

NATO Brussels Meeting Maps Nuclear Showdown

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First reports from the present Brussels NATO Defense Planning Committee meeting, a body constituted of the defense ministers of the North Atlantic Alliance, indicate that the meeting is dominated by two inter-related themes: (1) growing NATO "concern" over "rapidly improving Warsaw Pact war-fighting capabilities" in Europe, and (2) the alleged challenge posed to both Western Europe and North America by "vastly increased Soviet naval strength" and by new deployment capabilities for the Soviet Navy through the acquisition of several bases on the African continent.

A NATO intelligence report to this effect for the alliance's chiefs of staff was circulated at a Dec. 9 Defense Planning Committee meeting and further elaborated by Admiral Sir Peter Hill-Norton, the current chairman of the NATO Military Committee (MC).

According to Hill-Norton, Warsaw Pact developments are characterized by "a steady and continuous improvement in both quality and quantity of weapons, equipment, and training, with growing emphasis on offensive capability." Commenting on the establishment of Soviet air and naval facilities in Somalia and Guinea and alleged Soviet plans for bases in Angola and Nigeria, the honorable admiral interprets these moves, which at least in part are purely his own invention, as underlining the importance that the Soviets attach to cutting the lifeline between North America and Europe and between Europe and the oil-producing areas."

This is exactly the line spouted by Nelson Rockefeller in his Dec. 5 speech before a National Association of Manufacturers' (NAM) meeting, which simultaneously initiated a key feature of the ongoing NATO Hilex 75 exercise: a Third World raw materials and oil embargo, causing massive social disruption in Western Europe. What is real about Rockefeller's and NATO's scheme of things is their own desperate determination to instigate such embargos — motivated by some "nice little war" in the appropriate areas — and to simultaneously create provocations against the Soviet Union and its

allies, which would lead to MC 14-4 style "limited" East-West nuclear confrontation.

The Hill-Norton report's most immediate significance is its attempt to retroactively justify the cumulatively most extensive and provocative series of military maneuvers (in the period from August to December 1975) conducted by NATO since its inception. The main thrust of these maneuvers — emphasized as well by the August assignment of two additional U.S. brigades to Europe and their deployment in northwest Germany — has been the defense of NATO's northern flank and the securing of the North Atlantic-North Sea U.S.-Europe NATO resupply lines. Thus in the "Autumn Forge" series of maneuvers between September and November, the "Reforger '75" airlifting and associated land exercises in West Germany, and the massive "Ocean Safari" maneuver off the west coast of Scotland involving U.S. ships, several hundred planes, and over 17,000 men were of key significance.

The dangerously provocative character of these two maneuvers in particular is indicated by two facts: (1) the context in which they occurred: the "Shapex '75" NATO headquarters exercise simulating a sequence of events in which the Soviet Union allegedly takes military advantage of economic and social dislocation in Western Europe, and (2) the undeniable reality that northwestern Europe is conventionally undefensible against a full Warsaw Pact onslaught, so that major NATO deployments in that area must signal to the Soviet Union aggressive NATO intervention aimed at creating a Schlesinger-style "limited" nuclear confrontation.

The Soviet Union is fully aware of this situation, correctly defining it as a massive effort by "some influential circles in the Western countries" to violate and subvert the August 1975 Helsinki accords on European cooperation and "through all sorts of pinpricks intended to cause a reply reaction." forcing the Soviet Union into counter deployments. No such "limited" Soviet deployments obliging a Schlesinger-type game plan will

occur. Rather, as the Soviet leadership has stressed on numerous occasions, the Soviet Union is fully prepared to meet any actual provocations against Warsaw Pact territory with the full force of its military might.

We merely shall reference at this point three groups of actual worldwide NATO and U.S.-directed military deployments further underlining the immediacy of the war danger:

* NATO's Northern Flank

The "Ocean Safari" maneuver, officially concluded on Nov. 18, has been de facto extended, involving primarily British units, under the cover of British-West German disputes with Iceland over the latter country's claim to a 200 mile zone for exclusive fishing rights. Britain has sent several frigates and smaller units to protect its fishing trawlers in Icelandic waters. Conveniently, the Norwegians are supporting Iceland's claims — both countries might quit NATO as a result of the dispute according to the Swedish press and thus "lay Norway open for a Russian invasion." No need to develop the scenario further.

* "Terrorism" in Britain and the Netherlands.

Over the past two weeks IRA and South Moluccan (!) kidnapping operations have been used by British and Dutch authorities to fully militarize their respective countries and simultaneously subject their populations to a barrage of psychological warfare intimidation measures, now beginning to spill over into West Germany. The Italian defense and interior ministries, in turn, are taking advantage of these developments to motivate a "temporary" military takeover of all nodal points of the nation's telecommunications system.

* Third World Trouble Spots

It suffices today that the situation on the Indian subcontinent, the Thailand blockade of Laos, the South African and Zairean intervention into Angola, and the renewed major flare-ups in Lebanon — not necessarily any one it itself, but taken in conjuncture — could, at any moment, build to the threshold potential for actual NATO-Warsaw Pact nuclear confrontation.