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The Soviet Approach to Force  
Reductions in Europe

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THE SOVIET APPROACH TO  
FORCE REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE

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## CONTENTS

	Page
NOTE .....	1
THE ESTIMATE .....	2
I. HOW THE SOVIET POSITION ON MBFR HAS DEVELOPED .....	2
II. BROAD SOVIET POLICY AIMS .....	4
The Elements of Détente .....	4
The Role of the Soviet Military Presence in Eastern Europe .....	6
III. PROS AND CONS FOR THE USSR CONCERNING NEGOTIATIONS ON MBFR .....	7
Principal Arguments For .....	7
Principal Arguments Against .....	9
How the Arguments Seem to Net Out .....	10
The USSR's Stated Position .....	10
IV. THE GENERAL SOVIET NEGOTIATING POSTURE .....	11
In the Preliminary Talks on MBFR .....	11
In the Actual Negotiations .....	13
V. THE STANCE OF THE EAST EUROPEANS .....	14
VI. POSSIBLE SOVIET POSITIONS ON VARIOUS ISSUES AND OPTIONS .....	15
The Area of Reductions .....	15
The Conditions for Reductions .....	15
Types of Forces and Method of Reduction .....	16
Collateral Constraints .....	17
Verification and Inspection .....	17
Other Issues .....	17
A Preference for the Slow, the Small, the Simple .....	18

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## THE SOVIET APPROACH TO FORCE REDUCTIONS IN EUROPE

### NOTE

This Estimate is concerned with the Soviet position on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) in Europe.<sup>1</sup> It is not concerned with US-NATO positions as such, which, in fact, are still in the process of formulation. But the former cannot be considered without reference to the latter about which, therefore, certain suppositions must necessarily be made. While there is no intention in this paper to suggest the desirability of the US' adopting this or that position, an examination of Soviet views and attitudes inevitably suggests certain inferences about the likely Soviet receptivity to various US positions.

Principal judgments are set forth in the last three sections of the paper:

On The General Soviet Negotiating Posture — Section IV, page 11.

On The Stance of The East Europeans — Section V, page 14.

On Possible Soviet Positions On Particular Issues — Section VI, page 15.

<sup>1</sup> Although MBFR is used throughout in referring to the subject of force reductions, it should be kept in mind that this is US-NATO terminology which is not accepted by the USSR.

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## THE ESTIMATE

## I. HOW THE SOVIET POSITION ON MBFR HAS DEVELOPED

1. For the better part of 20 years the USSR has sought to establish its right to be involved in and consulted about problems of security in Europe as a whole. A European security conference (CSCE) has been regarded by the USSR, which first proposed such a conference in 1954, as a useful vehicle for advancing this aim. The USSR, and other Warsaw Pact states have also, over the years, poured out many words about the desirability of European disarmament, including force reductions. Moscow's satisfaction over the near certainty that a security conference will soon take place is clear enough (though the preparatory talks in Helsinki have not been going entirely as the Russians would have wanted). But how enthusiastic the Russians are about actually entering negotiations on

force reductions, now that the opportunity to do so is also at hand, is more obscure.

2. Beginning in 1954 when, at the Big Four Foreign Ministers Conference, Molotov called for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Germany, the USSR and its allies have produced an array of proposals concerning armaments and force levels in Europe, varying in both scope and plausibility. Proposals on force levels have called in some cases for the freezing of forces, in others for reductions, complete and partial, the latter frequently specifying a reduction by one-third of all foreign forces in the two parts of Germany. Such overtures have sometimes been made in connection with advocacy of a security conference, and sometimes made separately. They have sometimes been part of sweeping disarmament schemes appealing for complete dissolution of the opposing military pacts and elimination of foreign bases.

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Yet, whatever their other aspects, all of them have related to West Germany and the US military presence there.

3. These various Soviet proposals were largely propagandistic, but not entirely so. They also reflected certain fundamental Soviet political and military concerns, not least the question of West Germany's role in Western defense arrangements. The USSR in fact took some limited steps which altered the military situation in Europe by withdrawing its forces from Austria in 1955 and Romania in 1958 and by carrying out a small unilateral reduction in East Germany in 1964. Only in the German case was there a suggestion of a mutual reduction angle. (There were some indications that the Russians, at least, wanted to treat this step and a US reduction which took place at roughly the same time as a case of reduction by mutual example.) Even then the Soviets had their own military reasons for doing what they did. By and large, the USSR's approach to disarmament in the 1950s and early 1960s was in the same vein as the rest of its posture toward Europe which concentrated heavily on condemning the US' European role and West German "revanchism". As such, Soviet proposals were part of the tactical play of the Cold War in Europe; in this setting and by their nature they stood little chance of being taken up by the West.

4. A new phase opened in 1968 with NATO's announcement at its ministerial meeting in June of that year of its readiness to negotiate mutual and balanced force reductions in Europe (MBFR). This plainly caused difficulties for Moscow. Nearly two years passed before the Warsaw Pact states officially acknowledged the NATO "signal". By then, Moscow was already in the midst of a major effort to promote a European security conference, and NATO had indicated that it intended to link the convening of such a conference with discussion of force reductions.

The Warsaw Pact's response was a statement saying that the reduction of "foreign armed forces on the territory of the European states" could be considered in "an all-European security commission to be set up by the conference or in any other forum acceptable to interested states". Later, in the spring of 1971, Brezhnev began to state the Eastern position more positively. At the 24th Party Congress and in a subsequent speech, the Soviet party chief said that the time was ripe for considering force reductions, indicating that these should apply first of all to Central Europe and deal with both armed forces and armaments. Brezhnev did not further elaborate on the Soviet position, but he did call on the West to enter into negotiations.

5. The hesitancy with which the USSR initially greeted the Western proposals can be accounted for in a number of ways. Moscow probably saw no reason to negotiate the reduction of US forces in Europe at a time when the US Government seemed to be under growing domestic pressure to reduce unilaterally. It may have feared having to face charges that it was making it possible for the US to shift additional forces to Vietnam. Uncertainty over the implications of the Western demand for "balance" in any reductions gave Moscow further reason to move cautiously. And negotiating terms apart, mid-1968 and the months following, when the USSR was invading Czechoslovakia and establishing a permanent Group of Forces there, was a particularly inopportune time from Moscow's point of view for the opening of an East-West dialogue on force levels—or for raising any questions about the future disposition of Soviet forces in Central Europe.

