C. Akhromeyev, G. Korniyenko, *Through the Eyes of a Marshall and a Diplomat*, Moscow, 1992, roughly translated extract of Akhromeyev's comments, pp 22-23:

If one takes the correlation of forces in a broader sense, and not just in terms of numbers of warheads, already by 1976 a military balance between the USSR and the USA, the Warsaw Pact and NATO had been achieved for a significant period. Over 8-10 years it was possible to preserve it probably without much in-crease in military expenditures -- even with a certain decrease. The situation was favorable to transform the situation and shift from a constant growth in military expenditures to their gradual reduction. After the meeting of heads of state in Helsinki this favorable situation was aided by the political atmosphere as well as the military circumstances. At this time (April 1976) the Minister of Defense of the USSR, A.A. Grechko, suddenly died. A civilian, D.F. Ustinov, became Minister of Defense.

And this brings to mind again an episode which probably not everyone will easily believe (since in recent years some people haaave worked hard to create ab image of the military as people who care only for grabbing more resources for their needs to the detriment of the economy). I remember that already in 1975-76, in the General Staff itself, in this center of professional military officers, was born the idea of reducing our military ex-penditures in connection with the fact that the U.S. had withdrawn its forces from Vietnam, that our relations with them had become more equal and the negotiations on strategic arms were more or less normal. Soon after the Helsinki conference, a very narrow group of people in the General Staff (S.F. Akhromeyev, deputy chief of administration I.G. Nikolayev, chief of the finance administration V.N. Dutov) began working out a variant for freezing military expenditures, chiefly by reducing mass-produced weapons.

Our concept was given to the Chief of the General Staff V. G. Kulikov at the beginning of 1976. Having weighed the matter carefully, the Chief of the Genstaff decided, with the group, not to take up their proposal with Marshal Grechko. The latter op-posed any kind of reduction of military expenditures. The material was placed in the safe "until better times." About a month after Ustinov took over his duties [as Minister of Defense], this proposal was presented to him, but did not receive his approval. In truth, Ustinov's position was understandable. Brezhnev was seriously ill, and it was pointless to present such an acute problem to him.

I am now convinced that it was possible at that time to strengthen detente and to begin in our country, if not economic reform, at least a reduction in military expenditures and an in-crease in the production of consumer goods.

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[Akhromeyev goes on to speak of the "serious mistake" by the USSR in inserting itself in the conflict between Somalia and Ethiopia and in the war in Angola. After discussing the difficulties for the Genstaff in supplying military equipment to those arenas, he writes:]

The USA and states of western Europe came to the opinion that the USSR had undertaken a struggle against them for controlling influence in Africa (although we had no such intention). Secretary of State H. Kissinger at that time made a special statement on the subject. We underestimated this warning. These rash steps, along with the subsequent introduction of troops into Afghanistan, were used by rightist forces in the USA to gain the upper hand in state affairs and to destroy the policy of detente. The arms race was rapidly ratcheted up, and I realized it but could see no way to stop it.

In the second half of the seventies, the situation in Europe also become more problematic. The situation in Poland sharpened. Tensions increased in the GDR, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. This was not noticeable from the outside, but alarming aspects in the internal processes of these countries were known to us.

[Then he turns to concerns about China and earlier mistakes in Soviet policy toward China. Then to Afghanistan.]