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WORKING PAPER  
AC/276-WP(72)19

MUTUAL AND BALANCED FORCE REDUCTIONS WORKING GROUP

THE SOVIET ATTITUDE TO MUTUAL AND BALANCED  
FORCE REDUCTIONS

Note by the Staff Group

The attached United Kingdom paper "The Soviet Attitude to Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions" has already been distributed to Ambassadors and Military Representatives to NATO. In distributing the paper, the United Kingdom Authorities expressed the view that this appraisal of the Soviets' attitude will be of interest as background material to the work currently being undertaken by the MBFR Working Group and its sub-groups.

2. There are some interesting comments and views in the section "Confronting the West" (Part II, paragraphs 14-19) which develop a theme previously discussed by the Working Group in the context of the Balanced Ceiling Concept(1) and the Interpretation of Balanced Force Reductions(2). The discussion extends to the scale of Soviet forces which the Soviets regard as necessary in Central Europe and assesses (paragraphs 20-23) the sort of reductions the Soviets might afford in this region.

3. It is believed that the MBFR Working Group will wish to note and discuss this UK paper, and its relevance to the continuing examination of MBFR options and possibilities. This note will therefore be included in the Agenda of an early meeting of the Working Group.

NATO,  
1110 Brussels.

This document consists of: 1 page  
Annex of: 18 pages

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- (1) AC/276-WP(71)8(Revised Draft)  
(2) AC/276-WP(72)3

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THE SOVIET ATTITUDE TO MUTUAL AND BALANCED  
FORCE REDUCTIONS

PART I

Introduction

1. The aim of this Report is to examine Soviet attitudes to Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) in Europe, and to assess Soviet motives behind their recent response on MBFR. Although the Report concentrates on the military factors involved, we also discuss economic issues, and place our assessment against the overall politico-military background, and the Soviet Union's past and present European policies. We do not attempt in this paper to make predictions about negotiations on MBFR, or on the way in which the Soviet Union might conduct its side of any talks which might be held on this subject with the West. However, we do consider some goals which the Soviet negotiators might have in mind if talks were to be held.

Summary and conclusions

2. Although the Soviet Union had made repeated calls for mutual force reductions and nuclear-free zones in Europe during the 1950s and 1960s, Western attempts to promote negotiations were ignored until 1971, when Brezhnev began to raise the subject as a part of the new Soviet policy on Europe. The Soviet position on MBFR today is that the Soviet Government is prepared to enter negotiations with the West without pre-conditions, favouring a bilateral approach (including Soviet-American negotiations) rather than alliance-to-alliance talks (paragraphs 2-4).

3. We believe that this Soviet response to NATO initiatives must be seen against the background of the long-term aim of the Soviet Union to alter the balance of power in Europe to the advantage of the Soviet Union. The Russians hope to reduce American force levels in Europe, and ultimately to bring about the weakening of the American guarantee of West European security and the fragmentation of NATO's defence structure. The Russians are also anxious to increase their influence in Europe through a Conference on European Security (CES) (paragraphs 5-6).

4. When considering MBFR against this background, the Russians will take political, military and economic factors into consideration. For political and military reasons, the preservation of the existing pro-Soviet Communist régimes in Eastern Europe is a top priority Soviet requirement and the Soviet Union will wish to retain forces there sufficient to keep these régimes in power. Military requirements will lead the Russians to deploy adequate forces in Eastern Europe to hold the borders of the bloc against a NATO attack, or to take pre-emptive action against a NATO threat. We believe that the actual level of forces deployed by the Soviet Union will depend on the Soviet Government's view of the forces needed to carry out these three tasks (paragraphs 7-8).

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5. We estimate that in Soviet eyes the task of preserving the East European régimes can be carried out by a minimum of 16 divisions, of which 6 would be needed in East Germany. Partly because the Soviet leaders rate NATO capabilities higher than we do ourselves, we assess that they would not wish their forces in East Germany (which faces the only area from which they believe a major surprise NATO attack might come) allocated to a confrontation with the West to fall below 12 divisions. Taking these two tasks together, it is our view that the minimum which the Soviet Union would wish to retain in Eastern Europe in present circumstances would be 28 divisions, compared with the present total of 31, of which 18 would be deployed in East Germany. The Russians could therefore see room for a cut of 3 divisions from Eastern Europe, 2 of which would come from East Germany and 1 from Czechoslovakia. Should the Russians wish to retain the option of embarking on all-out offensive against the West, their forces would as at present have to be reinforced from the Soviet Union. We do not believe that a present need to reinforce the Far East against China is a significant factor in the current Soviet interest in talks on MBFR in Europe (paragraphs 9-25).