6. By the time that Brezhnev made his statements in 1971 some of these Soviet concerns clearly had eased. At this juncture, moreover, as a result of the May 1971 US-Soviet agreement affecting the scope of SALT negotia-

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tions, prospects had opened up for progress in stabilizing the US-Soviet relationship in strategic weapons. The interval between 1968 and 1971 had, in any case, given Moscow time to formulate a tactical response to the NATO initiative. This period had, at the same time, seen an acceleration of the process of change in Europe which sharpened the USSR's interest in establishing a more active role in West European politics and seemed to improve Moscow's chances of gaining wider access to Western Europe's economic and technical resources. Moscow therefore wanted a European security conference more than ever, and by continuing to hold out against MBFR it would have hurt its chances of obtaining one.<sup>2</sup>

## II. BROAD SOVIET POLICY AIMS

7. If MBFR is seen by Moscow as a way of assuring a European security conference, the latter is itself merely a part of the USSR's European policy as a whole, in which détente has become the principal motif. The chief features of this policy, as pursued with increasing vigor by the Soviets for the past three years or so, have been discussed extensively in previous estimates;<sup>3</sup> but they are briefly

<sup>2</sup> These are doubtless some of the most important considerations behind Moscow's shift to a more positive approach to MBFR. Yet the particular timing of Brezhnev's enunciation of the new Soviet stance is also worth noting. He spoke up on the eve of the vote in the US Senate on the Mansfield Amendment, thus contributing to the defeat of a motion which could have absolved the USSR from the need to negotiate for the reduction of the US military presence in Europe. It may be that Moscow had already concluded that the Mansfield Amendment would be defeated. Or it may be that Soviet leadership had, by that time, come to believe that it would have more to gain from negotiating for the withdrawal of US forces than from unilateral US reductions.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, NIE 12-72, "The USSR and the Changing Scene in Europe", dated 26 October 1972, SECRET.

examined again here for their relevance to the Soviet approach to MBFR.

### The Elements of Détente

8. Détente is first of all seen by Moscow as a means of winning West European and US recognition of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe and thus further securing this zone of control. Efforts to gain international recognition of East Germany and to render permanent the division between East and West Germany serve the same aim. West Germany's treaties with the USSR, Poland, and East Germany have given the Russians some of what they need in this regard, but a CSCE could go further in filling the gap left by the absence of a post-World War II peace treaty. But beyond getting the West to accept what Moscow refers to as the "existing realities", the Russians see in a security conference—and perhaps also in negotiations on MBFR—a vehicle for carrying them into a fuller role in the politics of a changing Western Europe.

9. The USSR's détente policies aim at giving it greater influence over trends in Western Europe, both those which, if continued, could produce unwelcome results for the Russians and those that are developing favorably from the Russian point of view. The process of West European economic integration is troublesome for the USSR. This is partly because the European Community (EC) might make it more difficult for the USSR to develop the kind of fuller trade and economic ties it wants with the West European states. Moscow does not necessarily believe that the Community will soon evolve into a cohesive West European political and military grouping, but it probably does believe that the elaboration of Community ties will render its member states, West Germany in particular, less susceptible to Soviet influence. While Moscow has chosen not to conduct a head-on struggle with the EC, it will do what

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it can to impede the process of integration and to preserve as far as possible the opportunity to deal bilaterally with the West European states in economic and political matters. The Soviets evidently believe that these aspirations are better served to the extent that West Europeans take a more relaxed view of the USSR's intentions and come to envisage the possibility that with Soviet participation (but not without it) a viable security structure embracing both parts of Europe can be created.

10. While Moscow can foresee developments within Western Europe which might go against its interests, it also sees opportunities for itself in the changing US-West European relationship. The long-standing goal of weakening NATO and securing a reduction of the US' presence and influence in Europe must now seem more realizable than before. This perception has sharpened the USSR's interest in projecting itself onto the scene in Western Europe in a way which will enable it to play on these favorable tendencies. No doubt the present Soviet leaders understand that achievement of such aims as the dissolution of NATO and the complete withdrawal of US forces from Europe lies far over the horizon. In the meantime, however, they recognize that the concept of "Atlanticism" has weakened and that many West Europeans have qualms about the long-term future of the Western Alliance as the central element in their security. The Soviets also perceive that the US' "special relationship" with Western Europe is altering.<sup>4</sup> Even though the Soviets are far from substituting their own influence for that of the US among the West Europeans, the latter are more and more inclined to fashion their political and economic relations

<sup>4</sup>For a fuller discussion on this point, see NIE 20-72, "Problems in US-West European Relations", dated 14 December 1972, SECRET.

with the USSR in their own ways. In these circumstances, the USSR has reason to expect that the West Europeans will be increasingly attentive to its views on European questions, including those pertaining to European security.

11. For tactical reasons alone the USSR would be disposed to avoid too active an assertion of its European pretensions. Blatant efforts to drive a wedge between the US and its European allies or excessive zeal in pressing for the withdrawal of the US military presence could damage Soviet policy toward both Western Europe and the US. For all the importance that Europe occupies in Soviet thinking, Moscow has at least as great an interest in "normalization" of Soviet-American relations and in shifting the competitive relationship onto a less dangerous plane. This is first of all because of the higher degree of safety in the strategic-nuclear relationship which continuing "normalization" would provide. But Moscow also hopes to benefit economically. Moscow's conflict with China supplies a further powerful impetus in the same direction. Thus, there are good reasons for the USSR to refrain from pressing too hard on vital US interests in Europe at this stage.

