

Europeans warn: Russian arms offer is 'new Munich'

While Western governments are officially acclaiming Gorbachov's "zero-option" plan to remove nuclear missiles from Europe, a growing chorus of official and media criticism has arisen, particularly in Western Europe.

France

France's Socialist President, François Mitterrand, in a statement released on March 4, cautiously welcomed the Soviet zero option, but emphasized that France's nuclear force will not be included. More caustic responses have come from the Gaullist RPR party, including Premier Chirac and other cabinet officials.

Premier Jacques Chirac, quoted by the daily Le Figaro March 5:

The zero option should not be considered in and of itself, but must . . . take into account factors determining European security. . . . We cannot repeat too often, that the peril to our existence from the formidable nuclear, chemical, and conventional arsenal of the East directed toward us, must be seen in its totality, and not piece by piece. Given the superiority of the U.S.S.R. on the European continent, especially in conventional forces, the security of Western Europe will continue to demand, for a long time, a sufficient number of American nuclear weapons.

French Foreign Trade Minister Michel Noir, in an interview with Paris-Match magazine published March 6 (Noir had returned recently from a trip to Moscow):

This is the biggest publicity stunt and manipulation operation ever. It's a movie film, a show. The amazing thing, is that it seems to be working. The manipulation consists of selling the idea that the Soviet Union is becoming a country of the Rights of Man. They want to present an image of liberalization and tolerance, when the system is really not moving one inch. . . . It is therefore a vast camouflage operation. . . .

Gorbachov's strategy is clear: He wants to change Western opinion and governments, because he needs it. . . . This is the purpose of organizing in Moscow, by 1987, the meeting

of the human rights commission . . . which would be the greatest intellectual fraud! It would be worse than Munich! Can we imagine Westerners accepting this? What a victory for Gorbachov! It would mean that the Europeans were disappearing underground; it would mean they were selling their souls! I cannot believe it. I will fight against it, I will speak out and say that we must not be fooled, because the Soviet system is totalitarian.

Jean-Marie Daillet, president of the defense commission of the UDF party and parliamentary deputy from La Manche, in an article in the daily Le Monde March 10, headlined "The Zero Option: Munich II?"

[Daillet writes that the proposed zero-option deal is not part of a process of global disarmament, but would only have the effect of] rapidly aggravating the disequilibrium which is growing from year to year between West and East, to the regular rhythm of the quantitative and qualitative development of the Red Army on the ground, on the sea, in the air, and in space. . . . Are we deliberately closing our eyes to the expansionist political-military strategy of the Soviet system, which Mr. Gorbachov simply wants to modernize, without changing its overall nature nor objectives, defined 70 years ago by Lenin? . . .

All the skill of the new secretary-general of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R., which anaesthetizes the West, and how better to do so than by returning to the West, the imprudent vocabulary that the West itself had invented? For journalists, and therefore for the public, "zero option" becomes synonymous with equitable nuclear disarmament, sought by the two parties. Just as the expression "Star Wars" has given an unpopular emblem to the idea of an anti-ballistic defense. . . . Mr. Gorbachov is successfully utilizing all the resources that can be offered to a clever communicator by the Western media, with the complicity—which he knew how to draw from, notably, at the "Forum for Peace"—of intellectuals, artists, and celebrated scientists, who sanctify him as a great reformer, if not a great liberal, and almost a democrat . . . a great pacifist.

One can ask oneself if America is not in the process of

dropping its guard. The same Ronald Reagan who had so well undertaken to redress the capacity of military defense of the Soviet Union, let himself be charmed at Reykjavik, to the point of accepting almost anything from his interlocutor. . . .

We understand that General Rogers, commandant of allied forces in Europe, criticized the disassociation of Euro-missiles from other subjects that need be debated, if one wishes to discuss disarmament.

Unfortunately, Lord Carrington, secretary-general of NATO, is holding to less firm words, which have won him plaudits from the TASS agency. . . .

Former French ambassador to NATO François de Rose, in an article in *Le Figaro* March 9, titled "The Zero Option: A Grave Error":

[Gorbachov is trying] "to lock Mr. Reagan and the West into the dead end in which they had placed themselves in 1983. . . .

