (but with a show of reluctance) to the bilateral (US-USSR) negotiating mode--which most NATO members currently prefer for theater nuclear arms control. Stubborn insistence on Soviet procedural preferences would become self-defeating, on the premise that the USSR will see arms control talks as a promising means to slow or block new NATO deployments.

Whatever the precise form of Moscow's opening arms control move, it will be fashioned to advance basic Soviet objectives: to protect deployment programs of the new Soviet systems, especially the SS-20; to seize the political/propaganda high ground on the theater nuclear force issue; and to impede the development of an added NATO long-range theater nuclear capability.

Moscow probably has not yet sorted out its thinking on the best tactical means to these ends; there are signs of muddle in the Soviet leaders' efforts to position themselves to deal with the problem. They have, for the first time, agreed that their medium-range nuclear forces, including the SS-20 and the Backfire, could be the subject of arms control negotiations (e.g., Brezhnev's speech of March 2). Brezhnev in March asserted that the bargain should cover US forward-based systems (FBS) in Europe, but Gromyko in June reiterated that US FBS must figure in SALT III. Yet Brezhnev implied a preference for keeping theater nuclear negotiations outside the SALT framework, although he did not say what the alternative forum should be or who should participate.

Moscow is doubtless even further from resolving the basic substantive complexities of theater nuclear arms control: interface between central and peripheral nuclear systems; interface between longer and shorter range theater weaponry; global vs. regional approach; and formulas for covering PRC, French, and UK forces. These uncertainties about ultimate outcomes give Moscow added reasons for making a simple opening move in the European context, shaped to address the immediate problem without foreclosing longer term options.

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- III -

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
I. Introduction	
A. Scope	1
B. Current Soviet Posture	1
C. Soviet Tactical Options	3
II. Soviet Objectives	
A. To Protect Soviet LRTNF Options	4
B. To Impede or Delay New NATO Deployments	6
C. To Seize the Political High Ground	6
III. Complexities of the Problem, As Seen From Moscow	
A. The LRTNF-Central Systems Interface	9
B. The Interface Between LRTNF and Shorter Range Theater Systems	9
C. Whose Forces Should Be Counted?	9
D. Regional Constraints Vs. National Inventories	10
IV. Likely Initial Soviet Posture	
A. Assumptions	11
B. Soviet Tactics	12
C. What Forum?	12
V. Content of a Soviet Arms Contract Proposal: A Freeze on New Missile Deployments?	
A. Description	14
B. Analysis	15

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Scope

Moscow recognizes that NATO may well decide in December to: 1) deploy long-range theater nuclear forces (LRTNF--land-based systems capable of striking well into the USSR from Western Europe); and 2) propose arms control negotiations about those forces and comparable Soviet nuclear weaponry targeted on NATO Europe (particularly the new SS-20 missile and the Backfire bomber). The Soviets have already begun, in official statements and media commentary, to position themselves for that eventuality. No doubt they are reflecting on their own arms control proposal to preempt or respond to whatever NATO decides to put forward.

This paper:

- describes Moscow's current posture on theater nuclear force (TNF)* arms control;
- sets out basic Soviet objectives that will determine Moscow's approach;
- assesses, against that background, possible Soviet gambits prior to or during the opening rounds of any TNF arms control talks; but
- does not attempt to estimate the detailed Soviet negotiating position that would unfold as such talks progressed.

B. Current Soviet Posture

In authoritative statements to date, the Soviets have:

- agreed that their medium-range nuclear forces, including the SS-20 and the Backfire, could be the subject of arms control negotiations,

* Note on terminology: This paper uses the term "long-range theater nuclear forces" (LRTNF) to describe NATO weapons systems--existing or projected, capable of hitting the USSR from NATO Europe--and the analogous Soviet forces (especially the SS-20 and Backfire), which have been at the center of recent controversy and debate. The shorter label of "theater nuclear forces" is employed in the arms control context to conform with general usage and in recognition of the fact that arms control negotiations may eventually treat shorter range systems as well.

