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POLADS(71)45

MEMORANDUM

To: Political Committee

From: Chairman

MBFR: DIPLOMATIC TALKS DURING THE PERIOD
FROM 30TH MARCH TO 30TH JUNE, 1971

As agreed, I am circulating herewith an analytical summary of all the documentary material received from Delegations covering the statements made by leaders and diplomats of the Eastern-bloc countries in the course of talks between them and various Allied statesmen and diplomats between 30th March, the date of Mr. Brezhnev's speech to the 24th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and 30th June.

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N A T O C O N F I D E N T I A L

MBFR: DIPLOMATIC TALKS DURING THE PERIOD
FROM 30TH MARCH TO 30TH JUNE, 1971

PREFACE

1. A considerable number of talks, at many different levels, are summarised below. One point that emerges is that the USSR did not consult any member of the Warsaw Pact before Mr. Brezhnev defined his attitude to MBFR in his speech on 30th March. During the following three months, the members of the Alliance made it clear that they wished the Soviet Union and its allies to clarify their intentions concerning MBFR, following the Tiflis statement. Leading figures in the Eastern-bloc countries were contacted and gave their Western interlocutors some information, but it was relatively limited and very repetitious.

2. In general, the Eastern countries attempted to present the MBFR proposals as a Soviet initiative and tried to make the most of this attitude for propaganda purposes. Although the Lisbon Communiqué was given a relatively favourable reception, criticism was levelled at NATO's allegedly unenthusiastic response to Mr. Brezhnev's proposals. One of the most frequently repeated criticisms was that the members of the Alliance were not prepared to embark on MBFR negotiations in the near future. Allied emissaries were therefore frequently urged to put forward "concrete proposals" or to make a "suitable response" to the Tiflis speech.

3. In these conversations, the USSR and its allies endeavoured to show that they attached great importance to force reduction problems, which for them were one of the essential factors of European security. They would therefore have preferred the question to be studied after an agreement had been reached at a CES, since, according to certain statements, one of the motives which allegedly prompted the USSR to contemplate MBFR negotiations outside the context of such a conference was the unlikelihood of one being held in the near future. Eastern spokesmen expressed similar views on this matter, although some of them consider that a CES and MBFR negotiations are interconnected, and this would in their view imply that a decision to embark on the one would entail an agreement on the possibility of holding the other.

4. By and large, the conversations showed that there is unanimity on certain matters:

- (a) negotiations might cover foreign and national forces although, as regards procedure, the possibility was mentioned of discussing them separately, beginning with the first, and not discussing the second until later;

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- (b) these negotiations might embrace conventional and nuclear weapons;
- (c) it was not possible to obtain any clarification of the limits of the geographical area covered by the expression "Central Europe"; one Soviet spokesman mentioned the two Germanies, while others appeared to refer more or less to the area proposed in the Rapacki plan;
- (d) there was a general refusal to conduct exchanges of view through "exploratory negotiators" acting on behalf of NATO or the Warsaw Pact; the reason given was the desire to avoid any procedure which might lead to "bloc-to-bloc" negotiations;
- (e) there was also wide-spread suspicion of the term "mutual and balanced reductions", which was regarded as a Western concept intended to justify "artificially" the use of delaying tactics. Explanations based on the Rome Declaration were neither understood nor accepted;
- (f) in these circumstances, there was little likelihood of receiving a positive answer to the question whether the four points contained in the Rome Declaration might be adopted as a basis for negotiation. With regard to the last two points, most of the Eastern representatives argued that they should not be discussed in the course of preliminary contacts but should be placed on the agenda for the negotiations proper.

5. The distinctive attitude of certain countries is worth noting. Thus, Poland said it was especially interested in the contribution it might be able to make to security as a result of the thorough study of nuclear disarmament problems which it had begun several years previously. Rumania and Yugoslavia expressed general satisfaction with the Lisbon Communiqué, and thought the possibility of negotiating force reductions was a very valuable point. The former country strongly urged that MBFR be regarded as a step towards total disarmament. Both were extremely hostile to any procedure which would encourage "bloc-to-bloc" negotiations, their main fear being that this might lead to an arrangement between the two super powers.

6. On 30th March, the Secretary General of the CPSU, addressing the 24th Party Congress, referred to disarmament problems. Over and above his call for a conference of the five nuclear powers, he proposed that efforts be intensified

to halt the armaments race, dismantle foreign bases, and work out measures to reduce the danger of war. He also said he stood for "a reduction of armed forces in areas where military confrontation was especially dangerous and, above all, in Central Europe"(1).