[It was a] mistake to present that decision as a response to the need to balance the SS-20. We did not want to see that these Euromissiles were aimed at confronting the U.S.S.R. with the threat of being engaged on its own territory, in case of a conflict in Europe. . . . This threat of involvement of its own territory was obliging Moscow to respond against U.S. territory, thereby assuring the "coupling" between the defense of Europe and the U.S. strategic system. . . .

In that system, where everything is linked, withdrawing the Euromissiles would suppress an indispensable element of the chain, the one element which is the cornerstone of deterrence in Europe.

With the aggravating condition that, meanwhile, the Soviets have deployed in their satellite countries shorter-range weapons which have the same capability as the SS-20 to threaten most of Western Europe. . . .

Great Britain

The British government, while maintaining a cautiously optimistic public view of the zero option, is widely reported to be privately much more skeptical. The skepticism is reflected in heavy press criticism of the plan.

Article by columnist George Gail in the *London Sunday Mail* March 8, titled "Hold It, Cowboy: You Must Not Jump the Gun."

[Ronald Reagan] has to confront a confident Mikhail Gorbachov apparently bearing gifts, and here lies the danger.

The temptation will be very great to redeem his Irangate mistakes and crown his Presidency with a disarmament deal with Russia. But is he up to it?

His ambition to be a peacemaker is noble, but his command of detail has always been slight. . . .

He will be no match for Gorbachov, who has already outflanked him by proposing a zero-option deal which NATO

foolishly advanced four years ago, never thinking the Russians would agree to it.

Nuclear disarming is politically tempting; but faced with the Soviet Union's overwhelming superiority in conventional forces, it is a dangerous game for the West to play.

Extreme caution and prudence is now called for. The last thing we want is President Reagan charging forward.

Whoa there, Silver!

Editorial in the *Times of London* March 10, titled "Staying Above Zero":

The "zero-option" had all the attraction of simplicity when it was put forward by the Americans in the autumn of 1981 as their objective for the arms talks in Geneva. As a public relations idea it looked fine. As a serious negotiating goal, it had drawbacks which were even then apparent. Those drawbacks have not gone away. . . . [The agreement] will still leave the Russians with a balance of advantage in shorter-range nuclear missiles of some 700 to 72.

[The Soviet SS-23, stationed in Eastern Europe and gradually replacing the Scud B] has a range of more than 300 miles, while the SS-22 can travel around 560 miles—enabling it to strike deeply into Western Europe (including most targets in England). . . . These are relatively small, highly mobile missiles, which could easily be moved back again, undetected by normal satellite surveillance. At best, this poses a major verification problem; at worst, an unresolved issue which would need to be removed before too long. And that will be more easily said than done, if only because NATO would have few bargaining chips left to play.

The fundamental difficulty raised by the zero-option, is that it over-simplifies an issue which in fact is very complex. In its present form, an agreement looks unwise. A zero-zero option, as presently envisaged, would remove the coupling of the American strategic deterrent to Europe, which the Pershing-2s and cruises briefly promised. At the same time, it would leave Western Europe exposed not only to Moscow's shorter-range nuclear missiles but to its vastly superior conventional forces.

As Mr. Shultz plans for next month's preparatory talks with Mr. Shevardnadze, Europe should make clear its misgivings. . . . Security is not well-founded on perceptions of good intent.

Commentator Bernard Levin, in a *Times* column published March 9, entitled, "On Guard—Or Gorbachov Will Tickle You Red."

So far, [Gorbachov's] behavior, announcements and decisions are perfectly consistent with his being a tyrant as ruthless and criminal as his predecessors, but more intelligent. . . . Russia's tragedy is that from 1964 to the accession of Gorbachov, she was ruled by men whose combined IQs ran clean off the scale on the minus side.

Arms control proposals; the pitiful parading of his wife

(the only First Lady of the Kremlin whose face doesn't look like a vegetable marrow that has been bombarded in a cyclotron for a fortnight); the sacking of a drunken blackguard like Grigori Romanov, and a good many sober blackguards as well; the homely references to God, and the careful references to Lenin; the unprecedented publication of news of disasters such as the ship that sank in the Black Sea; all these signs, and more, are congruent with both hypotheses—that Gorbachov is determined to free his country altogether from totalitarianism, and that he is determined only to modernize the country and the totalitarianism alike. . . .

