

October 14, 1963

Discussion between Soviet Marshal V. V. Kuznetsov and the SED Politburo

Citation:

"Discussion between Soviet Marshal V. V. Kuznetsov and the SED Politburo", October 14, 1963, Wilson Center Digital Archive, "Aktenvermerk, "14 October 1963, AAnlage Nr. 1 zum Protokoll 35a vom 11.10.1963 [Attachment to Protocol 35a (of the SED Politburo) from 11 October 1963]." SAPMO BA, J IV 2/2-900, pp. 2-21
<https://digitalarchive.umd.edu/document/111609>

Summary:

(Excerpts) discussion between Marshal Vasilii Kuznetsov and SED Politburoi members on the issues of Nuclear Non-Proliferation, US plans for the MLF, and Warsaw Pact military and political cooperation.

Original Language:

German

Contents:

Translation - English

... [Comrade Kuznetsov] then turned to the question of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons. The USA and the Soviet Union have already exchanged views on this matter for some time. In response to the pressure of the socialist countries, world public opinion, and especially a relevant resolution from the UN General Assembly, negotiations have moved forward. The USA is proceeding from its own motives on this topic. A certain role is played by the fear of the USA that West Germany will obtain nuclear weapons, remove them from the USA's control, and that they might then be misused even against the plans of the USA. This fear has grown since [the establishment of] closer relations between West Germany and France. The Paris Treaties did indeed forbid the production of nuclear weapons in West Germany, but West Germany can receive nuclear weapons from outside. Moreover, on the basis of relevant data, West Germany could quickly produce nuclear weapons if the Paris Treaties were annulled....

[In the years] 1959-60, the USA developed the idea of creating united nuclear weapons forces in NATO. At this time, General de Gaulle's ideas regarding independent French nuclear weapons were already known. West Germany was also demanding access to nuclear weapons. Under these conditions, the USA launched its new idea in order to maintain the unity of NATO and its monopoly in the military alliance. It wanted to urge France to give up on nuclear weapons, or, at the very least, to freeze the development of nuclear weapons. It wanted to demonstrate certain willingness to compromise with regard to West Germany, and to prevent it from obtaining nuclear weapons itself. These thoughts were presented over and over again to the Soviet comrades by American Foreign Minister [Dean] Rusk. It is clear that the creation of united nuclear forces in NATO will bring West Germany closer to control over such weapons. That is why the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic and other socialist states have come out against the creation of such nuclear forces in NATO. It has to do here with exploiting realities, and the negotiations that the Soviet comrades are conducting with the USA are also directed towards hindering the proliferation of nuclear weapons, especially to West Germany.

In the negotiations conducted with the USA at the end of 1962 and the beginning of 1963, the USA had initially declared that it was in favor of an agreement against the proliferation of nuclear weapons, but it did not want to give up its plans for proliferating nuclear weapons within the NATO alliance. On 8 August 1962, the USA had declared in an oral statement by Rusk to Gromyko that a future agreement should proceed from two main theses:

1. The states possessing nuclear weapons will undertake the obligation not to transfer them to third countries.
2. The countries that do not yet possess nuclear weapons will take on the obligation to not produce or seek to obtain any weapons of this sort.

The theses did not foresee, then, any limitation against the transfer of nuclear weapons under the aegis of a military alliance. They thus even wanted to obtain in this way silent consent for the creation of united nuclear weapons forces within NATO.

On 23 August 1962, the Soviet Union responded after a consultation with the socialist countries. The main theses were:

1. No transfer of nuclear weapons to other states, and also no information about their production.
2. Countries that do not yet dispose of nuclear weapons will not obtain them and will also not receive any technical data.

3. The transfer of nuclear weapons through military alliances to states that do not yet dispose of nuclear weapons is also forbidden.

In response to further exertions, the USA moved a step forwards. On 12 April 1963, they distributed a draft declaration and an aide memoir, which was given to the Warsaw Pact member-states for their information. With regard to points 1 and 2 from August 1962, the question of military alliances was added. States possessing nuclear weapons would undertake the obligation not to transfer any sort of nuclear weapons directly or indirectly through military alliances into the national control of states that do not dispose of such weapons, and not to give these states any assistance in the production of such nuclear weapons; states that do not possess any nuclear weapons should undertake the obligation not to produce nuclear weapons or to seek national control over any nuclear weapons directly or indirectly through military alliances and also not to receive or seek any assistance from other states in the production of such weapons.

