



INTERNATIONAL
SECURITY AFFAIRS

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20301

Office of the Secretary of Defense

Chief, RDD, ESD, WHS

Date: 07 SEP 1973 Authority: EO 13526 + 5 U.S.C. § 552

Declassify: X Deny in Full: _____

Declassify in Part: _____

Reason: _____

MDR: 18-M-1993

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

SUBJECT: MBFR: Soviet Proposal on Stationed Forces in Hungary
and Italy ~~(X)~~

Classification:

Orig - SecDef

OSD File

RC, S, D,

ISA RF

PF Chron-Subj

PF Comeback

Col Fulwyler/ez/55678

16 Mar 73

17 MAR 1973

In reply refer to:

I-21523/73

Fulcher NATO 3202

(Mar) 1973, Box 76

330-78-0001

This memo responds to your request for comments on the Soviet proposal for resolving the Hungarian participation issue by an agreement to limit the level of stationed forces in Hungary and Italy. (Tab)

Background

After a short initial meeting of all 19 delegations in Vienna, the talks were adjourned until participation issues could be worked out. Since then, there have been no plenary meetings, and we have been unable to get on with the business of preparing negotiations, including discussion of a possible agenda. Instead, Allied and Pact representatives have held a series of informal, bilateral discussions in an effort to break through to plenaries.

The two main problems have been Rumanian and Hungarian participation. While the Rumanian issue has been settled, the more serious problem of Hungarian participation remains and is the obstacle to moving ahead. We had invited Hungary as a full participant and had heard no objection to this until early February when the Soviets began arguing against direct Hungarian participation. A Soviet representative on a personal basis suggested that we might put the Hungarian issue aside for the time being. But more recently the Pact has argued that Hungary must be either excluded as a direct participant or Italy must be included as a direct participant.

After considerable abrasive wrangling over the pace and direction of movement toward a compromise on Hungary, the Allies have now agreed on an approach that would: (a) place the question of Hungary's role and status in abeyance; and (b) fix the participation of all other delegations, including Italy and the other flank states as indirect or consultative participants. This was coupled with an internal Allied agreement that the Pact should not be free to circumvent MBFR by building up in Hungary, that the question of inclusion of Hungary in a constraints area should be left open, and that a decision by any Allies (e.g., Italy) not to be included in restrictions would be supported by other Allies.

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Authority: EO 13526
Date: SEP 07 2018
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18-M-1993

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On 13 and 14 March, Allied spokesmen (US and Dutch) presented the Allied approach to Soviet and Hungarian representatives. There has been no movement in the Eastern position in substance, but the Soviets did agree to engage in a search for a neutral solution of the participation issue, and we have at least (and at last) engaged them on the problem.

Soviet Proposal on Stationed Forces in Hungary and Italy.

In the 14 March meeting with the US and Dutch representatives, Kvitsinskiy, Deputy Soviet Representative, confirmed the Soviet idea first proposed by Kapitonov on 7 March (this is the message you refer to). Kapitonov had proposed that in return for Western acceptance of special status for Hungary the East would be willing to give "an absolute guarantee" that the number of Soviet forces in Hungary would not be increased, providing the Allies would agree to the same limitation for stationed forces in Italy. In raising the Kapitonov idea, Kvitsinskiy said he understood that the Allies were concerned that Hungary might be a potential area for the buildup of Soviet forces, and thus, the Allies felt that the level of Soviet forces in Hungary should be frozen. Kvitsinskiy said the Soviets would be willing to do this if the Allies would apply the same limitations in Italy. Khlestov, the Soviet Representative, added that if it was in theory possible to apply such limitations to Hungary, "then in all justice they should be applied also to Italy."

Assessment

There is a basic issue involved in considering Italy in any force limitation agreement (FLA). From the outset of MBFR discussions, the US position has been to insist firmly that MBFR should be confined solely to Central Europe. We have resisted any expansion, particularly to the southern flanks. Our concern generally has been twofold:

- First, we have reviewed the MBFR process as difficult and complex enough considering only the Central Region without involving yet other areas and states.
- Secondly, to involve one or more of the southern flanks in any MBFR agreement would raise a whole new and complex range of political and military issues, including the Middle East situation and the question of US bases and force posture in southern Europe.

To agree to the inclusion of Italy in the MBFR process, even only in an FLA, would be a clear expansion of MBFR, breaking the focus on Central Europe which we have attempted steadfastly to maintain. In practicality, it could also undermine the logic of our past position and thus invite

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Date:

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In addition to the basic issue involved, there are several other factors which must be carefully considered:

- Italian consent to such a solution would of course be essential. It is uncertain what problems this might raise within the Italian Government.
- Although the Soviets aver that they do not want to get into Mediterranean issues, this may be nonetheless the underlying motive.
- A force limitation agreement could have sizeable constraining effects on such matters as US air operations in and out of Italy.

With this said, we need to examine the question fully. The Soviets may press for the inclusion of Italy together with Hungary in any non-circumvention or limitation formula as the price for an acceptable compromise which will permit talks to proceed. Some of our Allies see inclusion of Hungary as so important that they will be inclined to pay this price. Thus, while I would prefer complete exclusion of Hungary to inclusion of both Hungary and Italy in these terms, we may have to weigh the Italian problem against our interest in moving ahead with the talks. However, it is not yet at all certain that we will in fact be confronted with this choice.

Against this background, the US Delegation in Vienna was instructed in response to the 7 March Kapitonov initiative, not to initiate discussion or to present US views on the subject to the Soviets at this time pending further study. The delegation was authorized, should the Soviets raise the suggestion again, to determine how serious and how authoritative it was.

I have directed the Task Force to examine the implications of including Italy under some non-circumvention formula or a specific station force limitation agreement. This will help us to determine our position should the question be pressed by the other side or by our Allies.

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Lawrence S. Eagleburger
Acting Assistant Secretary

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