It is overwhelmingly unlikely that Mr. Gorbachov is the man who has come to set his country free. But it is not impossible. What is essential for us, while we wait for more evidence (and we may have to wait a long time for evidence that is truly unambiguous) is *not to give him the benefit of the doubt*.

For the doubt is colossal, and the benefit he stands to gain even more so. . . .

I have watched too many of my own countrymen, these past few months and weeks, rolling over on their backs to have their stomachs tickled; it has been a sickening sight. The man who is doing the tickling is the heir to 70 years of slaughter and oppression, and it is very much too soon for any of us even to hope, let alone believe, that he is about to renounce his legacy. *Very much too soon*, and if we give him the benefit of the doubt before he has plainly earned it, it will be very much too late.

That evil empire has wished us harm for many decades, and done us a great deal of harm, too. That is nothing to the harm it has done to its own people, who have perished in their millions, and hungered . . . in their scores of millions. . . .

Federal Republic of Germany

The West German government has welcomed the zero-option plan, which Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher called "a historic opportunity we cannot allow to pass." Defense Minister Manfred Wörner on March 8 said, "The zero option has been this government's policy aim since 1983." Chancellor Helmut Kohl, in a March 9 interview to the daily Bildzeitung, stressed that as soon as medium-range missiles are abolished, it is imperative that negotiations begin on reducing short-range missiles.

"Security—Built on Sand," the lead editorial in the daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung March 10:

"A complete denuclearization," the article states, "would render Western Europe defenseless against the full thrust of the Warsaw Pact's conventional superiority." Recalling that NATO has always depended on nuclear weapons to compensate for its military deficit against the Warsaw Pact, the article concludes, "Now, everything is about to go under in the euphoria of the zero solution."

Portraying Gorbachov's "revolution" as "more words than deeds" and "sandy ground to build on," the article criticizes an arms-control policy that would sacrifice Western nuclear weapons "once and for all." This would maneuver the West into unilateral disarmament, from which there would be "no return."

United States

The U.S. administration's official response to Gorbachov's proposal has been overwhelmingly positive, as President Reagan on March 5 said, "I've never felt more optimistic about the prospects of success in this area than I do today." A battle is raging among policymaking elites, however, and the following two statements are typical of the increasing criticism of the proposal.

NATO Supreme Commander Gen. Bernard Rogers, in an interview with the Bonn daily Die Welt March 2 (Rogers is retiring from his post on June 30):

We're hostages of our own argumentation. In 1981, everybody argued that the zero solution had to be accepted to calm down the opposition against rearmament. All of them jumped on this bandwagon, except some military men like us. Back then, I called that a political chess-game move, but from a military view, it gave me a stomach-ache. My view hasn't changed, since then.

Now, after Reykjavik and the possibility that the zero option will become a reality, I meet people in responsible positions, and they tell me: Good God, we cannot do that—look at the Soviet missiles with shorter range, and all the gaps in the conventional forces. . . .

With the zero solution, the West will not have anything left to pose a penalty on Soviet territory from Western Europe, except, perhaps, American aircraft and cruise missiles which belong to the strategic arsenals of the U.S.A. . . .

We have sold ourselves and our nations the idea that the isolated zero solution is the right way. Now, we've come to recognize the folly we've committed. But it is too late now. I don't see any among the leaders of our nations admitting having made a mistake. . . .

I won't place any bets on whether, one year from now, all of the 326,000 U.S. soldiers currently in Europe will still be here. . . . Once they begin with 100,000 soldiers, they'll soon pose the question, why not pull out more, and once the U.S.A. makes the first step, other nations will pull out their troops, too.

Henry Kissinger, article published in the Washington Post on March 8:

The so-called zero option reduces in no significant way the Soviet nuclear threat to Europe. It eliminates completely the American means of retaliating from Europe. It has little utility for arms control . . . [and] represents an important step in decoupling Europe from the United States politically.