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- 2 -

--indicated indirectly a preference for holding the negotiations outside the SALT III framework but have not categorically refused to open them in a bilateral SALT context; yet

--not said what the forum should be or who should take part; and

--made conflicting statements about how the subject matter should be addressed.

It appears that Moscow has not yet sorted out its thinking on the form and content of eventual TNF talks.

The first expression of willingness to negotiate about Soviet LRTNF was elicited from Brezhnev by FRG Chancellor Schmidt during the former's visit to Bonn in May 1978. Brezhnev's statement was in response to FRG anxiety, conveyed to him by Schmidt, over new Soviet LRTNF deployments, the Backfire bomber, and the mobile SS-20. Those private assurances to Schmidt were later confirmed in Brezhnev's public statements. In Prague, shortly after his talks with Schmidt, Brezhnev said publicly, but without specific reference to LRTNF:

"There is no type of armaments which the USSR would not be ready to limit, to ban on a mutual basis...on condition of full reciprocity of the states possessing respective armaments."

The Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee made essentially the same points in its declaration of November 1978.

Brezhnev picked up this theme in his electoral speech of March 2, 1979, but this time he directly linked the matter to prospective NATO LRTNF deployments. He reiterated that the USSR would reduce nuclear weapons "on the basis of complete reciprocity," adding, "this concerns also medium-range weapons in Europe, but with due account, of course, for the existence there of American military bases as well."

Neither Brezhnev's statements nor other official Soviet commentary have said whom Moscow would expect to take part in such negotiations. But the sequence of topics in Brezhnev's March 2 speech--first SALT, then MBFR, then the TNF issue--suggests that the bilateral SALT framework is not Moscow's preferred forum for negotiations. Later, the Soviets apparently were more explicit on this point. Gromyko told Schmidt, during the Chancellor's stopover in Moscow in late June 1979, en route to Tokyo, that the SS-20 should not be negotiated in

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SALT III because it was not a strategic weapon as defined in SALT I--this according to several FRG accounts of the conversation.

While Soviet statements have been vague on the forum, they have been contradictory on the content of any TNF negotiations. Soviet spokesmen have long insisted that US foreign-based systems must figure on the SALT III agenda--a position confirmed by Gromyko during his press conference in Vienna after signature of SALT II. Yet Brezhnev's March 2 speech, together with Gromyko's reported remark to Schmidt on the SS-20, points instead toward a bargain of Soviet LRINF for US FBS.

It is barely conceivable that the Soviets would divide US FBS into two segments, proposing to negotiate about some of these systems in SALT III and others in the still unspecified TNF forum. More likely, Moscow has not yet thoroughly thought its way through the issue.

To fill in the remainder of this blurred picture, authoritative Soviet spokesmen have also said repeatedly that, at some (undefined) point, other nuclear powers must also participate in SALT III--a position Gromyko confirmed during his Vienna summit press conference. The underlying military rationale undoubtedly is that Moscow sees the level of Soviet central systems as a function partly of the French, UK, and PRC nuclear forces (as well as of US FBS) capable of reaching the USSR. Yet the level of Soviet peripheral attack systems also relates to the level of those same adversary forces. (These issues are treated in more detail in Section III below.)

a. Soviet Tactical Options

Moscow will have several tactical choices to make in fashioning its opening TNF arms control position, including whether:

- to take the initiative or to adopt a reactive stance, waiting to see what NATO comes up with before making a first move;
- in either case, to open with a comprehensive draft arms control proposal or to make a simpler initial offer, regarded as a first step in a longer process; and
- with respect to forum, to keep pressing for a multilateral framework or to settle for bilateral US-Soviet talks, which most NATO members apparently prefer.

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The Soviet leaders will make their choices in light both of their basic objectives, described in Section II below, and of their analysis of the inherent complexities of the problems, dealt with in Section III.

