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*Weekend Box.*

*Ag. Paul*

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*Prime Minister*

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*Paul*  
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9 October 1979

*[Handwritten scribbles]*

Dear Michael,

President Brezhnev's Speech in Berlin

We have been considering how to respond to President Brezhnev's statement in Berlin on 6 October about theatre nuclear forces, confidence building measures and Soviet troop and tank reductions. The attached paper, which has been approved by Lord Carrington, sets out a line which our delegation at NATO can use in concerting Alliance views. We will draw on this, taking account of the opinions of our Allies, in handling the media in the United Kingdom. Meanwhile, News Department here have a holding line based on contingency briefing drawn up in NATO last week, (UKDEL NATO telegram number 208).

I am sending a copy of this letter to Brian Norbury (MOD) and Martin Vile (Cabinet Office).

Yours *GB*

*Paul*

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10 OCT 1979



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PRESIDENT BREZHNEV'S BERLIN SPEECH

1. President Brezhnev's speech includes three eye-catching security initiatives: on Theatre Nuclear Forces (TNF), Confidence Building Measures (CBM) and Soviet troop and tank reductions from the GDR. Although not expressly linked in the statement, they are undoubtedly aimed at influencing the NATO programme of TNF modernisation. The Soviet ideas on troop/tank reductions and CBMs are, however, irrelevant to this issue. It will be very much in the Western interest to treat the three components separately.

TNF

2. President Brezhnev warns that TNF modernisation would upset the security balance in Europe and harm the European countries which accept basing of these US systems. He claims that the Soviet Union has in the last ten years reduced its medium-range bombers and missile launchers and the yield of the nuclear weapons they carry. He offers to reduce Soviet theatre systems "if no additional medium range nuclear weapons are deployed in Western Europe".

3. Taken with the rest of the speech, this line will undoubtedly make it harder to get agreement to TNF basing in continental Europe. There will be a strong temptation, especially for example in the Netherlands, to put arms control first and delay modernisation. The danger is that the timetable for deciding on modernisation will slip to well beyond the US and German elections, thus delaying (or perhaps even frustrating completely) the introduction of the new systems.

4. While we can welcome Soviet acceptance that there should be negotiations about the theatre nuclear forces of both sides, there is nothing in the proposals themselves to indicate that the existing serious imbalance in TNF will be rectified. The need for Alliance TNF modernisation therefore remains as pressing as ever. On no account should we allow modernisation to be a hostage to arms control.

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5. Given the known views of the Dutch we need therefore to present a convincing case in NATO for pressing ahead with parallel decisions in November on modernisation and arms control.

6. We can deploy the following arguments:

(a) President Brezhnev's figures are open to challenge. It is true that the number of long range theatre missiles and aircraft stationed in the Western part of the Soviet Union have been reduced in the last ten years. But Soviet capabilities in terms of accuracy, ability to penetrate, mobility and target coverage have increased very substantially. Moreover, a number of Soviet missiles is now targeted on Western Europe from points East of the Urals.

(b) The NATO programme is designed to plug a gap in the spectrum of NATO's nuclear capabilities. This gap is increasing as Western systems (eg Vulcan) become obsolescent and increasingly vulnerable to the more sophisticated Soviet weapons.

(c) The proposed TNF modernisation programme involves no increase in NATO's overall warhead numbers in Europe.

(d) Announcing his decision last year not to deploy enhanced radiation warheads (the Neutron bomb), President Carter said he was looking for Soviet restraint in response to this important concession. President Brezhnev's statement should be seen in this light.

(e) The Allies have not only been considering TNF modernisation; Ministers will in December also consider specific proposals for negotiations on TNF arms control. This will enable the Alliance to respond substantively to President Brezhnev's statement without endangering Alliance security interests.

/Troop/Tank Reductions

Troop/Tank Reductions

7. The announcement that 20,000 Soviet troops and 1,000 tanks will be withdrawn from the GDR in the next 12 months is to be welcomed. But reductions of this kind will not do much to diminish the existing numerical advantages both in manpower and in tanks enjoyed by the Warsaw Pact. This aspect of President Brezhnev's proposals should be put firmly in the MBFR context and the Alliance needs to get across the message that a Soviet move in this field is irrelevant to TNF modernisation.

8. In detail we could argue that:-

(a) The Soviet reductions are not numerically significant. The withdrawal of 20,000 troops will make little difference to the Warsaw Pact's superiority of over 160,000 ground forces in the MBFR area of Europe. A cut of 1,000 tanks will hardly impinge on the Warsaw Pact advantage of 16,800 against 6,500.

(b) Even these small reductions will be meaningless unless there is a commitment not to exceed in the future the residual level of Soviet manpower and tanks in central Europe.

(c) Nonetheless we welcome this move as a hint that the Soviet Union may be willing to negotiate in MBFR for equal collective ceilings for ground and air forces in central Europe. For this we need agreed figures for both sides, a subject on which the East has so far been unforthcoming.

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9. Our practical response in the MBFR negotiations will need careful thought. Soviet unilateral reductions will tend to undermine the idea which we have been discussing with the Germans and Americans of interim MBFR reductions for US and Soviet forces. One possible area for a Western response would be to bring forward unilaterally the US nuclear warhead reductions which we have so far made conditional on Soviet troop and tank reductions.

Confidence Building Measures

10. President Brezhnev repeats the proposal for an early conference on "military detente" (which we and our Allies are unwilling to concede until we see what happens at the CSCE review conference next year). The new elements on CBMs are:

(a) a reduction from 25,000 to 20,000 in the ceiling above which ground force exercises must be notified under the Helsinki Final Act;

(b) a ceiling of 20,000 for notification of major military movements (the West proposed 25,000 at Belgrade in line with the current ceiling for exercise notification);

(c) a limit of 40-50,000 men in the size of ground force exercises (the East proposed 50-60,000 at Belgrade).

The lower ceilings proposed in (a) and (b) are a modest move in the right direction. The limit at (c) is not welcome. NATO, dependent on reinforcement, holds many more large exercises than the East, and Alliance studies at the time of Belgrade suggested that 60,000 was the lowest figure which might be acceptable for a measure of this kind.

11. These ideas are relatively small beer and can be dealt with in due course in the CSCE framework. At this stage it will probably be enough to say that we are taking these ideas into account in preparations for the Madrid Conference, for which we too will have substantial proposals to make.

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/Conclusions



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Conclusions

12. In the light of the foregoing we should seek the agreement of our Allies to an Alliance response on the following lines:

(a) The build-up in Soviet longer range theatre nuclear capability in the last ten years has been substantial. No amount of juggling with selective statistics can hide this fact.

(b) The Western Allies now find themselves faced with highly sophisticated and already modernised long range TNF. Comparable forces on the Western side have however remained unmodernised. Some are now approaching obsolescence.

(c) It is against this background that the Allies have been discussing the modernisation of their long range TNF. Nothing in the Brezhnev statement alters the need for this.

(d) NATO has for some time been concerned to limit the Soviet long-range TNF build up. They therefore welcome this Soviet expression of willingness to negotiate. A substantive Western response will be given in parallel with decisions on the modernisation programme at the December Ministerial meetings.

(e) The decision to withdraw troops and tanks from East Germany is also welcome. It must, however, be seen in the context of the MBFR negotiations where Eastern agreement is needed on reductions to levels of approximate parity on the basis of acceptable data.

(f) The Soviet proposals on CBMs are under study and will be taken into account in Alliance preparations for the Madrid CSCE conference next year.

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