

NATO replaces firepower with hollow words

by Nicholas F. Benton from Brussels

Heads of government of the 16-member NATO alliance met in Brussels on March 2-3 to substitute hollow words of unity for the military firepower they expect to be surrendering soon. They are facing a devastating loss of deterrent power resulting from deep cutbacks in U.S. defense spending and the pending ratification of the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) treaty,

The summit, the first since 1982, was portrayed as largely ceremonial, with hardly any differences expressed publicly among the leaders. The public show masked grave fears by European leaders about the reliability of its U.S. partner, fears which prompted the summit in the first place. Turkish Prime Minister Turgut Özal, the man who stunned both NATO and Warsaw Pact leaders last summer by meeting with U.S. Democratic presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche in Ankara, confirmed to *EIR* the day after the summit, that its main topic was European concerns about the future commitments of the United States to the alliance.

Despite paeans to unity, the effects of the economic breakdown of the West, combined with an appeasement mentality, are having an overpowering centrifugal impact on the alliance.

While not mentioned publicly, the recently released report of the U.S. President's Commission on Long-Term Integrated Strategy, the so-called Iklé-Wohlstetter report, *Discriminate Deterrence*, was among the factors contributing directly to these fears. That report called for the removal of the U.S. nuclear umbrella from Europe (and Asia).

President Reagan tried to redress the impact of the Wohlstetter report by telling his fellow government heads, "We often say that if the bomb is dropped in Amsterdam, it is the equivalent of dropping a bomb on Chicago. As long as we maintain that attitude, I don't believe a bomb is going to drop on anyone." A similar "assurance" was reflected in the final

communiqué of the summit, where it was stated, "We affirmed that the defense of Europe and North America is indivisible."

When pressed by *EIR* at a briefing about maintaining U.S. troops in Europe, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater contradicted earlier administration statements to say, "We have no plans to make any changes in troop levels." In this context, the allies agreed to maintain a public front of unity. "I have never seen such harmony and togetherness as we have," President Reagan said at the end of the first day. Secretary of State George Shultz gushed at the conclusion, "Nowhere have I felt more the vitality of freedom. . . . It felt good, and it was a wonderful experience." NATO Secretary General Lord Carrington and other heads of state mumbled similar things.

Rumblings under the surface

Yet, the reported desire of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to soften the language on modernization of battlefield nuclear weapons in the final communiqué, reflected growing opposition in his country to such nuclear weapons, which can only be fired onto German soil, if used. Also, each of the two communiqués issued by the NATO leaders included footnotes to remind everyone of Greece's formal opposition to the presence of any nuclear weapons in the NATO arsenal. Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu came out in the open again during a press conference the day after the summit, to affirm that he sees NATO-ally Turkey as a greater national security threat than the Warsaw Pact.

Not only the weakness of NATO's southern flank, reflected in recent anti-NATO moves by both Greece and Spain, but also growing Soviet-inspired anti-nuclear sentiment throughout Europe since the INF treaty signing, reflect the deteriorating real state of affairs in the alliance. Force mod-

ernization discussions at the summit smacked strongly of the assumptions underlying the Wohlstetter report, despite all assurances to the contrary. This was tipped off by Lord Carington in an interview with BBC: "In the event there is a war, we must be prepared to respond appropriately." His choice of the word, "appropriately," fit the "discriminate deterrence" conceptual framework of the Wohlstetter report, substituting regional deterrence modes for the concept of comprehensive deterrence contained in Reagan's public comments. That is also contained in Article V of the NATO Charter: "An attack on one is an attack on all."

Nonetheless, there was not a peep of opposition to the INF treaty from any government head during the summit, nor was there any public opposition to the current flight forward by the Reagan administration to sign a disastrous START accord with the Soviets to reduce strategic nuclear arms by 50%. Both arms-control initiatives were supported in the final communiqué. Instead, the leaders focused on the need to redress the enormous Warsaw Pact conventional superiority, becoming even more dominant in the wake of the pending INF and START agreements.

Amazingly, while the urgency of dealing with this imbalance was featured in a communiqué released at the end of the first day, spokesmen conceded that any hope for a treaty to correct the conventional force imbalance will depend solely on Soviet good will in new, expanded "Atlantic to the Urals" conventional arms control talks scheduled to begin soon. After 15 years of dead-end negotiations between selected NATO and Warsaw Pact nations to reduce conventional weapons on the central front in Europe, the NATO allies are now placing groundless hopes in new conventional force talks, incorporating a broader representation that includes most NATO and Warsaw Pact countries, 23 in all. The document issued by the NATO heads of state, entitled, "Conventional Arms Control: The Way Ahead," was hammered out weeks in advance of the summit, and merely rubber-stamped there.

Acknowledging the massive Soviet and Warsaw Pact conventional force advantage, the statement said, "Our aim [in conventional arms control negotiations with the Warsaw Pact] will be to establish a situation in Europe in which force postures as well as the numbers and deployments of weapons systems no longer make surprise attack and large-scale offensive action a feasible option." The document also admitted that:

- The Warsaw Pact, based on the Soviet Union's forward-deployed forces, has a capability for surprise attack and large-scale offensive action; the allies neither have, nor aspire to, such a capability;
- The countries of the Warsaw Pact form a contiguous land mass; those of the alliance are geographically disconnected;
- The Warsaw Pact can generate a massive reinforcement potential from distances of only a few hundred kilometers; many allied reinforcements need to cross the Atlan-

tic;

- The Warsaw Pact's military posture and activities are still shrouded in secrecy, whereas those of allied countries are transparent and under permanent public scrutiny.

The statement also confirmed that the Soviets continue aggressive modernization of their entire military strategic capability—but in identifying the Soviet conventional weapons which best reflect a capacity for "surprise attack and large-scale offensive action," it said, "Tanks and artillery are among the most decisive components" of this.

When asked by *EIR* at a background briefing to the U.S. press at the summit, why new Soviet offensive weapons based on "new physical principles, such as radio frequency, microwave, and laser weapons," were not included on the list of dangerous Warsaw Pact offensive weapons, a U.S. senior administration official who participated in preparing the statement responded, incredibly, "The main reason is that the primary emphasis is on ground-gaining offensive type equipment, and, generally speaking, that set of weapons doesn't meet that criteria."

'Trust Mikhail'

At the same briefing, *EIR* asked the U.S. official, "What reason do you have to believe that after 15 years of unsuccessful conventional arms control talks in the CSCE framework, you can reach an agreement under this new [Atlantic to the Urals] framework?" The response was that, while the negotiations to date "took place within a narrow area of the central front, this new negotiation will cover Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals and includes the 23 nations that are principally involved in the military confrontation. So, it's a much more realistic picture of the situation. It allows us to deal with the elements of military security in a much more comprehensive way."

Asked why including more nations in the negotiations would not, in fact, make it even more complicated than it has been for the past 15 years, the official said, "I think you could start off by saying that the Soviets have been more forthcoming. For example, the first time that we were able to agree in an arms control scenario for on-site inspection was in the Stockholm Agreement, and that has been part of the conventional arms control process."

It was in this pollyannish context that Thatcher reiterated her earlier praise of Soviet leader Gorbachov in her press conference after the summit. She removed any doubt that she "still believes Mr. Gorbachov is a new kind of leader who I can do business with." She praised his "domestic reforms" as "an historic and bold reform offering more freedom and choice inside the Soviet Union," and said she believed "both Gorbachov and the West want strong defense, but at lower levels."

The Soviets wasted no time dashing NATO hopes of any conventional arms control accord, lashing out at the NATO communiqué in TASS the day after the statement was released.