II. SOVIET OBJECTIVES

In rough order of priority, Soviet objectives are to:

- A) keep open Soviet LRTNF deployment plans;
- B) block, delay, or reduce the extent of any new NATO LRTNF deployments; and
- C) (partly to further B above) seize the political/propaganda high ground.

A. To Protect Soviet LRTNF Options

Deployment of both the SS-20 and the Backfire responds to deep-seated and traditional Soviet views about defense of the homeland. Moscow's calculus begins with the premise that NATO has superiority in technology, industrial base, and manpower. It follows that, if war breaks out, the Soviets should have, in their view, forces powerful enough to overrun NATO Europe quickly, before latent Western strength can be mobilized and brought to bear militarily.

Early destruction of NATO's nuclear potential and other key targets in Western Europe will be crucial, in Soviet thinking, to early success of the Warsaw Pact ground offensive. There is good evidence that the Soviets assume that a period of tension and crisis would precede a major European conflict. They also calculate that NATO would use the political and strategic warning time to disperse targets and bring its air defenses, which the Soviet military regards as effective, to a high state of readiness.

Thus Soviet planners lack high confidence that their attack aircraft could effectively penetrate NATO defenses in the crucial central region, acquire and destroy their targets given the inherent difficulty of target acquisition in the low-level attack model, and recover to home bases without heavy losses.

But should the initial, conventional air offensive fail will short of accomplishing its mission, and also suffer

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heavy losses, the Warsaw Pact ground offensive would be in grave jeopardy. (The evidence suggests that a Soviet attack on NATO Europe would be conventional, rather than nuclear, in its initial phase. The Soviets probably have little confidence that the fighting, once begun, would remain at the conventional level. They nevertheless have an obvious self-interest in keeping the battle below the nuclear threshold if at all possible and apparently have geared their war planning accordingly.)

The Soviets' risk assessment with respect to the initial air offensive, cited above, gives them compelling reasons to improve the quality of their attack aircraft (hence Backfire, among other new, higher capability models) and to deploy more effective nuclear missileery (the SS-20) for peripheral attack missions. The SS-20 provides, in Soviet thinking, an essential insurance factor to be called upon to destroy NATO's theater nuclear potential if the Soviet air offensive falls short. Recognizing the uncertainty of target location in many cases (e.g., mobile Lance and Pershing missiles), Soviet planning apparently involves nuclear barrage rather than point attacks.

Hence the perceived Soviet need for large numbers of accurate, relatively high-yield reentry vehicles, which the SS-20 system especially is designed to provide (four missiles per transport erector launcher, three MIRV's per missile, rapid reload capability, high-yield warheads). The Soviets, of course, also prize the relatively invulnerability of the mobile SS-20 to preemptive attack.

Western opinion reads these characteristics of the SS-20 as providing a threatening nuclear capability well beyond rational defensive needs. Moscow, however, sees the capacity quickly to overwhelm NATO as essential to homeland defense--and the SS-20 as a vital element of that capacity.

Thus one may expect stout Soviet resistance to any proposed reductions in the Soviet SS-20 deployment program or to constraining ceilings upon it. And if NATO itself deploys new long-range systems in Europe, this will increase the set of targets that the Soviet military will believe it needs the capacity to destroy. This judgment is not offered to contest the soundness of the NATO consensus that new Western deployments are militarily justified or that the prospect of such deployments is essential to the credibility of NATO arms control proposals covering this category of weapons. Rather, the estimate is that new NATO deployments will tend to increase NATO's already considerable reluctance to curtail SS-20 deployments much below the planned level.

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may be) and could even drive upward the number currently considered sufficient.

Much of the same reasoning applies to Backfire. As a multipurpose system, however, Backfire presents a more complex case, for reasons addressed in Section III.

