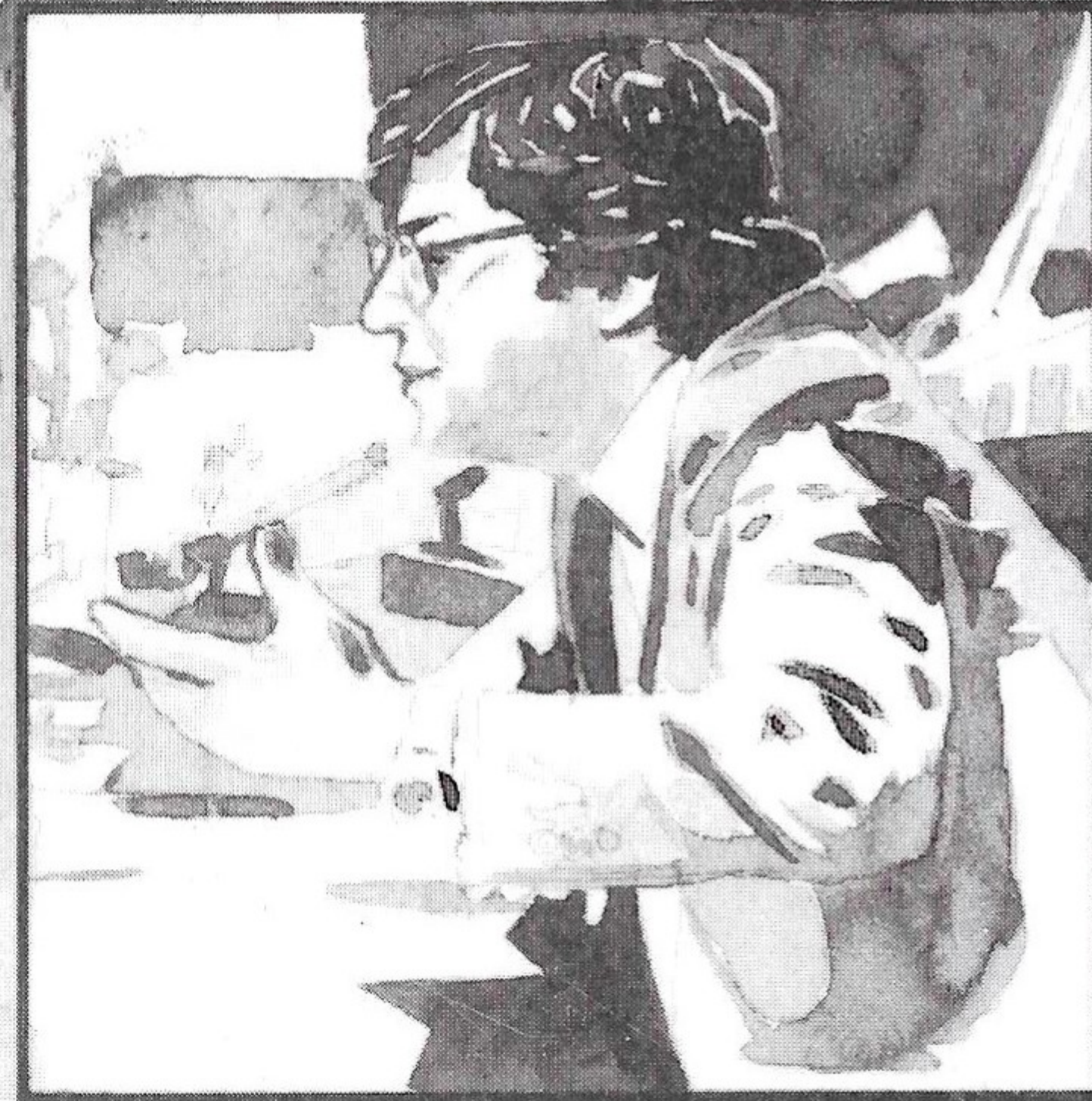


A TRANSATLANTIC DIALOGUE

Atlantische Studie

6



I. The Soviet threat as perceived in the US and in the Netherlands

Introduction by

Mr. H. Binnendijk, Deputy Director of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the US Senate

During the past decade, the Soviet Union has challenged the United States in at least three different ways: 1) it has challenged the United States 2) militarily, it has taken advantage of US political differences with Europe and with the Peoples Republic of China, and 3) it has sought to gain influence at US expense in the Third World. I believe that the United States has now recognized each of these challenges and has taken steps to meet them.