This new proposal of the USA does not hinder West Germany's access to nuclear weapons. The debate in NATO itself over the creation of united nuclear weapons forces continues. Many proposals have been made that are still far away from the reality. The main goal of the Soviet Union is, to begin with, to bind West Germany's hands, to prevent it from obtaining nuclear weapons. Other capitalist countries that dispose of the economic potential to produce nuclear weapons should also have their hands bound. Smaller states must also be prevented from increasing the danger of nuclear wars.

The question for now is how should the negotiations move forward. Should one strive for an all-embracing treaty? This is probably impossible for now, because the USA has committed itself as far as possible with its proposal for united nuclear weapons forces. Should one exclude these questions from an agreement, while maintaining our position? Even if the second American variant were accepted, this would not mean that one would have to give up the struggle against the creation of united nuclear weapons forces in NATO. The possibilities for such a struggle would be even better. In this regard, Com. Kuznetsov referred to the fact that such speeches as those held by Comrade Walter Ulbricht and Comrade Gomulka during the last visit of a party and government delegation of the GDR to the PRL [People's Republic of Poland], in which they came forward in opposition to the aggressive plans of West Germany and NATO, were very good. This is particularly necessary now, given the fact that Adenauer is popularizing a program of revanchism in a more brutal fashion.

When one weighs all the pluses and minuses of the USA's second proposal, the positive outweighs the negative. An agreement on this basis is at any rate better than the current situation, in which no such treaty exists. The Soviet comrades have closely evaluated the GDR's proposals, and they meet with their complete understanding. They will now try to achieve a treaty that goes further than the USA's second proposal. Whether the agreement will take the form of a protocol, a treaty, a declaration, or something else is unimportant for the time being. The Soviet comrades plan to give a proposal to the USA in which the preamble will refer to the goal i.e., general and complete disarmament and will designate:

1. No transfer of nuclear weapons directly or indirectly through military alliances into the national control, including into the possession (disposal) of states that do not yet have of nuclear weapons at their disposal, and also not into the control of a military unit or individual member of the military, who belongs to the unified armed forces of the military alliance.

2. No transfer of information and no help in the production of nuclear weapons for states that do not yet possess them.

3. The states that do not possess nuclear weapons will undertake the obligation not to produce nuclear weapons; to not seek national control or possession (disposal) of nuclear weapons either directly or indirectly through military alliances, or through the control of one of its units or a member of its armed forces within NATO. They will undertake an obligation not to obtain or seek help, information, etc. regarding such weapons.

4. The agreement will not expire, but it will be possible to leave it.

The Soviet proposal was worked out on the basis of old Soviet proposals while taking into account the opinions of other socialist countries, especially the German Democratic Republic.... But the Soviet proposal goes farther:

1. It does not have to do with national control, but with the possession (disposal) [of nuclear weapons], which the Soviet proposal also forbids.

2. The Soviet proposal also forbids the transfer [of nuclear weapons] to individual military units or military personnel who are members of a unified military alliance.

3. The Soviet proposal more clearly defines a national control. The U.S. proposal says nothing about a ban on transferring scientific-technical data, while the Soviet proposal forbids their transfer.

4. The American proposal does not provide for leaving [the agreement], while the Soviet proposals maintain the right to leave. In this way, the possibility is preserved in case the agreement is violated by the USA to proceed in accordance with one's own conscience. In certain cases, this right could be a means for exerting pressure.

Comrade Kuznetsov then discussed what acceptance of the Soviet proposal would get us. West Germany would not receive nuclear weapons or any data regarding their production. In reply to Comrade Walter Ulbricht's question about whether this would only apply to the USA, Comrade Kuznetsov responded, [it would apply] also to France if West Germany agrees to this treaty, because it would have to undertake the obligation not to produce or obtain nuclear weapons, along with any relevant information. Comrade Kuznetsov is of the opinion that especially the obligation that West Germany assumed with regard to the Paris Treaties i.e., not to produce nuclear weapons would receive greater weight as a result of the signing of an agreement on the basis of the Soviet proposals. It is unknown whether France will agree, but West Germany would also be bound if France did not sign. Comrade Kuznetsov gave a presentation regarding what West Germany would be forbidden to do under the Paris Treaties, the American proposals and the Soviet proposals...

