

Prime Minister



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

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London SW1A 2AH

From the Secretary of State

15 December 1989

Dear Prime Minister,

You will have had the record of the Four Power dinner in Brussels and telegrams describing the meeting of the Group of 24 on help to Hungary and Poland, and the North Atlantic Council. You may like to have some personal impressions.

[i.e. UK, US
France &
Germany]

The Four Power meeting was very useful. Indeed, I think it is the best forum available for discussing the affairs of the Alliance informally and in depth. Because it is small and private, people are prepared to talk frankly. I thought the personal chemistry was good.

Jim Baker, in his Berlin speech, at the Four Power dinner and again at the NAC, has been developing the theme of changing the Alliance by building up its political role. He did not dissent when I said that this must take place alongside, and not in place of, the Alliance's defence role, but I have no doubt that in the US mind the accent is shifting. Baker is also keen to build up the CSCE process, with NATO working out Western proposals, including building up the Anglo/US initiative on free elections. He also sees the CSCE as the right forum for economic help for the Soviet Union: he thinks the IMF and IBRD are way beyond their experience and comprehension. Developing the role of the CSCE may lead to a new Helsinki Summit - but when we are ready, not before.

/We

The Prime Minister



We discussed the German question at the Four Power dinner and it came up in my separate talk with Manfred Woerner. I thought there was slightly less anxiety about the GDR than a week ago. Dumas, endorsed by Baker, gave a more brutal account of Gorbachev's reaction to Kohl's 10-point speech than Genscher had probably heard from any other source. Genscher said that Shevardnadze had more or less acknowledged that there had been no attacks on Soviet military families in the GDR - merely rumours from East German sources. Baker said the same. Baker thought Modrow a man of some substance who might be able to hold on until the elections in May. Nonetheless the situation is still volatile, especially in the decayed industrial south of the country. It must be conceivable that turbulence and economic decline could lead to overwhelming demand in the GDR for unification, eg by referendum. We did not discuss this directly, but Genscher is well aware of the dangers. He talked again in private of two free German states living side by side for years, cooperating in more and more practical matters, without defining this cooperation in constitutional terms - in other words, an evolutionary approach.

There is some suspicion (already evident in the German press) that the French and ourselves, unlike the Americans, might be ready to try to use our status as Occupying Powers to block German self-determination - hence the importance of the Strasbourg language. All agreed that this Strasbourg language, worked out with such care, should be repeated in the NATO Communique. We also agreed at the Four Power dinner that Ambassadorial talks in Berlin should continue periodically, as necessary, not least as a useful means of allowing the Russians to let off steam. Genscher has misgivings about broadening the agenda. He agreed that we must stick to Berlin but could not stop the Russians sounding off about wider issues.

/Baker



Baker talked about his initiative for closer relations between the United States and the Community. There is a long and chequered history of such initiatives. It is far from clear whether this one will take a definite institutional form (Baker talked in his Berlin speech of a possible treaty) or whether it will simply involve beefing up the existing arrangements. For Baker it is all of a piece with strengthening the political role of NATO, building up the EC and underlining America's role as a European power - which means keeping American troops in Europe.

Our present dilemma was put clearly by Manfred Woerner when he said that if the NATO countries opposed German reunification, then the Alliance would lose Germany. By broadening the scope of Alliance cooperation, the Americans clearly hope to avoid confronting the Germans with any such choice. Genscher too is trying to play things long. Everybody sees the key to success as being the maintenance of stability in the GDR over the next few months. Baker said that, at Malta, Gorbachev had stressed the importance of keeping American troops in Europe. Shevardnadze's call on Woerner in Brussels next week is part of the same pattern. From the Russian point of view, NATO is now a more certain guarantor of the stability they need than the Warsaw Pact.