B. To Impede or Delay New NATO Deployments

The Soviets see NATO moving toward a possible decision by year's end to deploy new nuclear systems in Western Europe capable of striking the western USSR. Their media commentary on the NATO spring ministerials showed an uncharacteristically accurate reading of the tenor of the LRTNF discussions, the decisions they foreshadowed, and the hesitancy that still persists in some Allied countries.

Yet the tone of Soviet media commentary has stayed in the middle register, deploring NATO's allegedly misguided militarism but avoiding shrill denunciation. Why such moderation? Partly, no doubt, because (in contrast to the enhanced radiation weapons episode) no large and vocal body of Western opinion has so far emerged to attack the proposed deployments. Possibly also, Moscow simply is resigned to something it regards as inevitable. It is more likely, however, that Soviet restraint on this issue reflects both a disinclination to roil the waters before the US Senate finishes the SALT II debate and a calculated decision to hold back a while longer to see whether NATO can work its way around the nervous reticence within some member-states.

In any event, Moscow probably recognizes that a decision in principle to deploy would be one thing, actual deployment quite another, and that in the interim, there would be time to forestall, delay, or reduce the extent of the latter.

Thus, the Soviets likely will remain alert for any opportunity to retard or block the actual deployments. They undoubtedly will put forward in due course an arms control proposal designed to strengthen the hand of NATO's "doves," who prefer negotiation to deployment (see below for further discussion).

The Soviets have both political and military reasons for trying to ward off NATO's projected additions to its nuclear arsenal. Historically, the USSR has always shown particular sensitivity toward nuclear deployments in the FRG, even if the systems are US-owned and have no "German finger on the trigger." And the Soviets no doubt assume that, if NATO's

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plans are carried out, much or most of the new weaponry would be based in the FRG. Moreover, they will recognize that the LRTNF deployments will bind the US somewhat more closely to the defense of its transatlantic allies.

Militarily, new NATO LRTNF--current plans envision a mix of extended-range Pershing ballistic missiles and ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCM's), although a sea-launched cruise missile component is not excluded--would add to Allied capability for deep interdiction strikes against Soviet reinforcements moving from the western military districts toward the central front. The Soviets assume, in the event of major conflict, that the ground forces bearing the brunt of the initial Warsaw Pact assault would quickly suffer heavy casualties. They would therefore rely on rapid reinforcement by fresh units from the USSR to sustain the momentum of the offensive. The Soviets of course would have no effective defense against extended-range Pershing ballistic missiles and virtually none, for several years at least, against cruise missiles.

One can only speculate on how much weight the Soviet military would ascribe to the incremental addition to NATO's capacity in this area. It probably reckons that nuclear strikes designed to slow Soviet reinforcement of the central front already figure in SACEUR's General Strike Plan and in the US SIOP.

Nevertheless, there is ample evidence that Soviet military threat analysis tends to make worst-case assumptions about NATO capabilities. Moreover, the new systems (if deployed) would add an array of relatively mobile targets to what the Soviet military probably considers an already formidable NATO Europe target list. Finally, Moscow may have an uneasy sense that NATO is now preparing, for the first time, to confront the USSR on a terrain (land-based theater nuclear weaponry of longer range) where the Soviet advantage had previously gone unchallenged.

Hence one may conclude that the Soviets would ascribe a more than marginal significance to NATO's projected new systems--even though the numbers of warheads (300-600) now being considered by the Allies for these forces does not appear great compared with the full panoply of existing US and NATO nuclear forces.

Once a deployment decision is taken, Moscow undoubtedly will use both threat and flattery to sap Allied public and parliamentary support for the projected increase in NATO's

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LRTNF. The Soviets will bluster about the dangers to its interests and the added military risks to candidate host countries, while simultaneously putting forward arms control proposals that would allegedly remove any political or military rationale for the new systems.