7. On the occasion of the visit by Mr. Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister, to the USSR, Mr. Ford, Canadian Ambassador in Moscow, had a talk on 22nd April with Mr. Gromyko(2), during which he sought clarification of the Soviet views on MBFR. Mr. Gromyko said that only when the Western Governments had reacted to Mr. Brezhnev's proposals would it be possible for the Kremlin to go into the problem in greater detail.

Mr. Ford replied that it was "difficult to give a reaction" without knowing exactly what the First Secretary of the CPSU had meant. In reply to a question by the Canadian diplomat, Mr. Gromyko said that discussions on MBFR could just as well take place in the context of a CES as in the context of general discussions on disarmament, "or in a separate way"; the main thing was to approach the question seriously.

8. In order to draw public attention to his remarks on MBFR at the 24th Congress, Mr. Brezhnev broadcast a statement from Tiflis on 14th May, 1971, the main passages from which are as follows:

"Some of the NATO countries show an obvious interest, and even nervousness, where a reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe is concerned. Their spokesmen ask: whose armed forces - foreign or national - and which armaments - nuclear or conventional - are to be reduced? ... Don't these curious people resemble someone who tries to judge the quality of a wine by its appearance, without tasting it? If something is not clear to anybody, we are ready to make it clear..... Translated into diplomatic language, this means starting negotiations."

9. On 17th May, the United States Ambassador in Moscow, Mr. Bean, was granted an interview with Mr. Gromyko(3) to seek clarification of the Soviet attitude towards MBFR. The Soviet Minister regarded as "positive" the fact that a favourable reference was made in the Lisbon Communiqué

(1) See POLADS(71)36

(2) See Note by the Canadian Delegation dated 3rd May, 1971

(3) See Note by the United States Delegation dated 18th May, 1971

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to the possibility of a CES. Although MBFR might be included in the agenda for the latter, he said he agreed with the Western view that this subject be considered in another forum, which, according to him, would have the merit of simplifying discussion at the European Security Conference. He criticised and expressed reservations concerning the word "balanced". In certain circumstances he felt this concept might to all intents and purposes prevent force reductions. Finally, Mr. Gromyko thought that the United States interest in MBFR discussions was "a positive indicator" and he was prepared to press ahead with consultations.

The United States Ambassador said in reply that his Government was "not attached to any particular forum". He read out to Mr. Gromyko the statement attached to the Rome Communiqué, indicating that "this was the rationale for the use of the term "balanced", which protected both sides".

10. On 27th May the Soviet Ambassador in Bonn handed a memorandum to the German Government(1). This document devotes one paragraph to the discussions on MBFR, which might take place either "within the framework of a body which should be established by a CES ... or in another framework"(2); it appears to draw some kind of distinction, at least with regard to procedure, between "stationed" and "foreign" forces. Finally, Central Europe is referred to as being a particularly important area.

11. On 19th May, 1971 the Netherlands Ambassador at large visited Belgrade where he was handed a memorandum dealing with the various issues which, it was considered, should be discussed at a CES. This document is somewhat laconic on the subject of MBFR and can be summed up as expressing the hope that possible negotiations on this problem should be envisaged as a first step towards general and complete disarmament.

12. Assistant Secretary of State Hillenbrand and Soviet Ambassador Dobrynin conferred together in Washington on 28th May, 1971(3). They discussed a CES and East-West relations, but reference was also made to MBFR. Mr. Dobrynin repeated the familiar Soviet line that his Government would be very flexible over the choice of a possible negotiating body. He confirmed the importance attached by the Kremlin to the problem of MBFR since, he said, a solution would contribute towards a relaxation of military tensions, as Central Europe was an area where any confrontation would be particularly dangerous.

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- (1) cf. note by the German Delegation dated 15th June, 1971
(2) cf. POLADS(70)50
(3) cf. Note by the United States Delegation dated 1st June, 1971

In answer to Mr. Hillenbrand's enquiries, the Ambassador confirmed that the USSR accepted that MBFR discussions might take place prior to a CES, and that it was prepared to discuss all proposals which might be made regarding this question, which should concern both national and foreign troops. When asked whether the USSR accepted the four Rome principles as a basis for discussion, Mr. Dobrynin said he had received no instructions on the matter; an ad hoc committee might discuss this point, as well as the list of countries which should be included in the Central Europe zone.