DOUGLAS HURD

over,
Douglas

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SOVIET AND WESTERN CONCEPTS
OF 'MILITARY DOCTRINE'

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SUMMARY:

1. There are fundamental differences between the Soviet and Western concepts of doctrine.
2. Soviet military doctrine is a structured framework of thought by means of which the entire national military and civilian approach to war is conditioned.
3. As such, doctrinal thinking is taught in depth, and discussions of doctrinal issues use a strictly defined terminology which provides for a disciplined approach. This is in marked contrast to practice in the West.
4. The Soviet General Staff, of which there is no Western equivalent, has been very important in developing the implementation of doctrine. Its influence is often underestimated.
5. Policy decides if and when to go to war; Doctrine determines how to plan and prepare for war. It links policy on war with the conduct of war.
6. Once war starts, doctrine ceases to be important and strategy (how to fight the war) becomes dominant. If NATO is concerned about Soviet offensive capabilities, it should be discussing STRATEGY, not DOCTRINE.
7. Soviet military doctrine has always been defined as defensive. However the strategy by which it has been implemented has been primarily offensive. Within that strategy, operations and tactics have of necessity been both offensive and defensive, but primarily offensive.
8. Because NATO nations have no standardized and agreed definitions and terminology, NATO concepts for war do not fit neatly into the Soviet framework and are difficult to translate.
9. The liberal use of terminology and lack of a standardized and consistent approach in the West has often brought about unnecessary confusion in discussing military matters with Warsaw Pact representatives. Furthermore, these terms, when misunderstood by Western representatives or intentionally misused by Warsaw Pact representatives, can create barriers to a full understanding of Soviet military thought. This lack of understanding can be exploited by Warsaw Pact representatives in debate or discussion.

INTRODUCTION:

With an East-West conference on military doctrine scheduled for January 1990 in Vienna, it is perhaps worth recalling that the Soviet approach to doctrine is very different from the Western approach. If this is not taken into consideration by all participants in the conference, no small amount of misunderstanding may result.

The attached notes may assist in understanding the nature of these differences, the complexity and precision of the Soviet concept, and why it is important to understand them.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE 'DOCTRINAL APPROACH'

1. Soviet military doctrine is, first and foremost, a way of thinking, an attitude of mind, which springs from Marxism-Leninism. Marxism-Leninism may well have lost its appeal as an ideology, but it has become a code of behaviour, a set of ethics and values, which have moulded not only people's attitudes, but their way of thinking. This teaches people to be very analytical, to base their thinking on the dialectical process and to fit everything into a logical framework.
2. As a result, military doctrine takes the form of a structured framework of thought. It is not just the various different and transient ideas of a number of Soviet generals and politicians. This has several consequences:
 - (a) The doctrine is structured on a set of basic rules and principles which help to discipline thought processes and ensure a high degree of standardization of thinking.
 - (b) These rules and principles are formally standardized and form part of the basic education of everyone, civilian and military, who is concerned with military policy, military service, the defence industry, and so on.
 - (c) The doctrine is constantly being developed by organized and co-ordinated:
 - (i) academic research, in both the military and political spheres;
 - (ii) the exploitation of military, political and diplomatic experience;

- (iii) operational evaluation and analysis;
 - (iv) military exercises to test new theories.
- (d) There is a very large teaching system to educate and train people in all aspects of the doctrine. This is particularly notable in the armed forces, where it is accomplished by means of:
- (i) long courses at military academies which teach war-fighting to generals;
 - (ii) a large and active military press;
 - (iii) The stimulation of intense tactical debate.
- (e) There has developed a comprehensive terminology to cover all aspects of the doctrine. This terminology is precisely defined in official dictionaries. It is standardized throughout the Warsaw Pact.

Because there is no Western or NATO doctrinal system, there is no agreed standardized vocabulary with which to translate the Soviet terms, nor is there even a general appreciation for the necessity for such a terminology. The importance of the Soviet and Warsaw Pact doctrinal approach is not understood in the West outside the narrow circles of military and political specialists.

3. Although it is not in itself an element of 'military doctrine', the existence in the USSR of a Prussian-style General Staff (of which there is no equivalent in the West) has an enormous influence on the implementation of doctrine. The Soviet General Staff, which is the 'working organ' of the Ministry of Defence, includes the following main features:

- it is a relatively small elite, a staff within a staff, almost entirely Russian in composition;
- it successfully overcomes single-service rivalries within the armed forces, facilitating the transfer of resources and personnel between arms in response to operational requirements;
- it is responsible for research and planning for all aspects of warfare, present and future. This includes the development of: weaponry; operational concepts; force structure and organization; and training and manning;

- until recently it has had a complete monopoly of advice to the Soviet leadership on how to prepare the nation for war. This monopoly, and the General Staff's formidable competence and authority, have made it very difficult for any other person or group in the USSR to develop any expertise in military affairs.