C. To Seize the Political High Ground

This objective will be essential, in Soviet eyes, both to the carefully nurtured climate of European détente, in which the regime already has a very considerable investment, and to a strategy of undermining NATO's projected increase in LRTNF. An arms control proposal probably will become the centerpiece of this effort. Soviet media tirelessly recite the inventory of the regime's "peace initiatives," which already clutter the international and European political agendas. The Kremlin undoubtedly will concert a peace initiative to fit this issue, by conditioned reflex as much as from rational calculation of political advantage.

III. COMPLEXITIES OF THE PROBLEM,
AS SEEN FROM MOSCOW

The analysis that follows suggests that Moscow will prefer to open with a simple, straightforward initiative, contrived to appear as a plausible first step in a long-term negotiation, rather than with the outline of a comprehensive "solution." The almost intractable substantive complexities of TNF arms control will likely persuade Moscow that the simpler the opening gambit, the more effectively it will serve Soviet purposes.

A. The LRTNF-Central Systems Interface

Moscow cannot easily separate, either for military threat analysis or for arms control purposes, the peripheral nuclear strike forces--those deployed by the Soviets and those aimed at the USSR--from US and Soviet central systems. In fact, the very notion of theater as distinct from global conflict is alien to Soviet historical experience. The Russian homeland was very nearly overrun during two "theater" wars in this century.

Moreover, some Soviet central systems are assigned peripheral, not intercontinental, targets. Hence, substantial SALT III cuts in Soviet central systems would, in Moscow's view, require commensurate reductions in US central systems

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and in the peripheral systems targeted on the USSR. Concurrently, increases in adversary peripheral systems would add to the military requirements placed upon Soviet central systems, peripheral systems, or both.

Yet the Soviet arms control apparatus would be very hard pressed to produce in short order even the broad outlines of a comprehensive proposal striking an ostensibly equitable balance among the widely divergent security interests and weapons systems of all the nuclear powers. The apparent confusion between Brezhnev's recently suggested trade of Soviet LRTNF for US FBS, outside SALT III, and Gromyko's insistence shortly thereafter that the latter systems must figure in SALT III, suggests that systematic analysis of the matter at a politically relevant level had hardly begun in Moscow.

B. The Interface Between LRTNF and Shorter Range Theater Systems

Once arms control negotiations begin to deal with theater nuclear systems, there is no logical stopping place anywhere along the range spectrum--between, for example, the SS-20 at one end and the FROG missile (organic to Soviet divisions, range about 70 km.) at the other. Each system can wreak enormous havoc and decimate large cities. Any cutoff point, based on operational range, automatically establishes an invidious distinction between the populated areas within and those outside the "privileged" zones thus created. Moreover, a state that is party to agreed constraints on LRTNF might circumvent those limitations by increases in its shorter range weaponry.

Any comprehensive proposal for LRTNF limits probably would have to address this circumvention issue, at least in rough outline, yet there is no evidence that Moscow has even begun to reflect seriously on the matter. Admittedly, the problem is more troublesome for Western (and Eastern) Europeans than for the Soviets; few of NATO's shorter range, land-based systems can effectively reach the USSR.

C. Whose Forces Should Be Counted?

This question would arise immediately if Moscow ultimately decided to accept a bilateral negotiating forum for theater nuclear forces. Specific rules or general criteria for dealing with the forces of the nonparticipant nuclear powers would be exceptionally difficult to devise. Any conceivable concrete Soviet proposal for resolving this problem would be subject to challenge over its data base (in the

case of PRC forces) and over the criteria for gauging the military weight of disparate national systems.

The Soviets probably would see that if they tried to deal seriously with this problem in their initial arms control proposal, the effort would lead them toward a swamp of confusion and controversy--rather than toward the psychological high ground they would prefer to occupy.

D. Regional Constraints Vs. National Inventories

Dealing with TNF arms control regionally, rather than globally would simplify matters in some respects and complicate them in others. PRC and Soviet far eastern forces would not be directly addressed, but the puzzle of how to treat French and UK forces would remain.