1. The military challenge – The Soviets dedicate almost three times the percentage of their GNP to defense as does the US. In real terms, the Soviets outspend the US by a wide margin. In *strategic systems*, the Soviets have attained parity, and some in the US believe they have attained a definite margin of superiority. The Soviets have a 5:2 advantage in ICBM throwweight and a slight advantage in the number of missiles. There is parity in the number of warheads, and the US lead in accuracy is quickly disappearing (due in large part to Western technology transfers). Soviet throwweight advantages and new missile accuracy threatens US landbased ICBMs which, though they account for only a quarter of the US strategic force, are crucial to the US counter-force strategy. Strategic deterrence remains intact for the foreseeable future, but the long term trends are in the wrong direction. The US government has responded to this challenge by developing a strategic modernization package, and by proposing deep cuts in strategic systems in the Geneva START talks.

In *Intermediate Range Nuclear Weapons*, Soviet superiority is clear. Deployments of the SS-20 since 1977 have doubled the number of INF warheads potentially targeted at Europe. NATO has responded to the challenge with the NATO double-track decision and with the zero option for the Geneva negotiations. We in the United

States recognize the great public sensitivities involved in this NATO response, and we are negotiating to prevent the deployment of such weapons in Western Europe — but the Soviets must cooperate. There should be no misunderstanding in Europe. I believe that there is wide bipartisan support in the US for the 1979 NATO double-track decision, the freeze movement notwithstanding. There is a strong belief in the United States that this Soviet challenge cannot pass without a strong response — in the negotiations if possible, but with deployments if necessary.

With regard to the *conventional military balance* in Europe, the picture is again unhappy. Recent NATO force comparison figures indicate that the Warsaw Pact's main battle tank lead in Europe has grown to 4:1, its lead in artillery is now 3:1, and its lead in combat aircraft is more than 2:1. These figures overstate Warsaw Pact strength because they discount the impact of new technology, NATO's defensive posture, US reinforcement capability, and the cohesion of each Alliance. But when combined with Soviet dominance in intermediate – range nuclear forces and with parity in strategic systems, a consensus has developed on both sides of the Atlantic that priority must now be given to conventional forces. During the past 20 years, the Soviet navy has also grown from a coastal defense fleet to a blue-water navy with the ability to sustain operations far from Soviet shores.

2. Relations with Europe and China – The second Soviet challenge to the United States is less in the nature of a military threat, and more in the nature of a Soviet willingness to take full advantage of policy differences between the United States and the two major powers along the Warsaw Pact – Soviet borders: specifically, Western Europe and China. In both cases, the United

States has made things easy for the Soviet Union. Public discussions in the US on the possibility of nuclear war and harsh anti-Soviet rhetoric last year provided the Soviets with a perfect opportunity to capitalize on the sincere anti-nuclear weapon sentiments in Europe. While I do not believe that the Soviets control the anti-nuclear movements here in any real sense, they do attempt to support and influence it in many ways. A unilateral decision on the part of Europeans to abandon the 1979 NATO double-track decision could do grave harm to the Alliance, as would a unilateral US decision to withdraw our forces from Europe. With regard to China, the US decision not to abandon arms sales to Taiwan provided the Soviets with a golden opportunity to play their China card. They began to play that card recently during former Foreign Minister Huang's visit to Moscow, and it remains to be seen how that relationship develops.