13. Polish Deputy Foreign Minister Winiewicz visited Acting Secretary of State Irwin in Washington on 4th June(1). Their talks were devoted entirely to problems connected with a possible CES. There was only a passing reference to MBFR to the effect that Poland had always felt itself bound to help promote collective security in Europe, especially by contributing to disarmament problems.

14. On 8th June, 1971, Mr. Tsarapkin called on Sir Alec Douglas-Home, the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, in London(2): Mr. Tsarapkin stressed the distinction to be maintained between "national" and "foreign" forces, while confirming that his Government was prepared to consider proposals for the former.

15. On 9th June, 1971, Mr. Roger Seydoux, the French Ambassador in Moscow, called on the Soviet Foreign Minister. In the course of his comments on the Lisbon Communiqué, Mr. Gromyko expressed satisfaction at the flexibility which it evidenced, but said it was impossible to link together the various problems concerning East-West relations, as they must be dealt with separately. He added that his Department was reconsidering the overall problem of force reductions.

16. Mr. Brezhnev, Mr. Podgorny and Mr. Kosygin delivered election speeches on 11th, 10th and 9th June, 1971, respectively. Their references to MBFR can be summarised as follows(3):

Mr. Kosygin said the Soviet Union had "taken an important initiative in the interests of ensuring European security" by proposing to begin talks on the reduction of armed forces in Central Europe. It was ready to make such reductions, always provided that the NATO countries "showed in practice a serious attitude" which would enable progress

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- (1) cf. Note by the United States Delegation dated 16th June, 1971
 - (2) cf. Note by the United Kingdom Delegation dated 10th June, 1971
 - (3) cf. POLADS(71)36

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to be made towards the solution of this problem, which was essential to the cause of peace. Thus, the Tiflis proposal might lead to a complete transformation of international relations in Europe.

Mr. Podgorny said the Soviet proposals for the reduction of armed forces and armaments which might remove the danger of a military confrontation in Central Europe had evoked great interest throughout the world. The Soviet proposals were clear-cut and, in order to test the intentions of the parties concerned, negotiations must begin without delay. He also said that world opinion rightly considered that an agreement on this question, together with other measures for the limitation of nuclear weapons, might make it possible to halt the armaments race, thus allowing increased resources to be diverted to economic development.

Most of Mr. Brezhnev's speech was devoted to the question of armaments and he expressed the greatest confidence in Soviet military power. He then accused the United States of attempting to apply different standards to problems of national security and to those concerning the strategic armaments programme and the development of the Navy. The Secretary General of the CPSU refrained, however, from criticising the United States as strongly as he did in his address to the 24th Party Congress. This seems to be the first time that Mr. Brezhnev has alluded to the navies of the great powers and put forward the idea of solving the problem by negotiations on an equal footing. He repeated the Tiflis appeal and said he noted with satisfaction that NATO had been obliged to consider this problem in Lisbon. He ended by saying that the USSR had received no answer to its specific proposals concerning both national and foreign forces; no further details of this matter were given.

17. The Canadian Ambassador in Moscow, Mr. Robert Ford, called on the Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Rodionov(1) on 10th June. The Canadian diplomat said that on 11th June Mr. Kosygin had seemed to imply, when commenting on the Lisbon Communiqué, that no adequate reply had yet been made to the Tiflis proposals. Mr. Rodionov repeated Mr. Brezhnev's views and added that he hoped NATO would make "some concrete proposals". The ambassador pointed out that the West had long wished for such discussions to take place but that, although Mr. Brezhnev's speech did contain an idea, the terms in which it was couched could not be regarded as constituting a proposal. Mr. Rodionov agreed. He said that force reductions and a CES could not be separated and that, when the latter was convened, agreement would have to be reached at the same time about discussions on force reductions. He said there should be no illusions about the

(1) cf. Note by the Canadian Delegation dated 16th June, 1971

complexity of reaching agreement on troop reductions, but this was a most necessary task and, after all, it was no more complicated than SALT, which was eventually making progress. In answer to a question by the Canadian Ambassador, Mr. Rodionov said he had no clear idea about the possible mission for an "omissary" but that he thought contacts were always desirable in any form.

18. Mr. Ansteensen, of the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had talks on 14th and 15th June with the Acting Foreign Ministers of Hungary and Rumania(1).