Moreover, Soviet planners would also recognize that a regional approach, if presented as a long-term solution, would lack credibility because their own aircraft could be flown very quickly from the far eastern to the western military districts of the USSR, or even into Eastern Europe (and American aircraft from CONUS to the European theater). The missiles in question (the SS-20 and probably the extended-range Pershing plus GLCM on the Western side) are also mobile but, as a general rule, would take more time and effort to move over long distances than aircraft.

Another problem the Soviets might foresee in the inclusion of aircraft would be disputes over the counting rule applying to their own medium-range models. They would doubtless wish to exclude, and expect the West to insist on including, Backfires (as well as the older Badgers and Blinders) assigned to Soviet Naval Aviation. Those aircraft have external characteristics not significantly different from aircraft of the same model assigned to Soviet Long-Range Aviation, with a primarily land attack role.

Yet a proposed long-term regional "solution" without aircraft would be open to challenge because it left out of account so much of each side's nuclear potential.

* * * *

If the above description of the likely evolution of Soviet thinking on TNF arms control comes fairly close to the mark, then Moscow will be tempted to evade the more untractable problems by deferring them. The Soviets would

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see more immediate political advantage in a limited but appealing first step that could be taken soon, coupled with a commitment to good faith but necessarily more protracted subsequent negotiations on a comprehensive TNE arms control package.

IV. LIKELY INITIAL SOVIET POSTURE

A. Assumptions

This discussion assumes that either NATO will make a decision in principle to deploy new LRTNF or that Moscow, in due course, will judge such a decision to be imminent. The Soviets would then take it as given that NATO would, at minimum, simultaneously proclaim its desire for early TNE arms control negotiations or even accompany announcement of the deployment decision with the outline of an arms control approach.

B. Soviet Tactics

Under these circumstances, the Soviets would almost certainly try to seize the initiative by preempting NATO and putting forward first their own arms control proposal (for reasons set out in Section III). Failing that, Moscow would wish at least to respond promptly to the NATO arms control offer.

The Soviet proposal would almost certainly be uncomplicated in substance and portrayed as a first step in a longer negotiating process. A more specific and comprehensive arms control scheme, foreshadowing an outcome consonant with ultimate Soviet military objectives, would unavoidably stir up considerable controversy. Most Western capitals would find much to quarrel with in it.

But the Soviets, in advancing their proposal, would try not to touch off an East-West controversy. Rather, they would aim at intensifying the internal West European debate on the immediate issue of whether NATO's LRTNF weapons development-procurement-deployment process need begin before arms control possibilities have been thoroughly explored. Moscow probably would reckon that this could best be accomplished by a proposal that contained enough detail to be enticing, but not enough to provoke distracting arguments, and which focused on first steps, not ultimate outcomes.

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Under this approach, Moscow presumably would be content to wait for the Western substantive position to unfold, after negotiations had actually begun, before coming to grips with hard issues like system types, numbers, counting rules, regional vs. global scope, relationship to MBFR, and so on.

Section V outlines a possible Soviet initiative.

C. What Forum?

The Soviets would certainly prefer to negotiate on theater nuclear arms control in a broader than bilateral forum. They have said that they cannot continue the SALT process indefinitely with the US alone. Given the military overlap between central and peripheral systems, this preference no doubt would extend to arms control talks dealing with theater weaponry. (The Soviets have implied, as noted in Section I, that these talks should have their own procedural identity, distinct from the SALT process.)

Theoretically, four options are available:

1. A broad multilateral conference (e.g., all CSCE participants);
2. A five-power conference (US, USSR, France, UK, PRC);
3. A four-power conference (the above, less the PRC);
4. Bilateral negotiations (US, USSR).

Moscow's position of record favors 2, implies a preference for 2 over 3, and has prepared the ground, at least, for opening with 1.