3. Influence in the Third World – The third Soviet challenge is in the developing world, where the traditionally conservative Soviets have, during the past decade, taken



Mr. Hans Binnendijk (right) and Mr. Ton Frinking

advantage of opportunities and have expanded their influence. This is true in Africa (Angola, Ethiopia, Libya), Asia (Afghanistan and Indochina) and in Latin America (Nicaragua and now El Salvador). It is less true in the Middle East where their influence is currently waning, but where their military might can be brought to bare. The Soviets have taken advantage of opportunities by using surrogates, increasing their arms sales, increasing their clandestine operations and when necessary using their own troops. The US has responded militarily by creating a Rapid Deployment Force, and by increasing military and economic aid to vulnerable areas.

Conclusion: The Soviet challenge is real but often subtle. We should not be complacent nor should we overreach. The US has taken measures to meet the challenge.

Introduction by

Mr. P.J. Teunissen, Professor of the Sociology of International Relations, University of Groningen, the Netherlands

The Dutch are well known for their diversity of opinions. Dutch thinking about the Soviet Union is no exception to this rule. Leaving nuances aside, I should like to distinguish a few types of opinion, or schools of thinking, about the Soviet Union, as they exist at present in this country.

According to one school, the Soviet Union is a threat to international security because of its Marxist ideology of world domination and its traditional imperialism. The increasingly global projection of power, military and industrial espionage and peace propaganda of the Soviet Union against the Western world should be seen as evidence of a deliberate policy that is openly proclaiming its goals, while trying to disguise its tactics. This view of the Soviet threat is shared by a strong minority of the Dutch. It is not shared by many members of the Pacifist Socialist Party and of the Radical Party; probably it is not even shared by all members of the Communist Party, which has had long periods of strained relations with Moscow.

Between these two schools we find a conglomerate of opinions which hold that the Soviet Union is a threat to international security, but underline, at the same time,

that this is only part of the problem. Soviet Marxism is a threat indeed, but it is threatened itself by Western influences and the political opposition in Eastern Europe, and by the revival of the Christian and Islam religions among Soviet citizens. The Soviet military build up is a threat, but it cannot be seen in isolation from the fact that the Soviet Union has been invaded several times, and from the global arms race of the past decades. In many respects, the Soviets have been imitators of Western defence production. The Soviet Union is a totalitarian power, but at the same time it is faced with nationality problems and dangers of disintegration. In fact, the Soviet system should be understood in terms of a continuous struggle to maintain the existing power structures. Since the Second World War, the Soviet Union has greatly expanded her empire and international influence. But apart from Eastern Europe and Cuba, she has not been able to establish permanent power bases outside her national territory. In the Communist world her leadership has been contested continuously and not entirely without success. There are natural limits to her capacities, which exclude any realistic hope of world domination.

If we pose the problem of the Soviet threat in this broader context of a combination of factors that are inherent to the Soviet system and those that are external to it, the question arises as to which are the most important ones, at least from the point of view of international security.

Here the opinions are divergent. In general, we can say that the more we shift from the political right wing, and orthodox church members, to the left wing, the more we will find opinions emphasizing the importance of the external factors, at least for our dealing with the Soviet threat. In particular, members of the socialist parties will underline that the best answer to the Soviet threat is a world economic recovery, a more just and equitable international economic order, and a more constructive Western approach to regional conflicts. In the Atlantic debate of the past few years, they have pointed out strongly that the more the West tries to outdo the Soviet Union in the military sphere – be it only qualitatively – the greater our problems with the Soviet Union will become, and the greater the threat to international security. The West should seek, instead, a balanced

relation with the Soviet Union.

Implicated in this view is the opinion that, given the existing military balance of forces between East and West, the Soviet threat is primarily a political one; that there is no major threat of a further military expansion of the Soviet empire and that the intervention in Afghanistan will prove to be a mistake to the Soviet leaders themselves. In this school the hope on a future convergence of Eastern and Western socialism is still alive.