6. We have considered possible economic motives and have noted recent Soviet statements on their desire to make economic savings through MBFR. Our information is not good enough to allow us to say how important a motive this is in Moscow, although we recognise that the Soviet leaders have genuine resource allocation problems and would wish to keep defence expenditure in bounds. We calculate that in present circumstances a cut of 10 per cent in the forces in Eastern Europe (i.e. 3 divisions) would mean a saving of less than 1 per cent in overall defence expenditure, and savings from any likely cut-back in the production of conventional armaments as a result of MBFR would be very small. If MBFR were to mean no more than partial withdrawal of Soviet forces from Eastern Europe to the Soviet Union, the saving would be even less (paragraphs 26-29).

7. The Soviet Union probably places its present moves on MBFR in the context of its current European policy which involves the calling of a CES. A response to the NATO initiative on MBFR helps to promote the Soviet Union's peace-loving image, and is designed to lead to a psychological atmosphere in the West conducive to the slackening of NATO ties and the reduction of the credibility of the American guarantee of West European security (paragraphs 30-33).

8. We cannot at this stage predict how the Soviet Union would react in the course of actual discussions on MBFR to possible packages offered by NATO, or what packages she might put forward herself. Soviet propaganda statements have rejected Western concepts of calculating reductions on an asymmetrical basis. Nevertheless, we believe that the Russians may be prepared to negotiate seriously if the West is not driven off course by a Soviet propaganda campaign, and that they would pay particular attention in any offer to the number of American formations likely to be withdrawn to the United States (paragraphs 34-35).

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9. We therefore conclude:
- (a) The recent Soviet response on MBFR is to be seen against the background of the current Soviet "peace offensive" in Europe, and of Soviet long-term aims to alter the balance of power in Europe to the advantage of the Soviet Union.
  - (b) The Soviet Union's particular aims in this field are the weakening of the political and military cohesion of NATO, the withdrawal of American forces from Europe and the discrediting of the American guarantee of West European security.
  - (c) Soviet force levels in Eastern Europe will always depend on the Soviet leaders' view of the forces needed to preserve the pro-Soviet Communist régimes in Eastern Europe, defend Eastern Europe against NATO attack and take pre-emptive action against NATO in the event of war.
  - (d) In line with these requirements, the Russians could make a cut of 3 divisions from their total of 31 divisions at present deployed in Eastern Europe. This means that the Russians have 3 divisions which they could either withdraw unilaterally, as a gesture, or offer to the West to secure, among other things, the maximum reciprocal withdrawal of American forces from Europe. The Russians would need to reinforce from the Soviet Union if they wished to retain the option of an all-out offensive against NATO.
  - (e) Although the Soviet Union continues to reinforce its Far Eastern borders, we do not think that this requirement is at present a significant factor in current Soviet interest in talks on MBFR.
  - (f) The Soviet leaders are always anxious to keep defence expenditure in bounds and to look for savings; but our calculations of the savings to be expected from cuts in forces and weapons likely to be considered by the Soviet Union suggest that these would be very small. MBFR, which might mean no more than a partial withdrawal to the Soviet Union, is therefore unlikely to be regarded in Moscow as a source of substantial economies in Soviet defence expenditure.

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- (g) No prediction is possible at the present stage of how the Soviet Union would conduct its side of any negotiations on MBFR, or would react to offers by NATO of a number of detailed packages on force reductions. While propaganda and the creation of a psychological atmosphere in the West favourable to unilateral force cuts by NATO are an integral part of Soviet policy on MBFR, the Soviet Union is probably prepared to negotiate seriously with the West, particularly with the Americans, on this subject within the general framework of current Soviet policies in Europe.

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PART II

MAIN REPORT

Introduction

1. The aim of this Report is to examine Soviet attitudes to Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR) in Europe, and to assess Soviet motives behind their recent response on MBFR. Although the Report concentrates on the military factors involved, we also discuss economic issues, and place our assessment against the overall politico-military background and the Soviet Union's past and present European policies. We do not try to make predictions about MBFR negotiations themselves, or on the way in which the Soviet Union might conduct its side of any talks which might be held on this subject with the West. But we do consider some goals which the Soviet negotiators may have in their minds if talks were held.

Politico-military background

2. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s the Soviet Union made repeated calls for mutual force reductions and nuclear-free zones in Europe, emphasising especially the withdrawal of non-European forces from Europe and the closing down of foreign military bases. Western attempts, such as the Reykjavik Statement of June 1968, to promote negotiations were ignored by the Soviet Union until the subject was raised by Brezhnev with increasing emphasis in speeches made at the 24th Party Congress in March, in Tbilisi in May, and in his constituency in June 1971.