With regard to the creation of nuclear weapons forces within NATO, Comrade Kuznetsov said: Acceptance of the Soviet proposals would make this development more difficult, if not impossible. The relaxation of international tensions bound up with it would make it difficult for the Western powers to carry out the atomic armament of NATO. He believes, for example, that France did not sign the Moscow Treaty on a limited ban of nuclear weapons tests, but it is now much more difficult for it to carry out nuclear weapons tests. If West Germany would sign on to the points proposed by the Soviet Union, it would make it more difficult for it to gain access to nuclear weapons. The attention of the nations of the world in this regard would increase. The argumentation of the USA that if one does not make concessions to West Germany in this or some other form, it cannot be kept away from nuclear weapons will be invalidated by the proposed agreement. The struggle against the creation of unified nuclear weapons units under the aegis of NATO will be easier for the socialist states to carry out and will be expanded. The agreement would also

create a barrier to the transfer of data from France to West Germany. One must take into account here that West Germany declared a very great interest in de Gaulle's proposal to set up united nuclear weapons units for Western Europe.... If the [nonproliferation] agreement does not exist and unified nuclear weapons units already exist in NATO, it will be difficult to reach such an agreement, and West Germany's influence over the United States will be greater. West German circles have come out against such an agreement and are prepared for every form of cooperation in nuclear weapons forces. Adenauer is crazy because he fears that the USA is prepared to reach an understanding. Comrade Kuznetsov believes that an agreement of the desired type will have even greater resonance than the Moscow Treaty [i.e., limited test ban treaty].

Comrade Kuznetsov expressed his satisfaction that the CC [Central Committee] of the SED [East German Socialist Unity Party] found time to assess these problems, and he declared that one can expect a positive result in the form of the great work of all the socialist countries. Why shouldn't we strengthen what has already been achieved by undertaking new steps? Everything cannot be achieved, but much can. Why should we not press ... forward in the interest of the socialist world-system and the preservation of peace? Currently, no obstacle exists to the proliferation of nuclear weapons and practically no barriers to the attainment of nuclear weapons by countries that do not yet possess them. Comrade Khrushchev gave him the mandate to declare that the CC of the CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] has proceeded from our common interests and asks for understanding with regard to the Soviet proposals. All the other thoughts expressed by the comrades of the socialist countries will be assessed. The desire exists to work out a common strategic and tactical line for the Soviet Union's negotiations with the USA and England regarding the issue of preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons.

Comrade Ulbricht thanked Comrade Kuznetsov for his detailed presentation. He declared that we [i.e., the SED] agree with the CPSU's conception. The negotiations with the USA and England serve the strategic task of achieving universal and complete disarmament. The arguments that Comrade Gromyko used in his discussions with Rusk are correct. The Soviet comrades' proposed amendments are also correct. We ask for understanding that in conjunction with the results of these negotiations our situation in Germany is somewhat different than the situation of the other socialist states. The tactics of the Soviet Union indeed present the possibility of distancing the bourgeoisie in West Germany from each other and of pushing back the ultras to a certain extent. We recognize that nothing more can be achieved. That still has consequences, though, for the debates in Germany. The West German militarists consider the creation of united nuclear weapons forces in NATO as a success for their armament plans. They are declaring that they have not achieved what they want, but they are coming forward step by step i.e., their political authority in Germany is growing, even if they are discrediting themselves internationally. For domestic needs, Adenauer can say that the next step has been achieved; this is also true of [Fritz] Erler (West German Social Democratic Party (SPD) leaders) and [Herbert] Wehner. The creation of so-called multinational nuclear weapons forces in NATO will also shore up the cooperation of the right-wing SPD leadership with the CDU (Christian Democratic Union). One will have to consider what all can be done to mobilize the SPD's membership against the creation of nuclear weapons units in NATO.