Among the supporters of the present Dutch governmental coalition, we find more people who emphasize the importance of the internal factors of the Soviet system and the continuity of Russian and Soviet power politics. They point to the fact that the Soviet Union has become a problem to the client-states it has been helping; that it is disliked by its neighbours; that it could greatly contribute to international peace and security by curtailing its secret services and by stopping its practice of intervention by proxy. This school draws our attention to the fact that substantial progress towards arms control is only possible if the Soviet Union changes its attitude with respect to verification of agreements and on-site inspection; that the Soviet Union has shown little concrete readiness to accept the rules of a new international economic order and that it has been on the conservative side in discussions on a revision of the UN Charter. The internal political and economic system of the Soviet Union could not be mankind's guide to world peace. Without structural changes within the Soviet system, there can be no substantial progress towards world peace, but unlike democracy the Soviet system excludes a public debate about itself. A final point of consideration is that the Western world cannot help but be in competition with Soviet Marxism as long as this competition is proclaimed by Marxism itself; in this situation the West can only try to moderate the competition. Since the proclamation of martial law in Poland, refugees and left-wing intellectuals in the Netherlands have given renewed attention to the negative aspects of the Soviet system. Increasing attention is given to the continuing Soviet military build up and the illegal Soviet maritime activities in the Baltic.

The change of attitude is also becoming apparent from the establishment of some new organizations, like the Foundation for Peace Politics and the Interchurch Com-

mittee for Reciprocal Disarmament, which try to counterbalance the existing peace movements. Notwithstanding this reappraisal of the Soviet Union there is little immediate fear in this country that Western Europe is going to be Finlandized. This should be attributed to the strong belief of the Dutch in democracy and the continued strength of NATO as well as their assessment of the inherent weaknesses of dictatorships.

When dealing with the peace movement we should be aware that opinions are not always held because they are empirically correct, but also because they serve a goal. The Dutch like to be active mediators between East and West and between North and South. This can be done by diplomatic mediation, or in a more controversial way, by breaking conflict alignments. As a middle-size power, the Dutch often do the last. They try to act as holders of the balance, and for moral reasons at that. One example was the Dutch policy at UNCTAD IV in Nairobi, where the Netherlands blocked a com-



Professor Paul Teunissen

mon Western approach in order to help push forward the proposal of a Common Fund. More or less in the same way, the anti-nuclear opposition in the Netherlands has been obstructing NATO's modernization decision of December 1979, which it considered just a new step in the arms race. This does not mean that the Dutch peace movements intend to serve Soviet interests. They are linking their policy of unilateral disarmament steps to support for human rights in Eastern Europe and they have encouraged opposition in Eastern Europe against nuclear deterrence and the military build up of the Warsaw Pact. They are aware that this is contrary to Soviet interests and ideology. But they hope to continue this effort by offering such new perspectives on arms control and disarmament by the West, that the Soviet Union will continue contacts with them and with the churches, and that she will tolerate more freedom in the Warsaw Pact countries.

Actually the Soviet government, the Ecumenical Council of Churches and the majority of American bishops, stand united in condemning the first use of nuclear weapons and NATO's strategy. In 1983, the Ecumenical Council of Churches will meet in Vancouver, where it will welcome Canada's steps towards a unilateral denuclearization. Does this mean that religion is no longer "opium for the people"? We will have a clearer answer to that question when in the same year, 1983, the Luther memorial is taking place in the German Democratic Republic. The East German authorities have been planning great festivities, but they cannot be sure what effects this is going to have, now that the Evangelical Church has become a protector of opposition against the army.

What we are witnessing today is an interaction of developments between East and West which in particular in our democratic states are beyond the reach of political leaders. Fascinating as this may be, this development and the polarization of the past years also entail grave risks. A public opinion poll of a few weeks ago by the Atlantic Institute in Paris has made clear that in Western Europe and the United States there is in fact a broad consensus among the average population, that in East-West relations we need both defence and arms control. But on both sides of the Atlantic, the political

processes of democracy are drawing the public debate and politics to extremes. And we cannot deny that to a certain extent the extremes are reality. The Soviet Union is a superpower that is able and willing to engage in a sharp competition with the West in particular in this period of economic and political crisis.