12. The Soviet leadership's understanding of what is meant by détente in Europe and what will ensue from it is clearly dissimilar to the view widely held in the West. Moscow's hostility to the notion of convergence—manifest in its harping on the dangers of "ideological disarmament"—is one measure of the limits which it places on détente. The détente now under way in Europe is not in the Soviet view (as it is in the view of some Westerners) a first stage in an extended process leading to a fundamental reconciliation between East and West in Europe. Moscow's pursuit of détente does stem, however, from its belief that tension in Eu-

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rope, in both the military and political aspects, no longer serves its domestic and international interests.

#### The Role of the Soviet Military Presence in Eastern Europe

13. By and large, its assessment of the process of change under way in Europe inclines Moscow to adopt a flexible attitude in approaching questions relating to Europe's political and military security. These interests and concerns, however, will no doubt continue to count for less with Moscow than the considerations which have caused it to maintain large forces in Central Europe throughout the postwar period. This presence has fulfilled three principal military and political functions: (a) to provide a defensive and offensive capability against NATO forces; (b) to preserve Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe; and (c) to give the USSR a position of military strength which is translatable into political influence with the West European states and with the US.

14. The USSR (like Tsarist Russia) has always been an important land power and has always kept a major part of its forces oriented westward. After World War II, the USSR had good reasons for maintaining substantial forces on its western frontier and within the borders of its allied states in Eastern Europe. By its recognized capability to seize Western Europe, the Soviet Army in the early postwar period provided a deterrent against use by the US of its superior strategic power. The Soviet leaders no doubt also felt militarily threatened by NATO from time to time, especially during the 1950s, when NATO had high force goals and when the US was installing a nuclear capability in Europe. Accordingly, they developed their ground forces and associated arms on the doctrine of achieving a strong and ready offensive capability—one designed to blunt any

NATO attack and to enable the USSR then to seize the initiative.

15. Although Soviet concerns of this kind have no doubt diminished, they continue to be reflected in the deployment of Soviet forces in the forward area. The present military mission of these forces is both to provide a defense of the USSR and the territories of the other Warsaw Pact states against attack from the West and to bring to a favorable conclusion any military conflicts which may occur. Soviet forces in East Germany are positioned so that they would be able to absorb the initial shock of a NATO attack, and to provide cover for mobilization and reinforcement. The structure of these forces also gives them a capability for conducting offensive operations in various contingencies: to spearhead a first assault, a counterattack, or a pre-emptive attack against NATO forces in West Germany.

16. The positioning of Soviet forces at the same time bears a definite relationship to the USSR's political requirements in Eastern Europe. Chief among these is the preservation of loyal Communist regimes. With its military presence the USSR demonstrates its commitment to the defense of these regimes against external and internal adversaries, while helping to discourage either the peoples of Eastern Europe or their governments from aspiring to independence. For these purposes, the Soviet military presence in East Germany is of particular importance. Soviet troops stationed there have been used to help deal with threats to Soviet political domination of Eastern Europe—e.g., most recently in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

17. Finally, the USSR's military presence is useful for its political-psychological impact on the Western states. Its forces need not be in a threatening posture in order to convey the message to the West that the USSR

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must be treated with respect and that the attitude it adopts is a critical factor in European security. At the same time, a high level of strength in conventional forces, like its strength in strategic-nuclear armaments, is an essential element in the USSR's image of itself as a superpower and gives the USSR a self-confidence which would be lacking if it felt itself in a position of military inferiority vis-à-vis NATO.

### III. PROS AND CONS FOR THE USSR CONCERNING NEGOTIATIONS ON MBFR

18. Considered within the framework of its broad aims and interests in Europe, East and West, the prospect of negotiations on force levels evidently arouses mixed feelings in Moscow. Détente itself, even within the limits the USSR seeks to impose on it, has begun to produce a fairly intricate pattern of East-West interactions in which Moscow sees some risks for the stability of its position in Eastern Europe. The Soviets might fear that engagement in MBFR negotiations would carry them further into unknown territory than they care to go. It is probably this sort of uncertainty that has prompted Soviet leaders to say on several occasions that they believe that MBFR will pose "complex" problems. Overall, the pattern of Soviet behavior to date suggests that all pertinent factors are being carefully weighed in Moscow and that the Soviets will prefer to operate with much caution and deliberation.

#### Principal Arguments For

19. There are a number of considerations which might cause the Soviets to feel that MBFR negotiations need not take a course which would be damaging to their interests, and, in fact, could give the USSR certain benefits. This would be a result, for example, if negotiations contributed significantly to ex-

pansion of the détente spirit and the kind of atmosphere in Europe which the USSR is trying to create. More particularly, by showing itself ready to discuss seriously the actual problems of European security, Moscow stands to strengthen its credentials as a responsible partner in all-European undertakings.

20. Moscow probably also supposes that MBFR will present far greater problems of coordination and cohesion for the Western Alliance than for its own. In large part, this is because of the anxieties many West Europeans experience about the validity for the future of the US nuclear guarantee, anxieties which have been made more acute by the dramatic confirmation through SALT that the US and USSR are in a position of mutual deterrence. The Soviets are aware that such fears would be accentuated if the West Europeans became convinced that the US was prepared to reduce its forces in Europe substantially without obtaining an adequate compensatory reduction from the USSR. But even if the US made it clear that it was aiming at a limited and controlled withdrawal, there would still remain, within the context of a negotiating process, ample grounds for differences among the Western Powers over the scope and terms of an agreement. These would be fed by West European suspicions that the US gives higher priority to obtaining relief from its military burdens than to Europe's security and that the US has a proclivity for superpower bilateralism which is insensitive to West European interests.

21. It can be assumed that the Russians have considered whether they might by agreeing to negotiations be doing the US a bigger favor than themselves. We do not know whether the Soviets think it likely that domestic pressures in the US for early reductions will persist and even grow, or are, instead, allowing for the possibility that they might be contained. They might suppose that they

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could at least hold out in negotiations against the kind of agreement which helps the US with this problem. But the Soviets nevertheless run the risk in engaging in negotiations that they might, contrary to their intentions, enable the US to pace its withdrawals and thus actually help the US to put its military presence in Europe on a firmer foundation.