Recently, several institutes of the Academy of Sciences (eg, IMEMO) have begun to discuss military matters, providing an alternative viewpoint to that of the General Staff. However, their overall technical military expertise to date has not been impressive. Much of their rhetoric is based on Western ideas of 'defensive defence' and has a considerable propaganda content.

THE DOCTRINAL STRUCTURE AND THE DEFINITIONS OF TERMINOLOGY

1. Policy

'Policy' decides if and when to go to war

Policy, including military policy, is the responsibility of the Communist Party. Domestic political requirements are dominant, and drive foreign policy objectives. 'Foreign policy' includes military policy, arms control, and diplomacy. In the traditional Marxist-Leninist view, war and peace, diplomacy, arms control, etc., are all tools of policy, each to be employed as appropriate to achieve the all important political end. Any evaluation of Soviet policy must start with an assessment as to the nature of the political goal. At the moment, it is clear that Gorbachev does not consider war of any sort to be an appropriate means of achieving his particular political goals.

There has until now been a single concept of State and Party policy in the USSR. Military and civilian are integrated under the same political roof. This is most obvious in the concept of State assets. Civilian assets in, for example, industry, Aeroflot, the Merchant Navy and so on have always been closely integrated with military requirements, and vice versa. However, in the past, military needs have always taken precedence over civilian. Gorbachev is attempting to reverse this priority in many areas.

The General Staff's monopoly of advice to the Soviet leadership on how to prepare for war has led to an unhealthy military influence on policy, both domestic and foreign. Gorbachev is also attempting to revise this, on the grounds that it is out of date and counter-productive.

2. Doctrine

'Doctrine' determines how to plan and prepare for war

This includes:

- to avoid it;
- if starting it, how to do so for best effect;
- how to fight and win war;
- how to prepare the country and Armed Forces for the wars they may have to fight;
- how to decide what equipment is necessary to fight the war with.

3. Doctrine links policy on war with the conduct of war

There are two main elements to doctrine, these are:

- (a) The 'socio-political' element, that is, the interaction of war and preparation for war with society - the impact that war and war preparation has on society, and the impact that social conditions have on a nation's capability to go to war successfully.
- (b) The 'military-technical' element, that is, everything to do with waging war if it starts.

Gorbachev asserts that the Soviet General Staff has been so obsessed with the 'military technical element' that it has neglected to consider the equally 'socio-political element', to disastrous effect. That is, they have not taken into consideration the damage done to social development and international relations by excessive military spending and particular force deployments, and they have not considered sufficiently the impact of social discontent on the viability of the Armed Forces.

4. The 'military technical' element of doctrine divides into two parts:

- (a) Military art - how to fight wars

There are three levels or scales of this:

- strategy
- operations

- tactics

(b) Military science - how to improve one's ability to fight

This involves:

- (i) Military development⁽¹⁾, ie, keeping the Armed Forces up to date, implementing force cuts or increases, ensuring efficiency, etc., all so as to improve war-winning capabilities.
 - (ii) Structure and organization, ie, amending this as necessary to accommodate changes in policy, strategy, technology, economic capability, training levels, etc. This includes planning and implementing the conscription systems.
 - (iii) Equipment procurement.
 - (iv) Military training and education.
 - (v) Rear support: organizing civilian support for war fighting.
 - (vi) Military geography: studying the military features of likely theatres of war.
5. Once war starts, doctrine ceases to play a significant role and strategy becomes dominant. If NATO is worried about Soviet offensive fighting capabilities (operations, deployment, equipment, etc.), the subject for discussion should be Soviet strategy, not doctrine.

SOVIET MILITARY DOCTRINE IN RELATIONSHIP TO NATO AND WARSAW PACT

1. Warsaw Pact

Doctrine is a national thing, so technically there is no Warsaw Pact doctrine. However, as the Warsaw Pact is an extension of the Soviet General Staff and non-Soviet Warsaw Pact armies were all created along Soviet lines, the Soviet doctrinal approach is common to all Warsaw Pact countries.

1) Russian 'stroitel'stvo', often translated as 'build-up' or 'construction'.

Only in the past few months have some East European countries begun to talk about the possibility of having their own national military doctrine independent of the USSR.

