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Subject: Soviet Comment on the Harnel Exercise and NATO

The attached note is forwarded as of possible current interest.

SOVIET COMMENT ON THE HARMEL EXERCISE AND NATO

Soviet propaganda over the years has taken pains to attack the thesis that NATO can have any other role than that of an "aggressive military bloc". Any suggestion of a "peaceful" role for the Alliance has been vigorously rebutted. "Modernization", "reform", or "transformation" of NATO have regularly been attacked lest the public be "misled" about NATO's inherently "aggressive" nature.

It is not surprising, therefore, that as public attention to the Harmel "Future Tasks" study has grown, Soviet propaganda has begun to reflect apparent concern that the public relations effect of the Exercise may be to neutralize agitation aimed at weakening Western public support for the Alliance.

As Western media devote increasing space to coverage of the Exercise, an article in Pravda on 19th October (Spartak Beglov) has already set the tone for further Soviet comment leading up to the December NATO Ministerial Meeting:

"The modernization of NATO and true relaxation of tension in Europe are incompatible", the article asserts. "The main aim of the 'reformers' of NATO /In the Harmel Plan for 'modernization' of NATO/ is to obstruct the movement spreading in Western European countries for withdrawal from NATO in view of the approaching expiration of the 20-year term of the Atlantic Treaty Alliance and for the complete liquidation of this aggressive bloc."

Another Soviet commentator, R. Kolchanov, wrote on 18th October, "It is quite clear that the newly concocted plan is a continuation of previous attempts to present the Atlantic bloc as peace-loving,.... without changing NATO's international aims and aggressive essence".

Soviet media seeks to condemn the idea that NATO, as a political body, would play a positive role in efforts to improve relations with Communist countries of Eastern Europe as "hypocrisy". Moscow's antipathy toward a "co-ordinated" or "harmonized" detente on the part of Western governments is manifest.

Meanwhile, more generally, Soviet anti-NATO propaganda, persistently but in a relatively low key, has continued to revolve around three main themes:

- (a) There is no threat from the USSR and therefore NATO is unnecessary;
- (b) Atlanticism is dead owing to European disappointment and alarm over United States policies;
- (c) The "French example" should be increasingly followed by France's European neighbours.

For example, Pravda's senior political commentator Yuriy ZHUKOV wrote approvingly on 28th September, "It would be logical for France, after breaking with the Atlantic pact's military organization, NATO, to press its struggle against American hegemony to a logical conclusion in 1968 by announcing withdrawal from the North Atlantic pact".

Soviet press stories magnifying the discussion of the Atlantic Pact's future within NATO member countries, notably France, Italy, and Denmark, have become somewhat more frequent in recent months although their volume is still well short of a full-scale campaign.

Soviet phraseology has almost invariably contained the deliberately misleading term, "the expiration of term of the North Atlantic Treaty in 1969", following the practice of the Karlov Vary declaration last spring.

CONCLUSION:

The conclusion to be drawn, as far as one can judge from available Soviet media sources, is that Moscow's aims towards the Alliance as traditionally assessed - an end to NATO, its replacement by a loose, divided Europe, and reduction of United States influence there - have not appreciably changed. The continuing propaganda line is patently designed to weaken the NATO superstructure. There is no overt evidence at least for the sometimes advanced theory that, despite its public line, the Soviet Union's ever-cautious leadership privately desires the continuance of NATO, if in weakened form, as a factor of stability in Western Europe.