22. In other respects, however, the Russians would be running little political or military risk in agreeing to a limited reduction of its forces. The effects of such a step on the internal security of the East European states could be minimized, since stationed Soviet forces are more than sufficient for carrying out this security function. And it may be that Moscow has become somewhat less touchy on this score as a result of the strengthening of East Germany's international position and success in the "normalization" of Czechoslovakia and is prepared to lay greater stress on non-military means of control in Eastern Europe.

23. With progress in détente, which has yielded West Germany's *de facto* acceptance of the division of Germany and its formal acknowledgement of Poland's western border, the Soviets can also afford to take a more relaxed view of the purported military threat from the West. They have, in any case, assessed this threat as declining. It is true that the Soviet conception of the missions of its forces in Central Europe and of the requirements for accomplishing them has been little altered since the mid-1950s: Soviet forces in Central Europe, except for those in Czechoslovakia, have been maintained near their present level since then. But if the USSR were to expect that NATO's strength was likely to diminish as Western governments began, under the influence of MBFR negotiations, to seek ways to reduce their military budgets—

they might conclude that their military mission in Central Europe could be accomplished by smaller forces.

24. Soviet leaders have cited their desire to reduce military costs as a reason for their interest in MBFR. Given the present needs of the Soviet economy, particularly those arising from difficulties in agriculture and the need to raise the output of consumer goods, there may be some truth in these assertions. A cut in the Soviet Armed Forces which made possible the diversion of scarce material and manpower resources to other purposes would doubtless help the Soviet Government to meet some of these needs. Present force requirements for the Sino-Soviet border, and those that might be anticipated for the future, provide a further reason for Soviet interest in MBFR. But on present evidence we do not believe that either of these factors is likely to have a vital bearing on Soviet decisions with respect to MBFR.

25. Unless its withdrawals from Eastern Europe were on a substantial scale and unless a large proportion of the withdrawn forces were demobilized, the USSR would probably stand to gain little economically. There would quite obviously be no savings at all for the Soviets—and possibly a net loss in economic terms—if it was simply a matter of transferring forces from Eastern Europe to the Sino-Soviet border. If forces were, on the other hand, moved from Eastern Europe to the western USSR, Moscow might save something. But this might not be much. Judging from what is known about the arrangements the USSR has with the East Europeans for paying for the costs of stationed Soviet forces, the cost to the Soviets of maintaining forces in Eastern Europe is not a great deal more than would be the cost of keeping the same forces in the western USSR. And though

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there is an effect on the Soviet balance of payments with the East European countries, this does not constitute a serious problem.<sup>5</sup>

#### Principal Arguments Against

26. While mutual reductions might appeal to the Soviets on some grounds, there are other compelling reasons why they would not. Especially with regard to any substantial reductions, questions would arise about consequences for the basic rationale for Soviet military deployments in Europe. It might be further argued in Moscow that with the establishment of strategic parity conventional forces have gained in significance. Military planners might also take the view that, since Soviet military doctrine now allows that at least the early stages of a war in Europe might be fought by conventional means, the need to maintain the offensive capabilities of Soviet theater forces is all the greater. The Soviets would see difficulties in providing for rapid reinforcement in any war situation—conventional or nuclear—but they would regard these as especially great in the latter case. There could, finally, be objections to creating a situation in which a greater role might have to be assigned to East European forces of questionable reliability.

27. The prospect of large mutual withdrawals would raise an additional set of questions for the Russians. A substantial reduction of US forces in Europe would have appeal for them on both political and military

<sup>5</sup>The USSR reimburses, at least partially, those Warsaw Pact countries where it has stationed forces for the local currency costs required to support them (living expenses, construction, maintenance, etc.). Rotation and supply of its forces is a further cost to the USSR. There is evidence, however, that the Soviets receive some offsetting compensation from the East Europeans in the form of favorable pricing of local expenditures and adjustments in the terms of bilateral trade.

grounds. But the Soviets have also expressed fear that a precipitate change in the European military situation could have destabilizing effects. They might see a danger, for instance, that such a change would shock the West Europeans into moving more firmly in the direction of achieving political unity and closer military cooperation. There would, of course, be particular concern in Moscow to limit the growth of West German power in Europe. The Russians would, moreover, be concerned that a large withdrawal of their forces, if this suggested a relaxation of the Soviet hold in Eastern Europe, would have an unsettling political effect there; they would also be apprehensive about the risk of impairing their ability to intervene quickly and decisively in the event they considered their control in the area threatened.

28. Proposals which called for sizeable mutual cuts which were larger for Warsaw Pact forces than for NATO's would be even less attractive for the Soviets. Soviet strategists would almost certainly perceive them as disadvantageous—a step in the direction of substituting a different military balance in Europe for the present one, with which they have no reason to be greatly dissatisfied. An additional objection would be that it would give the US a way of reducing its forces without greatly troubling the West Europeans and thus of reducing a potential source of friction in US-West European relations.

29. The instincts of the present leadership would probably incline it to shy away from a complicated agreement, even if there were not other objections. Although the initiative in policy, particularly European policy, has seemed lately to rest increasingly with Brezhnev personally, in important areas of policy there continues to be a large element of consensus-making and balancing of bureaucratic interests. In such a context, the nego-

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tiation of an MBFR agreement of a complex kind could create even greater difficulties of internal decision-making than SALT did.

30. Partly because of the experiences of World War II and lingering distrust of the Germans, the issue of force reductions will have emotional overtones for many Russians. The strong ground forces orientation of the Soviet military high command and its tendency to hold to traditional views regarding force requirements in Central Europe are a further brake on Soviet actions. In any case, the political leadership will be concerned that any MBFR agreement meet its test of "equal security" and imply no adverse alteration of the military balance. This would be especially important in obtaining the assent of Party conservatives as well as military leaders. On these grounds, proposals entailing large or asymmetrical cuts would be hard to sell. These same elements would no doubt also be highly sensitive on the issue of on-site inspection. The leadership's bureaucratic habits will dispose it to take sentiments of this kind into account.