In Budapest, Mr. Pujá said that NATO seemed "far from ready" to negotiate about MBFR, owing to its own internal differences of opinion, especially with regard to the French position. He also alleged that, although NATO had raised this problem three years ago, it had not yet made any concrete proposals. Furthermore, the terms "mutual" and "balanced" needed to be clarified, and since negotiations could not be started without a concrete basis, it was for NATO to make proposals.

In reply to a question by Mr. Ansteensen, the Acting Foreign Minister said it was difficult to dissociate MBFR from a CES, in other words, readiness to discuss the first problem presupposed that agreement had been reached on convening the Conference. This did not mean that the Warsaw Pact countries were not prepared to consider any other concrete proposals on procedure if they might lead to results. Finally, he said that "foreign" troop reductions could certainly be envisaged, but that proposals about "national" forces might also be discussed.

19. In Bucharest, Mr. Gliga said his Government would have liked force reductions to be down on the agenda of a CES, and the wording of paragraph 7 of the Budapest Memorandum reflected the lengthy discussions which had taken place on this subject. For Rumania, "in any other form acceptable to interested States" meant that all European States were in fact "interested". In this connection he again mentioned, as he had already done when referring to a CES, his Government's misgivings about "bloc-to-bloc" negotiations, which were likely to mean talks between the two super powers.

20. The Canadian Representative on the Political Committee, speaking at the Committee's meeting on 29th June, reported that Mr. Manescu, the Rumanian Foreign Minister, when visiting Ottawa from 15th to 18th June, had stressed that his Government's fundamental aim was complete disarmament and that MBFR could only be regarded as a step in the right direction. However, so long as the final aim had not been achieved, his country would remain a member of the Warsaw Pact.

(1) cf. Note by the Norwegian Delegation dated 29th June, 1971

21. The Director of Political Affairs at the French Foreign Ministry visited Bulgaria and Rumania on 23rd June. In Sofia, the Foreign Minister, Mr. Bashev, told his French visitor that he was not acquainted with the limits of the geographical area which Mr. Brezhnev had in mind when he had spoken of "Central Europe". On the other hand, the Soviet proposal, as he saw it, was made against the background of the proposal contained in the Rapacki Plan.

In Bucharest, Mr. de Beaumarchais met Mr. Gliga, the Deputy Foreign Minister. According to the latter there had been no consultation between Moscow and Bucharest prior to the statements on MBFR made at the 24th Congress and at Tiflis. The Rumanian Minister again mentioned his fears, which he had already expressed previously through various of his Government's spokesmen, that the MBFR negotiations would in fact become a confrontation between blocs, or even result in an arrangement between the two super powers.

22. A number of official comments were recently reported from Eastern countries in connection with the communication through diplomatic channels, and on behalf of the Italian Foreign Minister of the Lisbon Communiqué to the governments in question(1). In addition, the United States and German Delegations obtained a certain amount of information in the course of talks with Soviet, Polish and Yugoslav officials.

Soviet Union: When officially handed the Lisbon Communiqué, Mr. Kossyrev asked for an explanation of the word "balanced". The Italian Ambassador made it clear that this concept did not conceal any precondition for negotiation and was used simply to describe a position which the member countries of NATO regarded as a valid one. Mr. Kossyrev replied that any negotiation on MBFR would be difficult without French participation, and that France seemed less hostile to a discussion than to bloc-to-bloc negotiation. He also said that in his view an agreement on MBFR was primarily an element of European security which in turn was the general aim of the conference proposed by the Soviet Union.

Various Soviet commentators, particularly on the radio, have proved extremely knowledgeable about the different principles underlying MBFR mentioned in the NATO Communiqués. However, the fact that NATO's proposals in this sphere date back in the first instance to the signals sent out at the 1968 Reykjavik conference is deliberately ignored. One of the criticisms levelled at the Lisbon Communiqué is that the Alliance has failed to reply in a clear and positive way to Soviet initiatives on the reduction of forces.

(1) See Note from the Italian Delegation dated 24th June 1971

Poland: Speaking in a personal capacity, the Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Willman, in his conversation with the Italian Ambassador, showed definite interest in NATO's MBFR proposals. He thought that they should be very carefully examined. He added that the Warsaw Pact proposals were still valid and that he would wish them to be studied in greater detail. He stressed the need for an agreement on nuclear weapons and pressed for the ratification of the Non-proliferation Treaty, particularly by the German Federal Republic. He also expressed a keen interest in obtaining details of the exact procedure which the NATO countries intended to adopt in their contacts with the Warsaw Pact countries.