3. The declared Soviet position now appears to be that the Soviet Government is prepared to enter into negotiations with the West on MBFR in Europe without preconditions. Both foreign and indigenous forces may be discussed, but the Soviet attitude to reductions in indigenous forces, though important, is not yet clear. On the whole, the balance of evidence indicates a Soviet emphasis on reductions in foreign forces. As far as method is concerned, the Soviet Union does not favour an alliance-to-alliance (NATO-Warsaw Pact) approach. The Russians have, indeed, suggested in bilateral exchanges with the Americans, that negotiations might be conducted bilaterally between the Soviet Union and the United States, each side reporting back as appropriate to its allies. President Nixon's visit to Moscow in 1972 could be an opportunity for such talks. But the Americans have told NATO that they have firmly rejected these Soviet proposals.

4. There are a number of inconsistencies in the Soviet attitude, resulting partly from a fairly sudden change of line on MBFR, and we cannot rule out the possibility that differing views within the Soviet leadership may be involved. But we believe that the Russians' military priority is to reduce or eliminate the presence of American forces in Europe, and therefore they are likely to continue to favour a direct approach to the United States on this subject.

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5. In order to assess the significance of this belated Soviet response to NATO initiatives, we look first at the overall political background and then at the basic Soviet requirements to maintain forces at a high level (at present 31 divisions) in Eastern Europe outside the USSR. We emphasise here that we make no claim to direct or inside knowledge of Soviet concepts or intentions; we base our assessment on general studies that have been made on Soviet foreign and military policies, on papers that have been circulated in NATO on MBFR (e.g. C-M(71)55), and on published Soviet statements (see Appendix A).

6. We believe that the long-term aim of the Soviet Union in Europe is to alter the existing balance of power to the advantage of the Soviet Union. In order to do this the Soviet leaders want to bring about reductions in the level of American forces in Europe, leading to their ultimate withdrawal to the United States, and the abandonment or at least the weakening of the credibility of the American guarantee to West European security. It is also our view that one of the main purposes of current Soviet political moves in Europe is to encourage disruption in the West and the fragmentation of NATO to hinder the further development of the European Economic Community (EEC) into the political and defence fields, and to increase Soviet influence in the area, e.g. through a CES. We believe that the present Soviet response on MBFR is to be seen against this aspect of Soviet policies towards Europe.

7. In formulating its policy on MBFR the Soviet Union will pay particular attention to its three main reasons for keeping troops in Eastern Europe. The preservation of the existing pro-Soviet Communist régimes and of the existing territorial status quo in Europe, especially the division of Germany, is a top priority Soviet requirement. It includes the capability to intervene militarily in member countries of the Warsaw Pact if the political supremacy of the ruling Communist Party appears to the Soviet Union to be threatened. Then there are the military requirements which involve both defence and offence. In the first instance, the Russians want to provide forward defence against a NATO ground or air attack and to protect the Soviet frontiers as far to the west as possible. Secondly, Soviet military doctrine holds that in the event of war, the Soviet forces in Eastern Europe, reinforced from the military districts of Western Russia, should be able to take pre-emptive action against NATO. We believe that the Soviet Union regards the deployment of considerable numbers of forces in certain sectors of the forward area (particularly in East Germany) and the logistic and other facilities which support them as essential to the fulfilment of their tasks in war.

8. We believe that the actual level of forces deployed by the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe will depend upon the Soviet Government's view of the forces needed to carry out these three main tasks. This means that the Soviet leaders will pay great

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attention to their view of the threat to political stability in Eastern Europe, including the effect on the stability of any East European Government from whose territory Soviet troops might be withdrawn. They will also pay attention to the strength of NATO forces and to possible American policies on unilateral force reductions from Europe. There is, accordingly, in theory at least, some room for manoeuvre on Soviet force levels in Europe. But we are convinced that the Soviet Union, in accordance with its traditional tendency to over-insure in military matters, will wish to deploy overwhelming force at the outset in any situation in the area to which the Politburo decides to apply military power.

Force calculations

9. We examine the relevant considerations on force levels, under two headings:

- (a) The preservation of pro-Soviet régimes in Eastern Europe.
- (b) Forces required to confront the West in Europe.

We cannot provide firm evidence on what the Soviet Union might regard as essential under either heading, but we believe that there are some principles, based on a study of Soviet behaviour in Eastern Europe since the war, which may help us to form realistic judgments.

The preservation of pro-Soviet régimes in Eastern Europe

10. Soviet forces have intervened (or threatened to intervene) on four occasions in East European countries since the death of Stalin: in East Germany in 1953, in Poland and Hungary in 1956, and in Czechoslovakia in 1968. From an analysis of the Soviet forces involved in these interventions, and from the level of forces deployed in these four countries since then, we believe that as far as the preservation of the East European régimes is concerned, one of the main Soviet criteria is ease of access for Soviet forces in the event of a political decision being made to intervene. In Soviet thinking, the number of Soviet divisions needed for this task is probably related not only to the size and record of loyalty of the country concerned, but to its geographical proximity to the Soviet border.

