

Anatoly Chernyaev's Notes (excerpts) from the Politburo Session, 8 May 1987
“On the Doctrine of the Warsaw Treaty Organization.”

On the Doctrine of the Warsaw Treaty Organization

Gromyko. We have always had a defense doctrine, in the political and the military sense.

Shevarnadze. I am for publishing the truth about the number of our troops in central Europe... not for withdrawal, but for the truth and arguments.

Yakovlev. Supporting Shevarnadze. We should say something about the disbalance. Otherwise we will come not only to a propaganda dead end, but a political one as well.

Gorbachev. (To Marshall Sokolov). When you go into a place, think about how you will go out...

Sokolov. Our (*the Warsaw pact organization*) military personnel is right now bigger than the NATO's by 170 thousand. Out of that, 70 thousand are Soviet troops, the rest are troops of the allies. There is no disbalance. And then, how would we reduce them? How do we keep what we've won? Withdrawing troops would be a policy mistake.

Chebrikov. The issue of disbalance deserves serious attention. But we are taking into account the territory from the Atlantic to the Urals. In that case, there is no disbalance.

Dobrynin. The essence of the issue is whether to say that we have more troops in the center of Europe than NATO has, or not. We need to close down Vienna somehow. If we want to be honest, we have to say that. We were cunning for 13 years, and we have to admit it now.

Medvedev. There is a phrase in the doctrine: “we will respond with all the means available.” Does this mean with nuclear weapons as well? It is necessary for every formula to be precise, not “on the whole.”

Vienna will not be “taken down” if the sore point (*disbalance*) is not taken down.

We cannot leave untruths... We cannot ignore our own views. And we need to speak openly about the territory of Europe being from the Atlantic to the Urals.

Zaikov. It would be better to speak about disbalance in Mikhail Sergeevich's speech.

Gorbachev. They (*in the West*) know about it anyway...

Zaikov. They know, but it is a different matter when you say it. We need to acknowledge it openly. The question of control arises next. So far we have been trying to avoid control ourselves.

Gorbachev. How the disbalances were formed—the skewed proportions on different types of weapons, here arguments must be used as well.

Akhromeev. I think that we should try to find a solution to the issue of the disbalance of armaments in Europe, and we should state it openly.

Gorbachev. Firstly. I disagree that there is “nothing new” in the document. Our understanding of the problems has deepened. Policy is the main issue here. The speculations are going on. Remember, I told you about my meeting with Thatcher. She said they were afraid of us; that we invaded Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Afghanistan.

This perception is widespread among the public there. It persists in the minds of many people. Anti-Soviet propaganda is based on it. We should strengthen our policy for humanization of international relations with our actions.

There were public statements by our generals in military journals, for example marshal Grechko's article. They put the West on guard and strengthen their distrust.

That is why politically it makes sense for me to give a speech and publicly state the new doctrine.

Secondly. What should the character of this doctrine be like? We are not just sitting or lying on our military doctrine, we are trying to find a way to make the world more stable. Now even parity ceased to be a guarantee. Therefore, we propose to act in an appropriate fashion. And we will not be stubborn about having 27 thousand tanks and almost 3.5 million soldiers there.

I would like to second Vadim Andreevich on the issue of implementing "all corresponding means". This is ambiguity.

We overlooked a very important question—the question of sufficiency. Many scientists, the public responded to this idea. And we need to make a statement that we are striving to keep the armaments at the lowest level.

About disbalance. I must say: nobody in the Defense Council could explain clearly what strategic parity is. This is not a question of statistics, it is a question of military policy. Strategic parity means that we have a reliable guarantee of defense of our country. And the enemy will not attack us because in that case it would receive an unacceptable retaliatory strike. If we anticipate such a result, then we have parity. But if we start counting—they have a rifle, we have a rifle—then we should stop with the building of socialism. They have 6 billion people working on armaments. So should we try to catch up the number? We should put an end to such an approach. I ask the question: we will keep turning the country into a military camp? They clearly want to pull us into another round of the arms race. They are counting on our military exhaustion. And they will portray us as militarists. And they are trying to pull us in on the SDI.

There are the positions, from which we should formulate our military doctrine.

And when we speak about the number of our troops in Europe, and if we state the numbers honestly, then we would have to come to the decision to withdraw them at an appropriate time. It is important for the leadership of our allies that we keep our military presence there. And is not so important how many troops there are. We also need the presence; it is a political element—so that others know: if they touch our allies, they will have to deal with our power.

Somewhere here lies the fruit of long contemplation. The direction of thought must be only such... We need to approach Eastern Europe from these positions. We have defense there, we have strong powers.

What is the difference whether there are 380 thousand there or 300 thousand? What is important is the matter itself, and the positioning of the troops.

Therefore, the approach of one soldier there, one soldier here, they have a bullet we have a bullet—is not our approach.

We need to find a way out of Vienna. The numbers are important here, we need to make it clear. Let us say, we keep 170 thousand. But there should be no rush—like we were going to withdraw the rest immediately. We should tell the government heads about this at the PCC in the context of the Budapest initiative. We must not allow it to look like

retreat. We need to think this through, discuss it with our allies, and then propose to the West during negotiations. Let them react. Maybe they will tell us that we do not need to do it. It is important for us to untie the line of trust, trust, and trust once again. The West is speaking about it all the time, and we are just cunning around.

And if we are talking about Europe as [the territory] between the Atlantic and the Urals, then you (the NATO members) should go ahead and withdraw troops. We will have to deal with their troop numbers. Here they are afraid, because they would have to ship the Americans over the ocean.

Translated by Svetlana Savranskaya and Anna Melyakova for the National Security Archive