At the same time, many if not most people on the Eastern side, including party members and leaders, should like to see the arms race curbed and international tensions reduced. What distorts our analysis of the threat and our policies is the fact that we apparently have not been able to shape the basic consensus of our nations into a coherent alliance policy of unity, force and moderation. Without a sufficient degree of unity, the West cannot deal constructively with the Eastern countries, while containing their influence, I cannot help considering this lack of political unity as a factor contributing to the crisis of the 1980's.

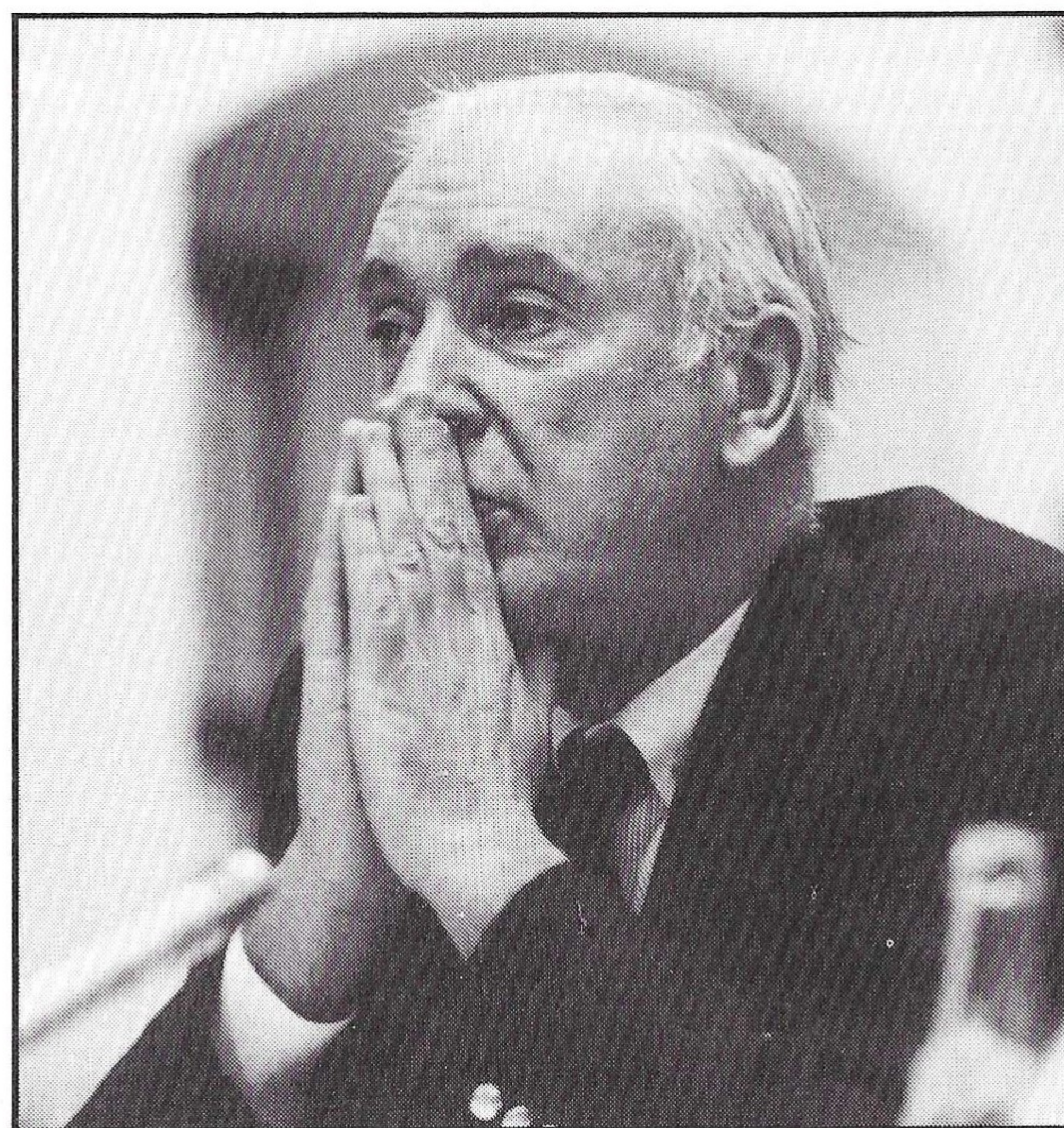
Discussion

In the discussion on the Keynote Address and the following introductions, attention was given to the nature of the Soviet challenge and ways to meet this challenge. Questions were asked about the prospects for arms control in the coming years, particularly in the context of NATO's "double-track" decision about the modernization of nuclear forces in Europe. The crucial role of public opinion in these questions was generally recognized. Finally, the possibility of American troop withdrawals from Europe was raised.

Jhr. G. van Benthem van den Bergh doubted the relevance of force comparisons, such as Mr. Binnendijk had given. These figures were too static and said nothing about important differences such as the position of the Soviet Union as an enclosed continental power vs. the United States as a power with a maritime tradition, and the resulting differences in the composition of nuclear forces. If the ICBMs of the United States became vulnerable, Soviet ICBMs would grow even more vulnerable, given the superiority of American technology. With regard to Mr. Grey's statement that the goal of Western defences was the deterrence of aggression, Mr. Van Benthem van den Bergh considered the prevention of nuclear war as the essential goal. Given mutually assured deterrence, aggression was no longer

the most worrying problem. This implied that nuclear strategists should be less concerned with what to do after deterrence had failed and should concentrate instead on stabilizing mutually-assured deterrence. This is what allied consensus should be obtained for.