11. Thus, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Romania border directly on the Soviet Union; Poland and Romania in particular have open frontiers across flat terrains, relatively near Soviet forces, served by good communications. Partly no doubt, for this reason Romania has no Soviet garrison, though Romania's independent policies and her stand against the stationing of troops abroad have also played a part in keeping Soviet troops out of Romania. In addition, Romania has, of course,

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no frontier with a NATO or neutral country other than Yugoslavia. Poland has only 2 Soviet divisions, both deployed in the former German territories in the west of the country. Hungary and Czechoslovakia, against both of whom Soviet military action has been taken, have a garrison of 4 and 5 divisions respectively. There was no Soviet garrison in Czechoslovakia before the military intervention in 1968, and the Soviet garrison in Hungary was much smaller before the Budapest rising; the size of the Soviet forces at present in those two countries therefore probably reflects Soviet doubts of their political loyalty. Bulgaria has no common frontier with the Soviet Union, but her impeccable loyalty to the Russians has clearly saved her from having a Soviet garrison.

12. The most interesting case is that of East Germany which has 20 Soviet divisions stationed on its territory. The events of 1953 and later have shown that a revolt in East Germany is possible, and both history and geography suggest that a revolt there could be more serious for the Russians than a revolt anywhere else in Eastern Europe. Moreover, Soviet forces in East Germany could be called upon to play a multiple rôle in the preservation of the pro-Soviet régimes in Eastern Europe; to suppress an East German rising, and hold the western border of East Germany against a possible NATO or West German intervention; to contribute to the suppression of a revolt in Czechoslovakia, as in 1968, or in Poland, as might have happened in October 1956 or in December 1970 had the Polish riots got out of hand and threatened the stability of the régime. The Soviet garrison in East Germany also has to allocate forces to contain West Berlin: in particular, to retain tight control in the Berlin area during periods of tension directed against the Western access routes.

13. On the basis of this analysis, and taking into consideration methods by which the Russians could reinforce their garrison in East Germany without using Polish territory, e.g. air and sea lift, and the employment of airborne forces stationed in Western Russia, we believe that the Soviet Union would probably regard a force of about 6 divisions as the minimum garrison necessary in East Germany to fulfil the tasks outlined in paragraph 12. For similar tasks in Hungary and Czechoslovakia the Russians would probably wish to retain their present garrison in Hungary, but might be ready to reduce their force in Czechoslovakia by 1 division; it is unlikely that they would take either of their divisions out of Poland. We therefore assess that for the purposes of the preservation of the pro-Soviet régimes in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union would require a minimum of 16 divisions. We emphasise that this figure does not take into account the Western military position (except in the one case of the need to protect the western border of East Germany during the suppression of a rising there) the strength of NATO, or Soviet views on NATO's capabilities and intentions, and we now turn to an analysis of these military factors.

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Confronting the West(1)

14. In the following paragraphs we attempt to assess how the Soviet leaders view the relative military capabilities of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, the rôles that they allot to their forces, and from that try and assess what scope they see for possible reductions. We base our assessments on general studies we have made over the years of Soviet military equipment, their military training, their mobilisation and general alert measures and what we perceive to be the military "philosophy" of the Soviet Service chiefs.

15. We consider that the Soviet leaders rate the military capabilities of the NATO forces far higher than we do ourselves. They do not see NATO's military capability limited only to those forces assigned to the central region, but include in their assessment of the relative force capabilities of all NATO's forces (active and reserve) not only on the continent of Europe but also in the United States, the United Kingdom and elsewhere. They put considerable value on the French forces and their independent nuclear capability, as well as on NATO's forces on the northern and southern flanks. The Soviet military leaders, many of whom have experience of fighting the Germans on Russian soil in the last war, still mistrust the West's motives, and see hostile intent in many of our defensive and precautionary measures. They therefore see all the forces of the West, whether assigned to NATO or not, as composing the total potential threat, and being by nature cautious, prepare for the worst case.

16. We believe that because the Russians are so excessively suspicious and take so little at its face value, they probably labour under a number of misconceptions about NATO. They have detailed and accurate information on NATO (which is much greater than ours on the Warsaw Pact), but they may not always appreciate the extent of their knowledge; they may therefore incline towards over-estimation of NATO's technological achievements and under-estimation of the effects of the Warsaw Pact's quantitative superiority. They may also believe that the United States has much more direct control over the affairs of NATO than is in fact the case. They are probably convinced that NATO forces are capable of taking the offensive against Eastern Europe at relatively short notice. We believe that they do not see the gross imbalance between the forces of the two alliances in the area as readily as we do. At Appendix B we show in outline the actual imbalance as seen by NATO.