#### How the Arguments Seem to Net Out

31. Taken together these considerations suggest that Moscow can envisage an MBFR negotiation, of a certain shape and outcome, from which it could obtain political advantages without suffering any loss in security. It would, however, value such a negotiation less for what it might yield by itself than for what it might do to complement other aims and undertakings. Where the correlation of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces was concerned, the USSR would want the agreement to go no further than to insure that, in the words of one Soviet writer, "the general balance that has emerged would be maintained at a lower level". Beyond this point—and if it became a question of large reductions or of complicated formulas concerning

the types of forces and the method of reduction—Moscow's interest in working for an early MBFR agreement would, more likely than not, sharply diminish.

#### The USSR's Stated Position

32. For the public record, Soviet spokesmen (mainly Brezhnev) have stated the USSR's position on MBFR only to the extent necessary to make its interest in negotiations seem plausible. This position is that discussion of force reductions should focus first on Central Europe, that reductions might include stationed and indigenous forces, and that they might apply to both troops and armaments. Various Soviet officials speaking privately and a small number of commentators writing in the Soviet press have spelled out the Soviet position in a little more detail. Certain of the USSR's attitudes have also been revealed implicitly in its diplomatic behavior. Together, these point toward what some of the elements in the USSR's initial approach to MBFR and its opening bargaining position will be.

33. It is reasonably clear on this basis that the Soviets think it likely that negotiations will, in fact, take place and that the negotiating process will be protracted. Although, as noted, they have stipulated that indigenous forces can be the subject of negotiation, they would prefer that foreign forces be the first subject of discussion and that, of these, US and Soviet forces be addressed first. The Soviets have not specified what they consider to be covered by the term Central Europe. This they evidently expect to be worked out in an early stage in the negotiations themselves. Enough has been said to indicate, however, that the Russians are not likely to make a serious effort to have the area of reductions confined to the two Germanys as was the case in proposals put forward by them in earlier years. They, of course, insist on the exclusion of the western USSR from the reductions

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area, but they give every sign of being willing to have Poland and Czechoslovakia included, and possibly Hungary as well. The Russians have not expressly rejected Romanian participation, but it is clear that they would like to keep Romania out of the negotiations, or, at least, so arrange matters that the Romanian role is merely nominal.

34. Much the fullest exposition of Soviet thinking on MBFR has come from one Yury Kostko, a member of the Institute for the Study of the World Economy and International Relations in Moscow, which may have some official role in Soviet MBFR studies. At any rate, Kostko is knowledgeable on MBFR and evidently speaks with the approval of higher authority. He has written a pair of articles on MBFR for his institute's journal in recent months and has discussed the subject at some length with Western diplomats in Moscow. Like every other Soviet who has spoken to the point, Kostko insists that the USSR will not accept asymmetrical reductions. He contends that the military balance in Central Europe is not one-sided in favor of the USSR. He maintains that the correlation of forces in Central Europe should not, in any case, be considered apart from the total correlation of NATO and Warsaw Pact forces world-wide. And he alleges that, in view of US air transport capabilities and the fact that the USSR is obliged to deploy a large part of its armed forces in Soviet areas far removed from Central Europe, the USSR does not enjoy a geographical advantage and this should not be a factor in MBFR. Moreover, Kostko argues that Pact advantages in some force elements are offset by NATO advantages in others, such as aviation and tactical nuclear weapons. Kostko, however, sees little early promise in a mixed-package solution to the problem of equivalence, since "at present there are no objective coefficients for comparing different types of arms". The

line of argument taken by Kostko seems, in other words, to aim at an initial agreement under which the two sides would make roughly equal cuts in roughly the same force elements.

35. The Soviets are undoubtedly fully familiar with at least that much of the work on MBFR problems within NATO as is public knowledge—and probably more. Some aspects of various NATO model-building studies are known to them and there is reason to think that they are also aware of certain of the negotiating options being discussed in NATO. But beyond the fact, revealed by the said Kostko, that the Soviets have themselves done some work on reduction models, some of which cover nuclear weapons, we do not know how far Moscow has gone in actually confronting major issues which may arise in negotiations. The Soviets have, for example, given little or no indication, publicly or privately, of what their approach will be to the question of the phasing of reductions or on verification and control, which have been elements in NATO's publicly stated criteria for negotiations since 1970. While some of the Soviet reticence is no doubt deliberate, it can also be inferred that the Soviets have not followed the same pace or the same route as NATO in their preparatory work. It is quite certain, in any case, that discussions on MBFR between Moscow and its Warsaw Pact allies have so far been largely rudimentary. The tempo of consultations seems now, however, to be picking up.

#### IV. THE GENERAL SOVIET NEGOTIATING POSTURE

##### In the Preliminary Talks on MBFR

36. Even if the Soviets were not somewhat behind in clarifying their thinking and positions on MBFR, they would want to see the substantive content of the forthcoming pre-

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liminary talks held to a minimum, in order to enable them to edge up to the negotiation rather than moving directly to the center of it. This was their approach in SALT. In the case of MBFR talks, an early joining of issues might be particularly inconvenient for the Russians in view of their strong desire to get a CSCE launched. If, for example, the opening up of discussion revealed that there was a substantial gap between the Western and Eastern attitudes toward MBFR, as it might well do, there could be some rethinking among the Western countries about CSCE. Many of them would want CSCE to undertake a fuller discussion of concrete security issues than the Soviets would want. And to insure that the Soviets would be obliged to do something through MBFR to compensate for benefits they are seeking through CSCE, there would be greater determination among the Western countries to maintain the "linkage" between MBFR and CSCE which Moscow would still like to break.

37. Although the Soviets want the preliminary talks to be confined mainly to questions of procedures and agenda for the formal negotiation, these questions will themselves raise certain issues of substance. The Western invitation to Hungary to participate in these talks already poses something of a problem for the Soviets: whether by agreeing to this now they will be helping the Western side to establish a larger area for Pact reductions. A possible course for the Russians is to go along with having Hungary present, while making it clear that the principle itself should be negotiated subsequently. Another issue which is likely to come up early in discussion is how the negotiations will be formally designated. The Soviets can be counted on to argue vigorously that when the Western side refers to "balanced" reductions it means asymmetrical reductions, that this prejudices the outcome of the negotiation, and that use of the term is therefore unacceptable. Since the US

has already indicated that it is willing to accept a more neutral description if necessary and since the Allies would probably be unwilling to see the talks break down over this issue, the Soviets stand a good chance of winning their point.