Dr. G.F. Treverton said that, while he agreed about the difficulty of comparing defense efforts, it was important to ask what was the point of the very significant Soviet effort. It seemed to him that the Soviet military build-up over the last decades had seriously called into question the major premises of the basic strategy of the United States, which could indeed be characterized as a rather classical maritime strategy. Soviet force improvements from the nuclear realm across the conventional realm and particularly including maritime forces, had given grounds for concern about the credibility of all major premises of American strategy. One might argue about possible countermeasures, or about implied Soviet intentions, but it would, in his view, be very difficult to



Dr. Tony Dake

argue that somehow these force improvements did not matter.

Dr. A.C.A. Dake asked Mr. Grey how serious one should take the zero-option, which was put forward by the US side in Geneva. Would this be acceptable to the Soviet Union? If not, might not a failure of the Geneva talks alienate public opinion, with all the complications that this would entail?

Mr. H.A. Schaper drew attention to the differences in significance attributed to arms control in Europe and the US. While Europeans considered arms control as a kind of linchpin in East-West relations, in his view the Reagan administration was of a different opinion and saw arms control as something for naive liberals. In their opinion, anybody with a hard-headed approach towards the Soviet Union would not think a real arms control agreement possible, as it would not be possible to agree on verification procedures. If, however, the American administration did not believe in the possibility of verifiable arms control agreements with the Soviet Union, the Geneva negotiations would be nothing more than a charade, undertaken only to make the deployment of new weapons possible. Did the American administration in Mr. Grey's and Mr. Binnendijk's view believe in verifiable arms-control agreements with the Soviet Union? And would the US Senate ratify a treaty which only provided for national means of verification?

Mr. H.J. van den Bergh wondered why part of the zero-option, as proposed by the United States, was that the Soviet Union should withdraw not only its SS-20 systems, but the SS-4s and SS-5s as well. As the SS-4 and SS-5 systems were previously not considered a serious threat to the Western alliance, their inclusion in the American proposal seemed illogical and threatened its possible success. He further questioned the American refusal to include the British and French nuclear forces, at least in theory, in the Geneva negotiations. Finally, Mr. Van den Bergh pointed out that often it was not Soviet subversion but Western lack of political, historical, economic and social understanding which made many Third World countries, e.g. in Latin America, turn away from the West.

