

Eye on Washington by Nicholas F. Benton

German expert warns of Soviet plans

Brig. Gen. Paul Albert Scherer (ret.), the Chief of the Military Internal Security Service of the West German Armed Forces from 1972 to 1978, came to Washington Jan. 26-28 to brief U.S. senators, journalists, and members of the Reserve Officers Association attending their annual convention, of the dangers of ratifying the Intermediate-range Nuclear Force (INF) treaty.

General Scherer delivered a powerful warning about the fatal effects of the loss of confidence by Western European political and military leaders that will result from the treaty. Even though many European leaders have given lip-service support to the treaty, in the name of NATO "unity," they are privately horrified, he said.

"This treaty could not come at a worse time," General Scherer said. "It comes as leaders in the West are aware that we are on the brink of an economic depression. The question which is not answered by the treaty is: Who will pay for the new military strategy that will be required to maintain security once the intermediate missiles are removed?" NATO's only existing military strategy will be taken away by the treaty if it is ratified, he said, and no one is prepared to address the question of paying for the development of an effective new strategy.

He said that European leaders will try to convince the United States to insist on a reduction in the large Soviet advantage in conventional forces prior to any further deals on reducing nuclear weapons when they meet at the NATO summit in Brussels on March 2-3.

The confidence of Europe has already been irreversibly shaken by the U.S.'s cavalier approach to arms negotiations, he said. "It is like trust on a personal level. Once you have lost it, it is impossible to get it back 100% ever again," he said. "The loss is incalculable." He said that "only 3% of the world's nuclear weapons are lost in the INF treaty, but 97% of European confidence in the U.S. is lost. This is a horrible thing the U.S. is doing to Europe."

The former head of military intelligence for the West German armed forces gave an unvarnished picture of Soviet military strategy, noting that "it is an illusion to think that we have been at peace for the last 40 years." Instead, the Soviets have been actively engaged in "irregular warfare," just below the threshold of nuclear war. The components of this have included partisan wars, terrorism, proxy wars, direct Soviet invasions (such as Afghanistan), and use of special forces ("spetsnaz") in sabotage and other activities.

This is combined with a massive infiltration of Soviet agents of espionage into the West, much of which has involved deep-penetration agents who are retained as "sleepers" who advance into high positions in government and policymaking bureaucracies of political parties, churches, unions, and the media before they are ever "activated."

He said that there are 25,000 "peace" organizations in the West that the Soviets influence, which all share the same Soviet-inspired slogan, "No nuclear weapons by the year 2000." He said it is the purpose of these groups to "project wishful thinking onto the population of Europe and the U.S."

In the U.S., he said, there is the delusion that if there are no more nuclear weapons, then the U.S. will never be attacked. "This is wrong," he

said. "The U.S. is no longer invulnerable to a land invasion." The Soviets will never, in reality, release their grip on Afghanistan, despite whatever cosmetic troop withdrawals they may promise or even carry out. "The Soviet presence in Afghanistan starts from the premise that there is going to be a war between Pakistan and India, which the Soviets will be able to exploit to obtain a warm water port on the Indian Ocean," he said. "They will do nothing to diminish their ability to reach that objective."

On Iran, he said that the Soviets implanted agents deep into the fabric of society there during the period of Persian partisanism at the end of World War II, and activated them to overthrow the Shah, whose regime was effectively a "NATO government." He said the Soviets orchestrated the attack on the U.S. embassy and seizing of U.S. hostages in 1979 using Islamic fundamentalist agents trained 20 years before inside the Soviet bloc.

He said the Soviets' plan is to unleash the Tehran-based Islamic fundamentalist scourge all over the Middle East. "The Soviets do not want to conquer Iran," he said. "They do not want the fleas of fundamentalism in their own fur. They already have 35 million Muslims in the Soviet Union, who will grow to 45 million by 1995. They want to direct the fundamentalist menace against U.S. friends in the region—especially Saudi Arabia and Egypt, and those elements inside Israel who are beginning to realize the danger of working with Iran."

The proper objective of the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf, he said, should be to "flatten Teheran and start a revolution there." Shaking his head, he added, "The notion that [U.S. Secretary of Defense Frank] Carlucci is thinking of pulling out U.S. forces from the Persian Gulf is terrible."