2. NATO

As NATO is primarily a political coalition, NATO's institutions for political co-operation are seen by the USSR as being well developed. But because there is no single powerful nation to enforce a military doctrine within NATO, this is traditionally regarded by the USSR as being very weakly developed. By Soviet standards the need for a standardized approach to preparing for and fighting war is not recognized, and there is only a moderate degree of co-ordination of war plans within NATO. This is seen by the USSR as being in stark contrast to the Warsaw Pact.

Because the principal founding members of NATO had not developed a strong understanding of the 'operational level of war', NATO has not developed this concept, and as a consequence has only a weak capability at the operational level for war-fighting in Soviet eyes.

3. NATO terminology through Soviet eyes

NATO has no formal doctrinal framework at all. Nevertheless, much of what is done in the USSR and Eastern Europe is also done in NATO, but without a formal framework, international standardization and accepted terminology. The NATO concepts do not fit neatly into the Soviet conceptual framework at all. There are often no direct and straightforward translations.

(a) 'Doctrine' - this term has no agreed meaning in the West. It is used loosely, and in vague association with other words, eg, 'tactical doctrine'.

(b) 'War prevention by deterrence' - this is NATO policy. The means by which this policy is implemented in peacetime is what the Soviets would term 'doctrine', ie, any military and political steps taken to:

- avoid war;
- prepare for it;
- plan it;
- fight it.

- (c) Forward defence/flexible response - these constitute NATO's strategy - ie, the means by which the NATO coalition will implement its defence in time of war.
- (d) FOFA - this is subordinate military concept, one option by which the above strategy might be carried out by one or several of the Alliance members. It is therefore OPERATIONAL ART. The carrying out of a FOFA mission would be an OPERATION. If it were on such a large scale and reached Soviet territory then it would be a 'strategic operation', that is, an operation of strategic significance.
- (e) 'AIR LAND BATTLE' - is a military concept of a single NATO nation (the USA) for the development of its ground and air forces operational art.
- (f) 'Corps counter-stroke' - is a military concept of a single NATO nation (the UK) for carrying out its tactical plan at corps/divisional level.
- (g) Only the US, German, French and Turkish forces within NATO are large enough and have the necessary command systems to carry out independent land and air operations. All other NATO corps can conduct only tactical action, or at best tactical-operational action, which falls between the two levels of scale.

Only the UK, US and French forces have sufficient strength to carry out independent naval or amphibious operations.

- (h) The US term 'naval strategy' is, by Soviet definition, a contradiction in terms. STRATEGY is all arms. The most a single service can accomplish is operational art.

Terms such as 'tactical doctrine' are rendered in Russian simply as 'tactics', 'operational doctrine' as 'operational art'.

The 'Brezhnev doctrine' is a Western term to describe Brezhnev's policy towards Eastern Europe.

4. Offensive and defensive

Since World War II, Soviet DOCTRINE has been officially DEFENSIVE, that is, it has sought to avoid war with the West and its military strength has been developed to 'defend the gains of socialism'.

However, if war had been forced upon the USSR, or if it had been embarked upon as a tool of policy, the war would have been waged ideally by offensive strategy. Defensive strategy was not considered a sensible military option.

Within that strategy, operations and tactics would have been primarily offensive, but defensive operations and tactics were also seen as essential (if temporary and local) elements of a successful offensive.

Both offensive and defensive actions at all levels remain essential elements of combat for military success in a conflict. This applies, in the Soviet military view, to both combatants.

Soviet studies of NATO do not refer to 'NATO doctrine' because NATO does not have any real and formal concept of 'doctrine' in its military thinking and planning. Because of this, and because of the 'misuse' of the terms by NATO representatives (eg, 'FOFA is NATO doctrine') Soviet representatives can select elements of NATO's military art and describe it as 'NATO doctrine'; then condemn NATO for its 'offensive' and 'destabilizing doctrine'. The effect of this debating tactic is to confuse the Western audience, if not the Western negotiator.

What has most alarmed NATO in its confrontation with the Warsaw Pact is Soviet strategy and the accompanying force deployment, organizational structure and equipment.

NATO's discussions with the Warsaw Pact should insist on discussions of strategy. Western officials should not permit the Warsaw Pact representative to control the debate through the intentional misuse of military terminology.

At best, if the Western specialists have no appreciation of the Soviet terms, and no agreed terminology in which to express their own proposals, then they will be forced to rely on the goodwill of the Soviet General Staff for a satisfactory outcome of any debate or negotiation.

Ch. Donnelly