Dr. P. Corterier said that in his opinion resistance against NATO's "double-track" decision was still growing in most West European countries and that there was a very serious problem with regard to public opinion. Support for the decision could only be hoped for if the US negotiating position in Geneva was seen as being credible, and if the Americans were seen to make an all-out effort to get results from these negotiations. Should the negotiations fail, it would have to be very clear that this was the fault of the Soviet Union and not of the United States in order to obtain public support for deployment of American systems in Western Europe. In this connection, the question of the French and British nuclear forces was highly important. In his opinion, the Soviet Union had had a lot of success with its position that these systems should be included in the Geneva talks, as many people considered the American refusal to do so unfair to the Soviet Union. Could not the US indicate a readiness to look into this matter within the START framework, and wouldn't that be a very important step forward for the INF talks?

Referring to the debate in the American Senate about troop withdrawals from Europe, Dr. Corterier saw a real danger of withdrawals of some American troops, while at the same time the French might also decide to withdraw troops from Germany, as a consequence of the emphasis on nuclear weapons in the new French defence budget and the corresponding need to cut conventional forces. All this ran directly counter to what public opinion in the Federal Republic wanted and to the need to strengthen conventional forces in order to be able to rely less on at least certain types of nuclear weapons, such as short-range or battlefield nuclear weapons. He considered this trend, which might lead to increased, instead of diminished dependence on nuclear weapons, as very dangerous and feared increased difficulties with public opinion in West European countries as a result.

Mr. S. Sloan commented that in his work for the Congressional Research Service, troop control was one of the issues he dealt with, and that, in his opinion, an amendment which would freeze US force levels in Europe at their current level and deny the administration the possibility for further increases on those levels,

would have at least a 50-50 chance of passing the Senate and being accepted by the House of Representatives.

Mr. A.B.M. Frinking pointed to contradictions in the nuclear debate. How could one say that any use of nuclear weapons might unleash a dynamic leading to general nuclear war, and have, at the same time, a strategy which included the first use of such weapons? In public discussions this was felt as a contradiction and there were many others like it. He wondered how much time was needed to clarify issues in the Geneva talks before negotiations about the substance would begin. His second question concerned the zero-option. If the zero option really was implemented, then how would the European defense be coupled to that of the US, and if this would not be possible, how realistic would the zero option then be?

Dr. G.F. Treverton commented that the credibility of the American strategic forces commitment to the defence of Europe was not only undermined— if this was

indeed the case – by the SS-20, but by a whole string of Soviet force improvements and particularly by the emergence of strategic parity between the United States and the Soviet Union. One ought to be clear that the "double-track" decision was not simply tit-for-tat, that is, no need to have these missiles because the Russians have the SS-20. Therefore, it was not outrageous to include the SS-4s and SS-5s in the zero-option. The justification for the "double-track" decision was the whole range of Soviet force improvements, and thus it was certainly fair to demand that the SS-4s and SS-5s also be withdrawn.

In his reply *Mr. R.T. Grey* agreed that an adequate assured deterrent capability on both sides was what should be achieved, hopefully at much lower levels than now was the case. In the START negotiations, the United States tried to reduce, for the first time, both the number and the destructive capability on either side in a significant and meaningful way; 30 per cent in the first stage of the talks and hopefully more in the second stage.