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(1) We have no firm evidence on which to base a distinction between the views of the Soviet political and military leaders on the the problems raised in this section. Unless otherwise specified we use the term "Soviet leaders" to indicate both the Politburo and their military advisers, and we assume that the Politburo's views prevail in the event of disagreement between them.

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17. We consider that the Soviet forces' deployment in Eastern Europe is strategically defensive, but, as noted in paragraph 7, the Russians would wish to retain the option of seizing the military initiative against NATO in the event of war. As is to be expected for reasons of political presentation the scenarios of their major exercises are defensive in nature as are the rehearsals of their mobilisation and general alert measures. Most of these major exercises follow a sequence of NATO aggression, possible escalation to nuclear conflict and then Soviet conventional or nuclear counter-offensive action. Therefore, although the Soviet forces are defensive in strategic terms, their tactics are generally offensive in design.

18. A large proportion of the Soviet forces is deployed around the periphery of the Soviet Union, to meet potential threats from all quarters. We believe that in the event of extreme tension the Soviet military leaders would be reluctant to reinforce the central region in Europe from these peripheral areas. Therefore, we assess that the only forces readily available to reinforce the central region would be those in the Western Military Districts (Baltic, Belorussia and Carpathia) and in the theatre reserves in the Moscow and Kiev Military Districts.

19. Bearing in mind our assessment of the Soviet leaders' view of the imbalance, we next attempt to estimate the different rôles that they see their forces fulfilling, and what forces they allot to each. We consider only the forces in the "Guidelines Area", i.e. the Benelux countries, East and West Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia, as well as France and the Soviet Western Military Districts. We have taken the number of divisions in each area from NATO document MC 161/71. As difficult and tentative as such an assessment must be, we have come to the following conclusions:

- (a) The total ground forces that the Soviet leaders will see as available for commitment in the central region are 54 Soviet and 28 Non-Soviet divisions in the Non-Soviet Warsaw Pact (NSWP) countries and the Soviet Western Military Districts, with another 10 Soviet divisions in the theatre reserve: a grand total of 92 Warsaw Pact divisions facing, by M+21 day, 31 NATO divisions.
- (b) We have assessed, that the Soviet leaders are extremely unlikely to embark on an all-out offensive against the West unless they are first satisfied that the cohesion and resolution of NATO are seriously weakened. However, in such an eventuality, the Soviet military leaders will insist upon a minimum force ratio in their favour of 3 to 1, and may not be prepared to guarantee their political masters success unless they can assemble a force advantage above this. Therefore if the Soviet leaders wish to retain

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the option of launching an all-out offensive against the West, they will see no room for force reductions. Indeed the forces facing West would have to be reinforced from elsewhere, even if they make the unlikely assumption that all NSWP forces are as loyal and effective as their own.

- (c) If, however, the Soviet leaders only see a need to retain sufficient forces facing West to meet a major NATO attack, or to take limited pre-emptive action to thwart such an aggression, then they may well consider the 92 divisions in the central region sufficient, particularly if they estimate that they can count on the loyalty of most of the NSWP forces. Indeed they might see room for a small reduction (see paragraph 20 below) for they will appreciate that they should get warning of a major NATO offensive in time to reinforce the central region from elsewhere.
- (d) The Soviet leaders will see a need to keep sufficient forces forward in the NSWP countries to contain without prior reinforcement a NATO surprise attack. They will appreciate that the threat of such an attack only lies opposite East Germany, for elsewhere they would get advance warning of NATO's forward deployment and that only 23 NATO divisions are in a sufficient state of readiness to launch such an attack. They will also fear that such an attack is most likely at a time when their forces are heavily committed to internal security and when the loyalty of the NSWP forces is largely in doubt. The Soviet military leaders will therefore insist upon keeping sufficient Soviet divisions free of all other commitments and ready at a moment's notice to meet such a threat, and will insist that a force ratio of more than 2:1 in NATO's favour is unacceptable to them. This means a minimum of 12 Soviet divisions in East Germany for the confrontation with the West, free of all other commitments.

20. In sum, then, we believe that the Soviet leaders accept that to launch offensive operations against NATO or to meet large-scale NATO aggression, they will have to reinforce their forces deployed in peacetime in the NSWP countries. Bearing in mind the speed with which such reinforcement can be carried out, a limited reduction in these forces will not affect their ability to carry out these rôles, particularly if the reduced forces are withdrawn to Soviet territory and not disbanded. We also believe that the Soviet leaders see the primary tasks of their forces in the NSWP countries as the preservation of the pro-Soviet régimes and a counter to a NATO surprise attack; that separate forces must be allotted to these two rôles and that for neither task can they count on the loyalty of the NSWP forces. Our conclusion

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is that in East Germany, the Russians see a need for 6 Soviet divisions for the preservation of the régimes, and 12 for the confrontation with the West, and therefore see room for a possible reduction of at most 2 Soviet divisions. As we have already assessed the possibility that the Russians might be prepared to take only 1 division out of their garrisons in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, we now conclude that on military and politico-military grounds the Russians are likely to regard as possible a reduction by 3 divisions at the most in all the Soviet ground forces at present stationed in Eastern Europe, i.e. a reduction of about 10 per cent.