Czechoslovakia: The Italian Ambassador concluded from what was said to him by Mr. Trhlik, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, that the Prague Government had been taken unawares by the Soviet move on MBFR negotiations last Spring. After putting a few questions for his own information he simply gave a vague outline of what are now familiar positions.

Hungary: The Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Puja, speaking on behalf of his Government, conveyed to the Italian Ambassador his regret that the NATO countries had not followed up the definite offer of negotiation made by the Warsaw Pact countries. He said that his attention had been caught by the term "mutual and balanced force reductions", and expressed his concern lest this term should have been adopted by the NATO countries in order to gain time by phasing the preparation of the negotiations.

Rumania: The Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Gliga, told the Italian Ambassador that he had gained a favourable impression of the way in which mutual and balanced force reductions were referred to in the Lisbon Communiqué. He hoped to examine them in detail and recalled that his Government was in favour of dealing with this problem within the framework of a CES in which all the European countries, the United States and Canada, would participate.

Yugoslavia: The Lisbon Communiqué was handed to the Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr. Tepavac, who simply informed the Italian Ambassador of his satisfaction that inter-European consultation was now contemplated. In addition, Mr. Nincic, Advisor on European Affairs at the Yugoslav Foreign Ministry, informed the German Chargé d'Affaires of his Government's interest in the ideas concerning the CES and MBFR contained in the Lisbon Communiqué. In his view, NATO's position on the latter was a constructive one and he approved the expression of the need for a careful study of Soviet intentions. He was more reticent over the possible designation of an explorer, believing as he did that this procedure would in the normal

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course of events be followed by bloc-to-bloc negotiations which his country was against and over which it felt considerable concern. His Government hoped that the negotiation on MBFR could be conducted within the framework of the CES, as the best means of preventing this negotiation from becoming a dialogue between the two super powers.

23. On 23rd June, 1971, Mr. Deschamps, the Belgian Ambassador in Moscow, had a long talk with the Soviet Foreign Minister on the subject of MBFR(1). Referring to Mr. Brezhnev's speech, Mr. Deschamps told Mr. Gromyko that, in the opinion of the Belgian Government it must first be established, before a start was made on negotiations, that there was a sufficient identity of views to warrant the despatch of a mission to begin the exploratory talks.

The Soviet Minister agreed on the need for reflection before the start of negotiations but expressed the hope that any "artificial delay" or "precondition" could be prevented. His Government considered that a short and general reply was sufficient for the present. The definition of the plan of approach to the problem or considerations about the quest for an agreement could be tackled later during exchanges of views between the governments concerned. More light had been shed on certain aspects of the Soviet position:

- (a) force reductions could apply to indigenous as well as stationed forces;
- (b) as regards procedure, bloc-to-bloc discussions should be avoided. The fact that force reductions primarily affected countries that were members of a bloc was not incompatible with this point of view;
- (c) the Soviet Union thought that the CES would be unable to cope with the inclusion of MBFR in its agenda. A forum in which to conduct the negotiations could be designated by a CES, or by any other procedure.

The Minister's attitude towards the concept of "balanced reductions" was extremely wary. He asked for explanations which could satisfy him that this term was not being used as a screen for delaying tactics. The Belgian Ambassador replied that the explanation was contained in the Rome Communiqué: any agreement must be compatible with the essential interests of the signatory powers and should not confer any military advantage or disadvantage on either one side or on the other.

(1) See Note by the Belgian Delegation dated 30th June, 1971

Mr. Gromyko ended by saying that he was agreeable to bilateral exchanges of views insofar as these could further negotiations.

24. Mr. Klosson, United States Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow, had talks on 23rd June with Mr. Korniyenko, Head of the United States Division at the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs(1). Mr. Korniyenko took a negative view of negotiations on a bloc-to-bloc basis conducted by a representative or group of representatives of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. These would have the disadvantage of making the talks look like a bloc-to-bloc tête-à-tête at which in any case the NATO representative would be unable to speak for France. Be that as it may, the participants in any negotiation should represent the States concerned. He side-stepped the question of how the Soviets defined "Central Europe" and refused to be drawn on whether the Soviet Union had undertaken any preliminary work such as model-making.

To Mr. Korniyenko, the concept of "balanced reductions" sounded like a precondition and he would prefer it to be discussed at the negotiations themselves. He added that the Soviet concept of the word "armaments" included nuclear weapons and that insofar as "verification" was concerned his Government's position was unchanged.

