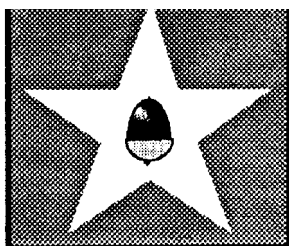


Conflict Studies Research Centre

J B K Lough

**Years in Big Politics-
Ye M Primakov**

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YEARS IN BIG POLITICS - YE M PRIMAKOV

Chapter II - NATO - In the Centre of Attention

(Translated and abridged by J B K Lough)

“Behind the Scenes History of the Intelligence Report”

Discusses report on NATO enlargement produced by the External Intelligence Service (SVR) in 1993. At this time, the Foreign Ministry (MFA) leadership (ie Kozyrev) had not yet developed a clear idea of the meaning of NATO enlargement or of the need to concentrate on neutralising its negative consequences.

We had completely reliable indications that strategic military planning in NATO HQ continued to include a “worst case” with use of nuclear weapons - against whom? Russia or China? Similarly, we knew that there was a dominant view in NATO circles to the effect that Pfp, trumpeted as a universal process in which even Russia could find its place, should be used as a school for the gradual inclusion of countries into NATO - of course, without Russia.

“What the Archives Told Us”

Quotes western leaders who “promised” Gorbachev that there would be no NATO enlargement: Baker, Kohl, Major, Hurd, Mitterand.

Why did Central and Eastern Europe (C&EE) countries want to join NATO? In order to be identified as part of Western rather than Eastern Europe. They wanted to join European structures, and NATO was simpler and less onerous than the EU. A portion of the blame for this rests on Russia. We did not pay enough attention to these countries after the collapse of the Warsaw Pact and Comecon.

I also do not exclude that some countries were motivated to join NATO out of fear of the growing strength of Germany, although such concerns were ungrounded.

The US was interested in enlarging NATO to include countries with a very pro-US agenda in order to brake efforts by some Western European countries to to develop a “European” defence component. Quotes Hubert Vedrine in support of argument (statement from 1997).

“We’re Not Used to Sleeping Next to a Hedgehog”

Meeting with Warren Christopher. Protocol problems relating to choice of meeting place. Irritation at Christopher’s desire to be familiar and not to raise sensitive issues. I went on the offensive, characterising the sort of relations Russia wanted with the US, ie permanent consultations, informing each other in case of issues affecting the other side, preventing “surprises”, implementing agreements, looking for solutions to issues where positions did not coincide. Russia has the impression that that the US side “is not paying such great attention to the equality of the two subjects of our relations”. Christopher disagreed, referring to Clinton and Yel’tsin’s relations. I started discussion with the CIS, but deliberately did not use the term

“re-integration” for fear of being misunderstood. Bosnia - I praised the State Department for its role in Dayton, but expressed concern that sanctions were not being lifted on time against Serbia. I warned Christopher that Russia was ready to withdraw unilaterally from sanctions regime if no progress was made.

Future of NATO: I outlined Russian concerns about enlargement, countering with the argument that the US would not welcome an increase in the Russian strategic nuclear arsenal even if the missiles were not targeted on the US. “NATO’s moving forward to Russia’s borders creates an entirely new, extremely disadvantageous military political and geopolitical situation for us.”

Christopher countered with well known arguments, but there were some strong notes in his voice: “President Clinton has made it clear from 1993 that NATO will enlarge.”

Christopher added that the NATO side was working on the basis of a signal from Moscow to the effect that Russia would want such enlargement to be gradual, and that it would be essential to find forms of linking Russia to NATO. Christopher added that if the signal had changed, “you will have to sleep next to a hedgehog”.

We agreed that Christopher would visit Moscow in March.

"We Chose the “Third Variant”"

The conversation with Christopher left no doubt that a decision had been made to ignore our position regarding NATO enlargement. Russia would have to adapt to NATO enlargement, and not the other way round.

Dispute with Strobe Talbott about the supposed equality within NATO: I said that it was not just a question of passengers of different classes - but with the US sitting in the cockpit. Talbott did not argue, he just smiled.

As part of the deal on unification, it was decided that there would be no nuclear or non-German forces on the former territory of the GDR. This condition was in part dictated by the USSR.