38. East-West differences over the formulation of an agenda may, however, produce some heavy going. The Soviets will want this to be as general and non-committal as possible. The agenda which many of the Western Allies want to put forward entails six categories for negotiation: (1) the geographic area to be affected; (2) phasing (of negotiations and of any reductions agreed to); (3) general principles underlying MBFR; (4) constraints (e.g., advance notification of movement of forces, limitation on their size, and limitation on the duration of their stay in a constraints area); (5) forces and size and method of reduction; and (6) verification.

39. Each of these items has some potential for difficulty with the Soviets. The verification question is, of course, a particularly sensitive one with them. They are hardly likely to take the position that it is not, in principle, a legitimate subject for discussion in the negotiations, but they may oppose having it treated as a separate item. The item on constraints will be at least as delicate for the Soviets. The position that some on the Western side want to take—that constraints could be taken up in negotiations apart from and even in advance of reductions—is contrary to the long-established Soviet position that reductions must come first. This consideration aside, the Soviets would recognize that the introduction of constraints proposals into the MBFR context could open up the issue of their freedom of military action in Eastern Europe.

40. There will thus be ample grounds for contention between East and West in the preliminary talks. The way it comes out will

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obviously depend, on the one hand, on how hard the NATO Allies press their points and, on the other, on how far the Soviets in the face of Western pressure believe they can carry their resistance without undermining their objectives in CSCE. We think it likely that both sides will want to find ways to prevent their differences from leading to a stalemate at such an early juncture. On the question of constraints, for example, the Allies might agree to an agenda item formulated in a way which would tend to disguise the issue; the Russians might, in effect, agree to postpone the debate to the negotiations proper.

#### In the Actual Negotiations

41. Assuming the initial talks are limited largely to procedure and produce agreement to proceed, the first phase of the negotiations would be largely exploratory in nature. This would involve the exchange of pronouncements by the two sides concerning the general principles and objectives which each believed the negotiations should serve. The aim would be to enable each side to size up the other's intentions and seriousness. This might be followed by further efforts to discover whether the premises for an agreement existed before real engagement on MBFR issues and options began.

42. The Soviets have frequently indicated that they foresee a long process of negotiation, and they have stated a preference for proceeding by small steps. They probably expect MBFR negotiations to move at a slower pace than SALT has, if only because of their multilateral character and the greater intricacy of their political ramifications. The problem of establishing the comparability of the forces to be controlled—more difficult in MBFR than in SALT—will introduce a further complication. But, beyond these considerations, the Soviets may feel a good deal

less urgency about achieving progress in MBFR than in SALT simply because the potential impact of technological advances on the US-Soviet military balance seems less in this case than in that.

43. For purposes of establishing an initial bargaining position and as a means of encouraging the Western side to make concessions later on, the Soviets might, once the feeling-out phase had ended, come forward with proposals which would go well beyond what they want or expect in an agreement. They might, for example, indicate that they would be willing to discuss a 30 percent reduction on both sides and that it would be appropriate to include nuclear forces among those to be considered for reduction. Allowing for some kind of tactical maneuver such as this, we would, nonetheless, expect the Russians to look to the US and its allies to take the lead in negotiations. They would, in effect, treat the Western side as the demandeur with respect to MBFR and place on it the obligation of presenting its considerations and options for them to respond to.

44. At least in the early phases of negotiations, we would not expect the Soviets to display such an attitude as would raise doubts about the seriousness of their interest in a successful outcome. They might, therefore, check their inclination to score propaganda points. This does not mean, however, that they would give up the tactical advantages which would accrue if they could provoke disunity among the Western Allies. They will almost certainly make efforts at establishing a special superpower dialogue. The USSR would do this anyway out of a belief that certain kinds of business can best be transacted between the principal parties involved, itself and the US, but it would also look to the chance of causing mischief between the US and its allies. There are some within NATO—their resentment of any hint of super-

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power bilateralism apart—who think that the US might be too ready, because of domestic needs, to close a deal with the Russians which would reduce forces without regard to the effect on European security. The Russians know this. And they are particularly aware of and would not be averse to exploiting in MBFR the anxieties that Europeans experience whenever there is talk about negotiations affecting US nuclear forces in Europe.

#### V. THE STANCE OF THE EAST EUROPEANS

45. While, as might be expected, the USSR's East European allies have been generally diffident about making their views on MBFR public, enough is known about these to suggest that their perspectives are not in all cases identical with the USSR's. Nor do the East Europeans as a group see the issues in exactly the same light. But, the Romanian position excepted, the divergence within the Warsaw Pact appears, at this stage in the development of its position, to be relatively slight and not such as would create serious problems of coordination for the Soviets in negotiations. Especially is this the case with those East European states which seem most likely to be seated at the negotiations.

46. The Romanians seem intent on claiming full participation and if present would almost certainly make trouble for the Russians in many ways. They could be expected to argue, among other things, for involving a greater number of small states in the negotiations, thus reducing the effects of intra-Bloc discipline, and for extensive measures of the sort which would constrain the USSR from applying military pressures on Romania. But for these very reasons, the Soviets, with general support from the other, more discreet East Europeans, will want to keep the Ro-

manians on the sidelines, where they will be able to do no more than keep up a running commentary on the play of the game.