21. We believe that these 3 divisions could be considered for withdrawal by the Soviet Union in a number of ways: 1 or more of them could be withdrawn unilaterally as part of a Soviet gesture to sow dissension within NATO, to increase pressure on the Americans to withdraw and to improve the Russians' peace-loving image; or to reinforce the Soviet bargaining position prior to, or during MBFR talks; or in response to Western proposals as part of a negotiated package. We cannot at this stage predict how, if at all, the Soviet Union might exploit this margin, but we believe that on the Russians' present assessment of their military needs, they would be very unlikely to consider withdrawing more than 3 divisions from Eastern Europe, whether as part of an MBFR agreement or otherwise.

22. Soviet statements have generally emphasised Central Europe, but the Russians have also spoken about the problem of naval forces in the Mediterranean and Northern waters in a manner which indicates that they might wish these to be included in any discussions of force reductions in Europe. We assume that they exclude Soviet territory from their calculations.

23. We have considered the question of the future status of any divisions withdrawn from Eastern Europe and transferred to the Soviet Union. We have no evidence to indicate whether the Soviet Union would be likely to retain these divisions in Western Russia as part of the forces available to reinforce the central region (possibly downgraded in category), transfer them to other parts of the Soviet Union, or disband them. The only precedent we have is the status of the 4 divisions withdrawn unilaterally from East Germany and Romania in the 1950s, 2 of which were retained at a lower category in the theatre reserves (1 later being transferred to the Far East) and 2 were disbanded. However, we cannot be sure that this pattern would be followed in the event of withdrawals in the present situation.

24. We have also looked at the possibility of assessing Soviet intentions on reductions in armaments, as mentioned recently by both Brezhnev and Kosygin: we have in mind nuclear weapons held in Europe, and "mixed trade-offs", e.g. tanks versus aircraft.

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We do not believe that we have enough evidence on Soviet thinking on this subject to make a realistic assessment, beyond bearing in mind that the Soviet leaders have coupled reductions in armaments with their comments on troop reductions since they launched their response on MBFR earlier this year. (See Appendix A)

Confronting the East

25. It is relevant that although the Soviet Union has over the last six years at least trebled the forces on its eastern border with China, this has not been significantly at the expense of the forces facing West. All the same, we have reason to believe that should this rate of reinforcement continue then it could ultimately only be at the expense of the forces facing NATO or through a further increase in defence expenditure or in increased enlistment. However, we do not believe that this strengthening of the forces in the East need rule out qualitative improvements to the Western forces, though those improvements may be slowed down.

Economic considerations

26. The Soviet Union has developed a defence capability which approaches parity with the United States, although the Soviet gross national product (GNP) is only about half that of the United States, while the population is 20 per cent larger. The Soviet economy is so stretched that military programmes cream off a disproportionate amount of the best resources and retard development in the civil sector. The Soviet leaders have genuine resource allocation problems and must always be looking for ways to keep defence expenditure in bounds and to release resources (manpower, raw materials and production) to the civil sector. The Soviet leaders have shown a growing awareness of the need to strengthen the civil economy, which lags far behind those of the developed West in the fields of advanced technology and management as well as in standards of living. They are obviously sensitive to the need to improve this standard of living in Russia, if only as an incentive in raising general efficiency and have frequently stressed the need for savings in defence expenditure as a major justification in themselves for disarmament. However, we assess that the Soviet leaders will always give priority to national security, and therefore to the requirements of defence when allocating resources.

27. As a large percentage of Soviet defence expenditure is committed to research, development and maintenance of the strategic forces, no dramatic savings are likely to come from MBFR. In particular, savings in defence expenditure from any likely MBFR cut-back in the production of conventional weapons, such as tanks and aircraft would be very small indeed. As a rough estimate, a reduction of 10 per cent in the ground forces and tactical aircraft in the central region would mean a saving of less than 1 per cent in overall defence expenditure now, although future

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savings might be marginally greater because of a lower level of procurement of military hardware. If these forces were merely withdrawn to Soviet territory, and not reduced significantly in category or disbanded, then there might be no direct saving. All the same, savings through MBFR may also be seen as a way of easing the strain caused by the need to reinforce the forces on the China border and the expansion of the Soviet Navy. Also even a nominal switch of resources may be sufficient to mollify those arguing for a reduction in defence expenditure, and of course the Soviet leaders would welcome any economic advantages that might accrue from reductions prompted by military or political considerations.