Moscow might see advantages in a "nuclear CSCE," calculating that the presence of the neutrals and non-aligned and NATO's "doves" (the Netherlands and the Scandinavian members) plus, of course, all the Warsaw Pact states, would assure a tilt in the "right" direction. Indeed, the Soviets have already called for a conference in 1979* of CSCE participants to discuss "military detente." They might welcome an opportunity to add a fresh and topical issue to the rather stale agenda already suggested for that meeting.

* Declaration of the Warsaw Pact Foreign Ministers meeting in Budapest last March.

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The Soviets would recognize that a meeting of some 25 countries could do little or no serious negotiating. But this would be irrelevant to Moscow's purposes--the stimulation of West European resistance to NATO LRTNF deployments. And if NATO declined the invitation, it would bear the onus of excluding the smaller European governments from a discussion of important nuclear issues. A number of these governments, including some NATO members, would happily attend a gathering where they could exert some influence on nuclear arms control or at least be seen to be attempting to do so.

Thus NATO could not reject such an initiative except at some political cost. Yet participation by NATO members would slow, or perhaps arrest altogether, the momentum of the Allied LRTNF deployment program. The Soviets would not be unaware of the discomfort that such a proposal would cause on the Western side.

Moscow would also calculate that France would refuse to attend a nuclear CSCE; that the UK would also join the US in opposing it; and that, whatever their own inclinations, the smaller NATO powers would not take part in the absence of the larger ones. Even so, Moscow might decide to advance the proposal to demonstrate its own benign intentions and to throw some sand into NATO's LRTNF decisionmaking machinery.

A call for a five-power conference on theater nuclear issues would not impress the audience Moscow most wants to impress--the influential, serious-minded peace and disarmament constituencies in some West European countries. It is common knowledge that the PRC and France, and almost certainly the UK as well, would refuse to attend. Moreover, the Soviet arms control apparatus, one may safely assume, could not fashion the outlines of a persuasive limitations and reductions proposal to accompany the purely procedural initiative of suggesting that the conference convene. This would reinforce the inclination, in Western Europe, to dismiss the five-power conference idea as mere propaganda. Moscow probably is perceptive enough to realize this.

With the same considerations would apply to any proposal for a four-power conference to negotiate INF constraints for the European region. Given well-known French attitudes, this would not be taken seriously. Hence Moscow wishes to avoid it.

This, the Soviets might feel, could fairly promptly be replaced by a new multilateral format.

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the US-USSR bilateral mode, which most NATO members currently prefer. This judgment is based on the premises that the USSR will attach importance to blocking or slowing new NATO deployments and will see arms control talks as a promising means to that end. Long and stubborn insistence on Moscow's procedural preferences would then become self-defeating.

Even so, the four options are not mutually exclusive and could be orchestrated into a single score, modulated to suit different circumstances. For example, an initial call for a broadly multilateral negotiation might have tactical and propaganda advantages. When that failed, stressing the need for a five- (or four-) power approach would help establish the USSR's claim to compensation for the forces of other nuclear powers-- a claim Soviet negotiators would certainly press in any bilateral talks. By moving down the scale from broader to narrow forums, Moscow could dress up as concessions its recognition of reality.

Even after bilateral talks had begun, the multilateral themes would allow Moscow to go on dangling the prospect of ambitious nuclear disarmament programs, either in the European region or globally, if the absent nuclear powers agreed to join in. Finally, if the bilateral talks tended to focus on INF constraints applying to the European region (including the western USSR), this could alarm Peking and Tokyo. The two capitals might worry that any constraints that the Soviets accepted for the western USSR would be translated into even larger far eastern deployments of the systems concerned. In that case, Moscow could play its five-power conference mood music.

V. CONTENT OF A SOVIET ARMS CONTROL PROPOSAL:
A FREEZE ON NEW MISSILE DEPLOYMENTS?

A. Description

Conceivably, the Soviets could call for:

- agreement to an immediate freeze on deployments "in Europe" of new types of land-based missiles of more than, say, 1,000-km. operational radius;
- subsequent negotiations on limitation and comprehensive reductions of all nuclear weapons and delivery systems in the European region.