47. The East European states most likely to be represented at negotiations (East Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary) have hitherto followed the Soviet lead on MBFR and will probably be content to continue to do so. There seems to be no great enthusiasm among them for MBFR, but few serious misgivings either. Poland seems likely to take a more active role than the others; Warsaw has traditionally been more interested in nuclear arms control than in troop reductions. East Germany has from time to time in the past shown signs of nervousness over the prospect of force reductions. Czechoslovakia would obviously like to see Soviet forces on its territory withdrawn, but the Czechs seem hardly likely to press the Soviets on the matter. Hungary would evidently like to play a role in any aspect of European détente and Budapest would probably like to see Soviet forces on its territory reduced. The East Europeans have, by and large, a greater interest than the Soviets now do in an agreement embracing indigenous as well as foreign forces because this would enable them to make some cuts of their own. Some of these East Europeans would also be glad to see the introduction of the kinds of collateral constraints which would limit the movement of Soviet forces on their territories. It seems doubtful, however, that they would be willing to assert themselves or take issue with the Russians on this question during negotiations. Another issue which could produce divergence between Moscow and the smaller states might be the matter of verification arrangements. The USSR is more likely to agree to inspection in Eastern Europe than in the USSR and this could cause resentment in one or another East European state.

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## VI. POSSIBLE SOVIET POSITIONS ON VARIOUS ISSUES AND OPTIONS

48. In considering in the following paragraphs what the particular elements in the Soviet negotiating position might be, we take it as likely, in view of what was said in paragraph 43 above, that these would emerge piece by piece by way of comment on the options presented by the West. The details of the latter are, as indicated, not yet fixed, but enough is known about them to suggest the kinds of issues the Russians will have to deal with.

### The Area of Reductions

49. If the Russians have not already conceded the point, the question of the reductions area would have to be addressed early on in the negotiations. We believe that, if the Russians were going to balk at acceptance of the so-called NATO guidelines area (the two Germanys, Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the Benelux countries) as a beginning, they would already have given some indication to this effect. The main issue could therefore become whether the USSR will agree to the addition of Hungary. There is some chance that Moscow will hold out on this point. Moscow may be reluctant to enlarge the reductions area on the Pact side. The Soviets may believe they could insist on the exclusion of Hungary unless NATO offered some *quid pro quo*. Alternatively, they might argue that Hungary could be allowed a place at the negotiations but that its eventual inclusion in the reductions area would be conditional on the precise nature of whatever agreement is reached. From the Soviet point of view, its participation might be seen as analogous to that of the NATO flank states.

50. Another and quite different issue could arise. The USSR might be reluctant to settle upon a definition of the reductions area which

would at the outset exclude NATO aircraft beyond it from consideration at some stage. In any case, the Soviets would almost certainly resist inclusion of Soviet territory in a reductions or constraints area.

### The Conditions for Reductions

51. The Soviets can be counted on to insist from the start that asymmetrical reductions are non-negotiable. The issue is bound to arise early in connection with discussion of general principles. The two sides would no doubt readily agree that the results of the negotiation should assure "undiminished security" for both. It will be immediately apparent, however, that the implications of the term are quite different for each. For the West, it means that some way must be found to offset what is regarded as the USSR's geographical advantage, otherwise the West's security will have been weakened. Authoritative Soviets, including Kosygin, have on the other hand, defined the term as meaning that there should be no change in the *relative* strength of the opposing military forces in Central Europe.

52. The common ceiling approach to reductions—under which forces on both sides would be reduced to an identical specified level—would encounter the same Soviet objections, since this would, in fact, also involve asymmetrical reductions. There is only one known case in which a Soviet has not rejected the idea of asymmetry out of hand. [

] said that it might be possible to make a "political decision" on equal percentage reductions "which could be spelled out by experts in a way which, while defined as equal, might in fact be considered by the US as appropriately asymmetrical". Enigmatic as it is, this remark seems to refer at most to a cosmetic effect. One possibility, for example, might be a reduction of three Soviet motorized rifle divisions vs. two US mechanized divisions: asymmetrical

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as to number of units but approximately equal as to number of men. Other possibilities would be mixed packages of various sorts—a subject discussed in paragraph 56, page 17.

53. There are a number of reasons for the USSR's emphasis on symmetry. There is its insistence on equality of treatment in all dealings with the West. Beyond this, though the Soviets obviously appreciate that the geography of the situation favors them over the US, they may question whether this factor by itself would give the Warsaw Pact a meaningful advantage over NATO. Their assessment of the present balance of forces in Central Europe is probably considerably different from the assessment commonly made in the West. To support its objections to asymmetrical reductions in Europe, Moscow will take the position that the balance in Central Europe is governed by a whole range of factors, the exact weight of which cannot be readily established. The Soviets will stress, among other things, NATO's capabilities to concentrate and apply the forces available to it world-wide. And for purposes of establishing the balance they would almost certainly insist that French forces in Germany would have to be taken into account. Moreover, the Soviets would, we believe, give greater emphasis than NATO does to West Germany's mobilization capability. The Soviets would thus take exception to some of the premises and certain elements in the data base on which the Western side's proposals were predicated.

#### Types of Forces and Method of Reduction

54. In considering the types of forces subject to withdrawal the Soviet preference would presumably be that reductions in ground forces be made on the basis of complete front line units (battalions, regiments, divisions); this, rather than reductions by thinning-out or through the paring of non-

divisional support units. This method would have the advantage of leaving undisturbed the basic force structures and readiness levels which the Russians have shown great reluctance to tamper with in the past. It would have the further virtue, from the Soviet point of view, of reducing the problem of verification and inspection. We are less sure that the Russians are ready to confront the questions which air force reductions would pose. There would be concern lest such reductions seriously affect Pact capabilities to carry out wartime air missions. Current Soviet aircraft, because of certain of their operational characteristics (e.g., relatively short radius, limited loiter time, and restricted bomb-carrying capacity), require forward basing to achieve maximum effectiveness. At the same time, the Soviets would welcome a reduction of NATO's nuclear capabilities and would, therefore, like to see high-performance US aircraft withdrawn. Moreover, the Soviets would, in the case of aircraft withdrawals as in the case of withdrawn ground forces, have an advantage over the US in terms of return times.

55. The Soviets have, as noted, accepted the principle that reductions can apply to indigenous as well as stationed forces. This position makes MBFR more palatable not only to some of the NATO countries but also to some of Moscow's allies. But it is fairly clear that the Soviets are chiefly interested in an agreement which would cover, first of all, US and Soviet forces. Neither would they have any reason to object in principle to the proposition that reductions should be phased in scope and timing, though this would imply negotiation of the kind of extensive and complex agreement that the Soviets would argue lies somewhere in the future. And, sooner rather than later, the Russians might raise questions about just what kind of phasing the Western side has in mind.