While he saw value in bilateral approaches, he was interested to know how fast NATO would be able to move in reaching the negotiating table.

As regards the other member countries of the Warsaw Pact, he said that he was not competent to explain their position.

25. Sir Dennis Greenhill had several talks with Mr. Kossyrev, Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister, between 23rd and 27th June(2). The Soviet Deputy Minister accused NATO of trying to delay the negotiations. Sir Dennis pointed out that the Soviet Union had taken three years to react to the Western proposals and that there were no "preconditions" to negotiations on MBFR. Mr. Kossyrev again explained his Government's position which was, on the one hand, that it would be preferable for negotiations to be separate from a CES and, on the other hand, that the initial talks should not be conducted by "explorers" lest they assume the character of an exchange between two military blocs. He repeated comments he had already made in earlier diplomatic exchanges as regards Soviet acceptance of treaties on national and foreign forces and as regards the Kremlin's

(1) See Note from the United States Delegation dated 24th June, 1971

(2) See Note from the United Kingdom Delegation dated 30th June, 1971

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misgivings over the term "balanced reductions". On this last point, Mr. Kossyrev refused to be convinced by Sir Dennis Greenhill's arguments and added that in any case this was a concept which should be discussed during the negotiations proper.

26. Mr. Vorontsov, the Soviet Chargé d'Affaires in Washington, was received, at his request, by a State Department official on 25th June(1). Mr. Vorontsov claimed that the United States was not really ready to negotiate on MBFR and had been caught off its guard by Soviet acceptance of the Western proposals. He said that negotiations should begin as soon as possible and even this year. He added that the USSR was seriously interested in reciprocal force reductions in Europe.

He repeated now familiar objections to the term "balanced" but when asked by the State Department official whether he would accept "unbalanced" reductions, his reply was obviously negative. He explained however that the concept, as used by NATO, implied something unequal and it was this that troubled the Moscow authorities. In reply to the United States official who pointed out that the withdrawal of troops to the Soviet Union was quite a different matter from repatriating them across the Atlantic, he said he had always been impressed by the United States airlift capability.

When asked what the Soviet Government had in mind in referring to "Central Europe", Mr. Vorontsov suggested the two Germanies. The State Department official pointed out that the geographical area of the Rapacki proposals suggested other territorial boundaries.

Referring to past discussions within the framework of SALT on the problem of "verification", the United States official asked whether a similar principle could not be applied to reductions of land forces in Central Europe. If not, the implication would be that the Soviet Union changed its attitude depending on the problem at issue. Mr. Vorontsov replied that the Soviet attitude towards observers conducting inspections in Europe, but outside the USSR, was different from its attitude towards "foreign intrusion" into the USSR.

27. At the end of June the Head of the German Trade Mission in Sofia had a conversation with Mr. Minchev, Head of the Planning Division of the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry(2). Mr. Minchev would not admit that the initiative

(1) See Note from the United States Delegation dated 1st June, 1971

(2) See Note from German Delegation dated 2nd June, 1971

on mutual and balanced force reductions had come from the West. He claimed on the contrary that this initiative came from the Socialist countries as long ago as 1956. In his view, those countries would have preferred to discuss MBFR at a CES but since this now appeared to have been put back it was natural that Mr. Brezhnev should have taken his recent initiative with regard to the reduction of forces. When asked whether the Soviet Union had consulted with its allies before the statements made in the Spring, his reply was sufficiently evasive as to indicate that this had not been the case. It transpired from replies to questions by the German chargé d'Affaires that there had been no joint studies so far by the members of the Warsaw Pact on force reductions but that on the other hand each individual country had considered the various issues involved.

28. The Director General of Political Affairs at the Italian Foreign Ministry had a series of talks with Mr. Marco, Czech Foreign Minister and Mr. Thrlik, Deputy Foreign Minister in Prague on 25th and 26th June(1). Mr. Marco was of the opinion that negotiations on force reductions should start as soon as possible. He also upheld the view that all other East-West negotiations should be conducted in parallel.

Mr. Thrlik emphasised the importance which his Government attached to the problem of force reductions and gave the impression that Soviet studies on this subject were only just beginning to be examined jointly by the Warsaw Pact member countries as a whole. Mr. Thrlik was doubtful about the advisability of monolithic representation (consisting either of one or of a group of persons) in the conduct of the exploratory talks. He was anxious to know at what stage in the preparatory work the East Germans would be authorised to participate.

(1) Note from the Italian Delegation dated 6th June, 1971