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A move of this sort might, in Moscow's judgment, sow confusion and perplexity within NATO. It would also:

- put the USSR on the right side of the "peace" issue;
- fit neatly with Moscow's general detente strategy, past disarmament proposals, and recent "peace initiatives";
- serve as a rallying point for those, inside and outside certain Western European governments, who are uneasy about NATO's projected new deployments; and
- give Moscow the diplomatic initiative and also room to maneuver in response to the reactions evoked by its opening gambit.

B. Analysis

This type of proposal would entail a Soviet decision to open with a regional rather than a global approach to theater nuclear arms control. It would play to the West European audience and address an immediate problem--NATO's LRTNF deployment plans. Yet it would close no doors and could be shaped in various ways, depending on the responses it stimulated.

It would be uncharacteristic of Moscow to neglect a chance to reaffirm the older, more ambitious disarmament initiatives cherished by the Soviet arms control bureaucracy and repeatedly blessed in high-level Soviet and Warsaw Pact pronouncements. Hence the judgment that Moscow would wish to couple its first-step proposal (the deployment freeze) with something pointing toward bolder long-range "solutions."

1. Choice of Forum

It is possible, even likely, that Moscow would suggest a "nuclear CSCE" as the forum of choice. The procedural ground has been prepared (Warsaw Pact call for a meeting in 1979 of all CSCE participants to discuss military detente). The proposal would have enough political appeal to be troublesome for NATO. And it would avoid (in contrast to a call for a four-power conference) a direct challenge to the French, which would be out of harmony with Moscow's broader European policy.

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2. System Coverage

The Soviets would justify the narrow scope of the freeze proposal by emphasizing that they were offering to halt deployments of the weapon system (the SS-20) that had aroused most anxiety in the West. They might explain exclusion of medium-range bombers on the grounds that the mobility of aircraft raises difficult problems for a regionally focused negotiation, problems that would require lengthy discussions to resolve. The freeze was suggested merely as a prelude to broader negotiations, which could encompass aircraft as well as missiles.

3. Range

A limit fixed at about 1,000 kilometers would catch the extended-range Pershing and GLCM's, the central elements in the projected NATO program, and of course the SS-20 on the Soviet side. It might also constrain the SS-22, the follow-on version of the Scaleboard missile, but the Soviets seem to feel no pressure to accelerate the SS-22 program.

4. Area

The crucial issue would be the precise definition of "the European region" and how much of the USSR was covered by it. Brezhnev's public offer to negotiate about "medium-range" weapons systems implies necessarily the inclusion of some Soviet territory. Obviously, in the Soviet view, the less the better. The Soviets might open by proposing to define "Europe," for purposes of TNF arms control, as the area fixed in CSCE for prior notification of maneuvers (which, on the Soviet side, includes a band 250 kilometers in width along the western Soviet frontier). They might also hint at some flexibility here, recognizing that more Soviet territory would have to be covered to make the offer attractive to Western opinion.

5. Effects on the SS-20 Deployment Program

Under the proposal postulated above, the effect would be nil at the outset and perhaps quite limited over the longer run. In the first place, the proposal would ban deployment in the European region, but not production. Moreover, the Soviets would not expect a deployment freeze to be promptly accepted and would view the proposal as the starting point for negotiations. If talks began, Moscow could control their pace by a variety of substantive or procedural devices. SS-20 deployments could continue until agreement

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- 17 -
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was reached. Even then, a ban on European deployment would not, of itself, block production for deployment elsewhere.

The Soviets, of course, would not enter upon such talks expecting to have everything their way. They would recognize the possibility of reaching a point where they would have to choose between unacceptable constraints on their systems or no constraints on NATO. But that would be a problem of middle- or end-game strategy and should not deter the Soviets from the opening gambit postulated here.

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