28. In the specific context of MBFR, we have noted reports of statements by Brezhnev and Kosygin made during their recent talks with foreign leaders that the Soviet Union is anxious to reduce expenditure on its forces stationed abroad, and would like to make substantial cuts in force levels in Eastern Europe. We believe, however, that reductions on this scale would be inconsistent with everything we know about Soviet requirements in Europe, and we consider that these statements were designed to encourage Western leaders to take the Soviet response on MBFR seriously.

Verification

29. The Warsaw Pact, being a less open society than NATO, has more to lose from an effective verification system of an MBFR agreement. We understand that the Russians clearly differentiate between "verification" i.e. intelligence collection by existing means of surveillance by satellite or through military missions, and "inspection" i.e. a specific MBFR ground or air inspection organization. We believe that while they have no option but to allow the existing means of "verification" to continue, and might agree to some form of ground inspection in the NSWP countries, they would never allow ground inspection in the Soviet Union. A recent NATO paper on verification suggested various ways these ground inspections might be implemented. We are unable to assess how the Russians will react to these suggestions but we consider that under no circumstances would they agree to a workable system, adequate in NATO eyes, of inspection from aircraft, or to a virtually unrestricted system of ground inspection.

What do the Russians hope for from MBFR talks?

30. We have assessed that in her European policy, the Soviet Union is in general anxious to consolidate her position in Eastern Europe and to improve the balance of power to the advantage of the Soviet Union. While the Russians have powerful motives encouraging them to reach certain limited agreements in SALT and to prevent the further dissemination of nuclear weapons, we do not believe that they consider that their security in Europe is threatened in any serious or urgent way. Thus Soviet motives for engaging in discussions on MBFR cannot be the same as their motives in other arms limitation talks.

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31. No doubt the desire to see whether scarce resources can be saved is a fairly constant element in all arms limitation talks. But our information is not good enough to allow us to say with any precision how important a motive this is in the minds of the Russian leadership. Certainly they would be very glad to be able to use some of the scarce resources at present devoted to defence in order to strengthen the Soviet economy generally and to try to close the technological gap with the West. But at the same time we are confident that the Soviet leadership would not allow these wishes to override the imperatives of defence nor perhaps even less tangible political and diplomatic considerations. While we believe economic considerations do provide some stimulus towards MBFR, we think we must look elsewhere for the main Soviet motive.

32. We think that the principal Russian motives both for engaging in a CES and for talks on MBFR are a desire to encourage disruption in Western Europe, to promote disunity in NATO, to hinder the further development of the EEC, to worsen relations between Western Europe and the United States and to undermine the Western defence structure. The latter is, we believe, the main reason why the Russians are not content merely to wait for unilateral force reductions by the Americans. For these could lead to a firm restatement of the American defence commitment to Western Europe, and to greater efforts towards political and defence integration in Western Europe. Both of these would be unwelcome to the Russians, who may calculate that negotiations on MBFR, including bilateral ones with the United States, would have a disintegrating effect on the West consistent with Soviet long-term goals. We doubt if the Russians have a fully articulated plan of campaign, but we think they intend to probe Western resolution and unity and to exploit whatever fissures are revealed. Whether they will be prepared to make significant troop reductions depends not only on the military and economic considerations set out above, but also on their estimate of what the effect would be on Western strength and unity, and especially on the position of the United States in Europe.

33. The Soviet Union probably also sees other advantages in agreeing to, and holding MBFR talks. They tend to enhance their peace-loving image everywhere, and especially among the members NATO, and indeed, they may have calculated that their current "peace offensive" would have lacked conviction if they had continued to ignore the standing NATO proposals for MBFR. Quite apart from any agreed troop reductions, the holding of talks could lead to a psychological atmosphere in which defence reductions and economies were not only acceptable in the West but were widely urged upon Governments by public opinion. Indeed such an atmosphere would be conducive to the slackening of NATO ties and to the reduction of the credibility of the American guarantee of European security. We believe that the atmosphere created (in Soviet eyes) by the Soviet response on MBFR and the discussions themselves with the West are probably more important to the Soviet

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leaders than an agreement itself, unless that agreement should lead to a substantial reduction in the level of American forces in Europe and in the credibility of the American defence guarantee of West European security.

