

Soviets make separate arms offer to Europe

Immediately after the collapse of the Oct. 11-12 superpower summit in Reykjavik, Iceland, top Warsaw Pact officials launched a high-publicity campaign to break Western European support for the U.S. negotiating position. It had become apparent to the Soviet leaders that President Reagan was definitely not going to use the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) as a "bargaining chip" in arms-control negotiations—despite the urgings of White House Chief of Staff Donald Regan and Secretary of State George Shultz; the Kremlin therefore initiated what veteran "back-channel" diplomat Georgi Arbatov called, in a statement at the close of the Reykjavik meetings, "a big diplomatic offensive" in Western Europe.

The point-man for the drive was Viktor Karpov, Moscow's chief arms negotiator, who set off in mid-October on a whirlwind tour of European capitals, pledging Soviet readiness to discuss "the possibility of finding a solution on medium-range nuclear weapons in Europe separately from space and nuclear offensive arms." This, despite repeated statements from Gorbachov that the arms-control "package" would absolutely have to include a U.S. back-down on the SDI.

The Military Council of the Warsaw Pact countries met Nov. 12-14 in the Romanian capital of Bucharest, "to evaluate the post-Reykjavik situation," as the Soviet gov-

ernment daily *Izvestia* reported on Nov. 15.

The immediate outcome of this meeting was the announcement by Viktor Karpov on Nov. 18 that the Warsaw Pact was about to issue an appeal to NATO for direct contacts on limiting and reducing conventional forces in Europe. The obvious effect of this would be to short circuit the Moscow-Washington negotiations, by appealing directly to the Europeans.

Karpov announced that a "special working group" of the Warsaw Pact was meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria "to study the possibility of comprehensive reduction of conventional forces and weapons in Europe," as was proposed by the June 1986 Budapest summit meeting of Warsaw Pact nations. Karpov demanded the convening of NATO-Warsaw Pact negotiations to discuss the Pact's conventional forces proposals: "The Soviet Union is being accused of wishing to maintain a clear imbalance of conventional forces in its favor. The West however, will not negotiate on this. We want contacts between NATO and the Warsaw Pact."

NATO headquarters officially rejected the Karpov proposal on Nov. 20. An official NATO spokesman in Brussels confirmed that Moscow had tried to establish direct contacts with NATO, first in an approach to NATO Deputy Secretary-General Marcello Guidi, and then through Italian diplomatic channels. Moscow was told that "the normal way" for the Warsaw Pact to make contact for dialogue with NATO, was through bilateral channels with individual member countries. The French government was reported to be particularly angered by the Soviet attempt.

ern Europe, in light of what had been discussed at the Reykjavik summit. He welcomed the views of West German Social Democratic strategist Egon Bahr, the notorious pro-Moscow appeaser. During the week of Nov. 24, Rùhe is scheduled to go to Moscow—despite Soviet cancellation of visits by leading West German officials, supposedly out of anger about Chancellor Helmut Kohl's recent likening of Gorbachov to Nazi propaganda chief Joseph Goebbels.

One other dirty nest, is that around Bonn Defense Ministry State Secretary Lothar Ruehl, himself nominally an FDP Genscherite, but whose "post-Reykjavik strategic ideas" are being circulated by the public-relations office of the CDU-CSU parliamentary faction. Ruehl, the same individual responsible for destabilizing disinformation leaks about a supposed change in the "Quick Reaction Alert" of nuclear missiles stationed in Western Europe (see article, p. 39), is coordinating a new task force of senior Western Europe civil servants in Bonn, which is discussing "alternative defense strategies."

At this rate, the Pugwash Conventional Defense Task Force may already be dictating the policy of Western governments, by the time of the group's next meeting in Sweden, in April 1987. The Pugwashers are counting on two factors of irrationalism in the West, to achieve their aim.

First, Pugwash is trying to spread panic, to the effect that the United States is about to abandon Europe militarily. As one Scandinavian Pugwasher puts it: "Opinion is moving a bit in our direction. This is because people are getting scared; there is a growing fear in Europe that America will sell the European forces down the drain. Now, all sorts of ways to alternatively defend ourselves, on our own, are becoming discussable."

Second, Pugwash is counting on the cost-cutting mania now overcoming Western capitals. If "alternative defense strategies" become acceptable in enough minds, the thinking goes, then why bother to spend all that money on modernization of nuclear capabilities, sophisticated strategic-defense capabilities, and the like?