From left to right: Dr. Pierre Lellouche, Professor Paul Teunissen and Dr. Gregory Treverton

Mr. Grey also agreed that fixed ICBM systems were clearly the most destabilizing weapons on both sides, as they gave a potential first-strike capacity and as they were the weapons one had to "use or lose" if an exchange would occur. Therefore, the US wanted to reduce the number. The zero-option proposal in the INF talks was, of course, a serious proposal. It made sense in terms of verification and would solve a number of problems for the US. It was clear from his prepared text, drawn up with precision and cleared with Washington, that the proposal was intended to be taken as a serious negotiating position and confirmed President Reagan's statements to this effort. Thus; the US was prepared to negotiate seriously if and when the Soviets declare their readiness to reciprocate. As to the role of verification, it was true that this could be used as an excuse for not having any arms control at all. Nevertheless a number of joint measures were contained in the proposal which went beyond national technical means and which could help solving verification problems without being terribly intrusive. There might be certain aspects of this verification which would require more intrusive measures, but these would be taken up on an issue-by-issue basis in order to achieve the degree of confidence in the agreement that would enable the administration to take it to the Senate for ratification. British and French forces would never be overtly compensated for in any negotiation, but if one remembered the long history of the SALT discussions, it was clear that in some mysterious fashion, without ever saying it, events developed in a way which opened the way to a solution. This however would have to be considered, if at all, in the context of the strategic talks rather than the INF talks.

Taking up the suggestion that the START and INF talks should be combined, Mr. Grey said he accepted that the substance of these talks was intellectually related to the same problem, but he believed it a wise policy to keep them separate for the time being. He reasoned that if progress should develop in the INF talks this should not be complicated by its inclusion in an overall START package.

In any case, those in Washington who were responsible for preparing the negotiating teams and for issuing instructions, were the same for both the INF and

START talks, thus both sets of negotiations were being treated as aspects of the same problem.

Mr. H. Binnendijk agreed in his response that his presentation of resource allocations had been simplified in order to give a ready frame of reference for the discussion, yet it was still useful to note that Soviet budgetary outlays, both in real and nominal terms, were greater than that of the US. Mr. Binnendijk believed that US ICBMs were in a more vulnerable state than those of the Soviets, but that it was part of the administration's START strategy to change this situation by attempting to convince the Soviets to eliminate this destabilizing factor. The US commitment to arms control was again vigorously defended and reference was made to the efforts of Senator Percy, the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who, with the support of the Committee, has been urging the administration for the last two years to take action on arms control. Mr. Binnendijk was convinced that the problem of verification would not be an obstacle should the administration submit an arms control agreement to the Senate for ratification.

European criticism that the US was not exercising greater flexibility with respect to the zero-option and with respect to the inclusion of the British and French systems in the Geneva talks, gave Mr. Binnendijk cause for concern. These negotiating standpoints, however, were originally taken by the Europeans, both with respect to the desirability of the zero-option and the non-inclusion of British and French forces in the Geneva talks.

Mr. Binnendijk expressed his agreement with Mr. Sloan on the question of US troop withdrawals by stating that a freeze at present troop levels was the most likely result of this debate. He noted that the debate had significantly shifted in the last year to questions of a technical nature and that the proposal to place ceilings on troop levels in Europe arose from considerations related to the economic situation in the US. The resulting need for a reduction in military expenditures was understood in Europe and was no longer perceived as a punitive act towards Europe.

Mr. P.J. Teunissen observed that the concern over a possible withdrawal of some 10,000 American soldiers from Europe was due, at least in the Netherlands, to an attitude, however unpleasant it might be, which would effectively leave the solution to all important defence problems in the hands of the US.

"We should not have serious defence problems; leave them to the US." Such an attitude was, according to Mr. Teunissen, unsatisfactory. Instead, a more complete European integration in the field of arms control was the proper objective. This objective, however, was

made more difficult if the British and the French insisted on having their own nuclear weapons excluded from the arms control talks. Too, the exclusion of British and French nuclear weapons from the arms control talks might encourage neutralist tendencies present in the Netherlands and the Federal Republic of Germany, and any neutralist stance would but only make arms control more difficult. Therefore, Mr. Teunissen favored the development of European integration in this area as well as a balanced approach to arms control; policies to which European nations should make their individual contribution.