The likely Soviet approach to negotiations

34. If substantive talks on MBFR were held, and NATO took the initiative in offering a number of detailed packages to the Soviet negotiators, we believe that the Soviet response would be guided primarily by the number of American formations likely to be withdrawn to the United States. We cannot predict at this stage what response might be forthcoming from the Soviet Union if the West's packages contained substantial reductions, but we do not believe that the Russians would ever deprive themselves of the forces needed to carry out the military tasks listed in paragraph 7, in accordance with the military ratios assessed in paragraphs 19 and 20. Nor would they be likely to agree, in our view, to proposals including genuine constraints on the movement of Soviet forces inside the Warsaw Pact area, since they would limit the Soviet Union's ability to act to preserve the pro-Soviet Governments in the area.

35. We are not able to predict either how such negotiations might be conducted on the Soviet side, or with what priorities the Soviet negotiators might wish to pursue their aims at an MBFR conference table. Any Soviet proposals would, however, be designed to secure the maximum reciprocal withdrawal in the West of American forces. Soviet propaganda statements have rejected Western suggestions that mutual force reductions, in order to be balanced, would have to be calculated on an asymmetrical basis, and we would also draw attention to the possibility that a Soviet spokesman, in order to embarrass the West, might offer sweeping reductions in a propaganda forum with no serious intention of carrying them out. But Soviet leaders have made a number of references to "equal security" and "no detriment" in the context of troop reductions, and this may reflect a readiness to negotiate seriously if the West does not allow itself to be driven off course by a propaganda campaign.

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SOVIET PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON FORCE REDUCTIONS  
SINCE 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1971

A. Brezhnev/Brandt communiqué, Oreanda (19th September, 1971)

The sides outlined their views on the reduction of armed forces and armaments in Europe without detriment to the participating States and found the existence of common elements in their positions. They are convinced that a solution of this complex problem would seriously strengthen the mainstays of European and international peace. The future of the European continent, just as of other areas of the world, should be based not on a military confrontation of States, but on equal co-operation and on ensuring security for every State separately and all States together.

B. Gromyko's speech to the United Nations (28th September, 1971)

As the reaction to the suggestion of the Soviet Union to start talks on the reduction of armed forces and armaments in Europe has shown, many agree with this suggestion. Consequently, our job is to set to work.

C. Brezhnev speech in Paris (25th October, 1971)

One further question of European politics, which is increasingly attracting the attention of many States, deserves attention in our view. I have in mind the reduction of armed forces and armaments in Central Europe.

D. Brezhnev television address in Paris (30th October, 1971)

We want a reduction of the troops facing one another....

E. Soviet/Canadian communiqué on Kosygin's visit (26th October, 1971)

Since the military confrontation in Central Europe... is particularly dangerous it was agreed that early steps should be taken to seek a general agreement on the mutual reduction of armed forces and armaments in that area without detriment to the participating States.

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COMPARISON OF NATO AND WARSAW PACT FORCE STRENGTHS IN THE  
CENTRAL REGION ON M-DAY AND M+21(1)

	M-DAY			M+21		
	NATO	Warsaw Pact	Ratio	NATO	Warsaw Pact	Ratio
Total manpower						
Army.....	580,00	820,00	1: 1.4	?	1,148,000	?
Air Force....	190,400	232,000	1: 1.2	?	?	?
Divisional manpower.....	377,200	509,000	1: 1.4	605,400	758,000	1: 1.3
Divisions.....	25	56	1: 2.2	31	(2) 82	1: 2.6
Standard battle groups(3).....	210	672	1: 3.2	261	984	1: 3.8
Medium battle tanks.....	5,260	13,160	1: 2.5	6,330	19,507	1: 3.1
Medium and long-range anti-tank weapons.....	2,030	2,580 (4)3,940	1: 1.3 1: 1.9	2,530	3,820 (4)(6,470)	1: 1.5 1: 2.5
Indirect fire support weapons	2,420	(3)4,740	1: 2.0	3,000	(3) 7,220	1: 2.4
Tactical aircraft:						
Attack.....	950	990	1: 1.1	1,660	1,420	1: 0.9
Reconnaissance	400	290	1: 0.7	540	470	1: 0.8
Air defence.	340	1,890	1: 5.6	510	2,300	1: 4.5
Of which:						
Dual rôle.	780	330	1: 0.4	?	675	?
Tactical surface to surface nuclear delivery systems:						
Missiles.....	300	(5) 240	1: 0.8	300	(3) 532	1: 1.8
Guns.....	1,000	None	-	1,000	None	-

NOTES:

- (1) All figures are rounded and assume that all Warsaw Pact formations are at full strength
- (2) Excludes 10 divisions from the theatre reserve (see paragraph 19A of Part 2)
- (3) Represents the number of battalian/regimental headquarters
- (4) Figures in brackets represent the new totals after issue of the new APC, a proportion of which mount ATGW, to Soviet forces only. This re-equipment has only just started, and will take some years
- (5) Includes non-divisional weapons