Comrade Ulbricht turned to the words of Comrade Kuznetsov that the course of the negotiations cannot prevent us from struggling against the creation of nuclear weapons forces in NATO and said: But the opponent [i.e., the West] will claim that the Soviet Union has ignored the proliferation of nuclear weapons in NATO; only the GDR is opposed to it. Already, reports are appearing in the capitalist news agencies that the Soviet Union is no longer offering resistance to the creation of united nuclear weapons units in NATO. We know that this is not true, and we will come out against it. But world public opinion will be misled by the Western agencies because people do not know what we know. One must consider how to react against the methods of psychological warfare [employed by the] militarists. Probably, one has to underline the changing balance of forces. One must come forward in such a way that the West

German population can be mobilized.

Comrade Ulbricht pointed out that there is no obligation on the part of the USA not to increase or to reduce atomic and nuclear weapons in West Germany. Currently, the NATO troops are being stationed closer to the GDR's border in accordance with a decision by NATO. It is necessary to influence the USA to make declarations in this regard in which it obligates itself to not change anything. If these plans nevertheless become reality under pressure from West Germany, the dangers will increase even if West Germany is not supposed to control nuclear weapons. Conflicts will likely not begin with nuclear warheads, but with traditional weapons. In this regard, the plans of the West German militarists are dangerous, even if the USA controls the nuclear warheads. West German militarism has become strong, especially through its alliance with France. It does not yet possess nuclear weapons, but it does have the means for delivering nuclear weapons, such as rockets and other things. The danger of aggression has also become greater. The policy of the Soviet Union is clear. It is not yet clear, however, how the campaign against the creation of unified nuclear forces in NATO should be carried out.

Dr. Lothar Bolz[78] supported the comments of Comrade Walter Ulbricht and pointed out that two tendencies exist: on the one hand, to achieve disarmament, and on the other hand, the aggressive plans of the West German militarists in the sense of a forced tempo of armament. He said that a linkage has yet to be made between the nonproliferation of nuclear weapons and the Moscow Treaty... World opinion will initially interpret the exclusion of NATO's united nuclear weapons forces [in a nonproliferation treaty] as a renunciation of broader demands. Already, the situation must be clarified for the masses in preparation [for a nonproliferation treaty]. Taking into account the fact that the enemy has not yet agreed to the proposals, [Bolz] posed the question of how far one might still retreat. He doubts whether the possibility of leaving [the treaty] will bring any advantages to the socialist side and opined that the form of the agreement is not important, but it would still be better not to retreat to something less than the Moscow Treaty [i.e., limited test ban]...

Comrade Florin: ... The current Soviet proposals demonstrate that the Soviet comrades' in conjunction with the positions of the SED CC [Central Committee] have seen that the problem is complicated and that something more will have to be done. Greater pressure will be necessary in order to push through the current Soviet proposals.

Comrade Kuznetsov thanked [the SED] for the exchange of views and declared that nuclear weapons must be prevented from falling into the hands of West Germany. The analysis presented by Comrade Walter Ulbricht is clear and conforms to the thoughts of the Soviet comrades. A common standpoint exists that nothing should be left untried in preventing the creation of unified nuclear weapons units in NATO so that West Germany will not get a hold of nuclear weapons. We must move forward and continue the negotiations in order to achieve as much as possible on the basis of the Soviet proposal. He agrees that it will not be easy to achieve and that the public must be mobilized. The reports of the capitalist press agencies were interpreted by him as attempted feelers. Nevertheless, Comrade Gromyko he said has a clear conception. (Comrade Ulbricht interjected that we know this, but the world does not.) Comrade Kuznetsov declared that any agreement in accordance with the Soviet proposals will not give silent consent to the creation of unified nuclear forces. Consultations will probably have to take place more often during the course of the negotiations. With regard to leaving a joint agreement, one cannot discern everything in advance. But one must have the possibility even if it would be difficult to free one's hands in the interest of possible defensive measures. He understands our concerns regarding the imperialist troops on the border, but he asked what concretely can be done. The Soviet Union made a broad proposal to withdraw all foreign troops from West Germany and the GDR. Perhaps this proposal will have to be resuscitated. In closing, Comrade Kuznetsov [referred] to the preparatory measures being taken in

the session in Washington with regard to creating unified nuclear weapons forces in NATO. Up to now, the imperialists have had their hands free to do this; if we could create an obstacle to it, it would be better.