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56. The Soviets would probably not reject in principle the idea of mixed-package reductions involving the trade-off of one force element against another. One suggestion ]—that there might be a prior political decision on percentage magnitude of reductions while leaving it to experts to flesh out details later—could foreshadow a Soviet tactic in response to proposals for mixed-package trades. Nevertheless, the Soviets have indicated their appreciation of the extreme difficulty of establishing equivalence between disparate force elements. Moscow probably does not see much prospect for agreement on mixed packages, particularly complicated ones, at least in the early stages of negotiation.

#### Collateral Constraints

57. It might be a mistake to assume that, simply because the Soviets have always been tepid about arms control measures, they would refuse to accept collateral constraints in MBFR. Indeed, Moscow might have some of its own to propose, such as restrictions on exercises near frontiers or prohibition of movements of nuclear weapons. The Soviets would probably recognize, in addition, that an unforthcoming position in this area of negotiations would not go down well with the West Europeans, most of whom attach great importance to it.

58. Nevertheless, the Soviets will resist Western efforts to introduce extensive collateral constraints. The Soviet military would no doubt object to such constraints as an infringement on their freedom of action in deploying and training their forces. More importantly, the Soviet leaders would be unwilling to accept limitations which would impair their ability to move military forces freely and rapidly into Eastern Europe in times of emergency. In addition, the Soviets would in all likelihood take the position that such con-

straints as might be agreed to would be applicable only in the reductions area itself—in no case being extended to the western USSR—and that consideration of constraints of a complicated kind would have to be put off to a later stage of negotiations.

#### Verification and Inspection

59. There is little reason to suppose that the Soviets have relaxed their long-standing antipathy to the kinds of verification measures which are by their lights intrusive and which they allege would create open season for espionage. This attitude is shared by their East European allies. Almost certainly, the Warsaw Pact side will argue strongly that the requirements of verification and inspection should be met to the fullest extent possible by "national means". If the Soviets thought an attractive agreement was available we think it possible, however, that they would make some concessions with regard to inspection arrangements, by, say, granting the Western Military Liaison Missions (MLMs) in East Germany and Western military attaches in Poland and Czechoslovakia somewhat greater latitude. But the East German Government would almost certainly resist any effort to give the MLMs, which they have long objected to as vestiges of the occupation period, a broad new role and function.

#### Other Issues

60. There is reason to believe that the Soviets would for now prefer to keep the issue of US forward-based systems in the SALT forum, if only because they might expect it to be more effectively addressed there than in MBFR negotiations. Nevertheless, it can be expected that they will raise the nuclear issue in MBFR, partly in order to play on West European anxieties and perhaps also as a device for cooling the West's interest in expanding the scope of negotiations beyond simple reductions.

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61. As to some other issues which might arise, the USSR would resist proposals to permit a thinning-out of units on the Western but not on the Eastern side. The USSR would, in addition, almost certainly want to retain flexibility in the disposition of its withdrawn forces, thus remaining free to keep them in the western USSR, move them to Asia, disband them, or do some combination of the three. Moscow would probably envisage that stationed forces would take their equipment with them as they withdrew, and the Soviets might resist suggestions that the West be permitted to pre-position the equipment of withdrawn units in the reductions area. The Soviet Union's allies would be unwilling to destroy equipment of reduced indigenous forces but might accept some constraints on its disposition.

#### A Preference for the Slow, the Small, the Simple

62. It should be clear from the foregoing that, in our view, the outcome the Soviets would prefer to move toward, at least at the end of the first stage of negotiations, is one which would have the virtue of providing both equality and simplicity. Given the total political and military framework, including relevant domestic considerations, the Soviet leaders would be unlikely to opt for an elaborate or far-reaching agreement. A token reduction (e.g., on the order of five percent of US and Soviet ground forces or perhaps of NATO and Warsaw Pact ground forces) might suit them best as a first step.<sup>6</sup> They have probably concluded, however, that clearly token cuts would not be acceptable to either the US or its negotiating partners. This being so, the next best outcome from

<sup>6</sup> In the latter case, the Soviets would welcome having US forces take much or all of the NATO cut; if it were a case of all, the reduction of US forces could amount to 20 percent.

the Soviet point of view might be an agreement along the following lines: a limited and equal percentage reduction of stationed ground forces, say, 10 percent on each side, taking the form of a withdrawal of complete units and accompanied by a minimum of collateral constraints and verification provisions.

63. The Soviets seem to believe, rightly or wrongly, that the US would be content with, or might feel obliged to accept, a first-stage agreement of this general nature. We do not know what allowance they make for the existence of sentiments within NATO favoring a more elaborate agreement on quite different terms or for the impact these might have on the Western negotiating position. But they do evidently have reason to suppose that an agreement acceptable to them is obtainable, or that, failing this, they can make a plausible enough negotiating record so that they can escape responsibility for the failure of negotiations.

64. The Soviets would probably be willing to see some further piecemeal agreements emerge from any follow-on negotiations. How far they would be prepared to go in time might depend to a large extent on whether they felt increased confidence in the strength of their political position in Eastern Europe. The progress of SALT would also be an important factor: at some point, we believe, the Soviets will want either through SALT or MBFR, and possibly both, to obtain undertakings from the US respecting its nuclear forces in Europe.

65. Unless the USSR's European policy takes a sharp turn away from its present course, the Soviets would in all likelihood want the negotiating process to continue, in any case, because they would see advantages simply in being present in such a forum. This might be so even if, as presently seems the

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case, they have no particularly well-thought-out long-term disarmament objectives and might see some danger in involving themselves in an intricate web of negotiations. They would certainly reckon that, in the event negotiations were very protracted and

were bringing no substantial results, the pressures on the US to carry out unilateral withdrawals would mount. In such circumstances, they might even try to prime the pump by carrying out small unilateral reductions of their own.

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