Three options were open to Russia re NATO enlargement:

- i) Oppose enlargement and renounce all relations with NATO. This would be a road to nowhere, or back to the Cold War. This would also have meant giving up the Russian contingent in Bosnia.
- ii) Recognise or, at least, not protest against NATO enlargement, and, on this basis, define Russia’s relations with the Alliance. US was pushing Russia in this direction as well as some Russian politicians who were recommending to Madeleine Albright that she should not pay attention to those in Russia who opposed enlargement since they were trying to gain votes! Such an option smacked of capitulation, and would have been quite unacceptable to Russian society. Strongly opposed to this option were the President, MFA, Ministry of Defence, and SVR.
- iii) Not to move away from a negative position on enlargement, but at the same time hold talks with the aim of minimising the consequences which threatened our security most seriously and were not in our

interests. In other words, to put the emphasis on influencing the process of enlargement.

We agreed on the third scenario, considering it to be the best suited to the situation as it was developing.

Dismisses idea of Russia ever joining NATO (quotes V Rühle in support of argument). NATO could never adapt to the task of guaranteeing Russia's security.

Talks on minimising the damage of NATO enlargement: with whom should we conduct them?

The US was not interested in talking about enlargement with Russia, but favoured the idea of talking about NATO-Russia relations in a broader context (ie enlargement was already decided). If Russia wanted talks on the broader relationship, then it would have to deal with Secretary General Solana. This was the US position at the beginning of 1996.

The West German (sic) and French positions were less categorical. They both nodded in the direction of Solana, but gave us to understand that they wanted to maintain bi-lateral contacts with Russia at the same time. The UK later showed interest in an exchange of views with us on NATO-Russia relations.

“On the Eve of the Negotiations”

Confidential talks were held with US, Germany, UK and Solana to “sound out” the issue. There were also consultations with the Turks, Greeks, Italians and Norwegians.

Our partners were also trying to “sound out” our position - hence Christopher's visit to Moscow (21-26 March). Reference to Christopher's statements in Prague about the nature of enlargement (C&EE countries face a security threat, Ukraine might join NATO at a later stage, enlargement will not be put on hold).

I told Christopher that Yel'tsin had reacted strongly to what had been said in Prague. “I referred to Yel'tsin's tough conversation with Solana who had been received in the Kremlin the day before the arrival of the US State Secretary. Obviously, this was also a reaction to Christopher's Prague statement. I added: was not the US betting on Yel'tsin losing the elections (June 1996)?”

Christopher knew from Solana about the extremely tough Russian position. He was obviously worried about meeting Yel'tsin, and wanted to put the emphasis on building normal, developed relations between NATO and Russia.

In the event, Yel'tsin had decided that the signal sent to Solana and through me to Christopher was sufficient, and their conversation was cordial.

Confrontation with Christopher in Jakarta on 23 July: Christopher said that US would not discuss either enlargement with third countries nor the provision of different classes of membership in NATO. I countered that if the US insisted on this, we would put more emphasis on providing for our security, including revision of arms control treaties.

Despite the stronger presentation of the issue, we had the feeling that attempts to deprive Russia of influence on NATO's enlargement were beginning to lose ground.

Contacts at foreign minister and deputy foreign ministers with Germany, UK and France (Afanas'yevskiy, Mamedov, Kislyak, Belous, Spasskiy on the Russian side) showed that the Europeans did not categorically reject the range of problems which we put forward as the basis of discussion and solution: These were:

- military issues - guarantee of non-deployment of nuclear weapons on the territory of new members
 - non-deployment on a permanent basis of foreign troops and related infrastructure
 - defining "framework" principles of modernisation of CFE Treaty to prevent NATO approaching our borders in threatening numbers

creation of consultative mechanism between NATO and Russia - to allow us to take consensus decisions on issues affecting Russia's security

evolution of NATO - moving away from "traditional" line, strengthening of political element

the need to give binding character to the document determining NATO-Russia relations - this should not be an amorphous charter or declaration, but a document signed by the Heads of State

Realisation on the Russian side that not all NATO members supported unreservedly the Christopher position.

Lists some contacts with European NATO members which showed movement in European thinking: Rifkind (27 Feb 1996) - I tried to put an end to illusions about the fact that a pause in enlargement for the Russian elections would sweeten the pill, and that our co-operation in Bosnia would allow Russia to ignore enlargement. Rifkind is a brilliant advocate. He accepted that Russia had a right to be concerned about the prospect of nuclear weapons being located closer to its borders.

30 July 1996 - meeting with Rifkind in Paris: I referred to two red lines re enlargement: vertical: threatening movement of infrastructure closer to Russia's borders as part of enlargement; horizontal: NATO membership of Baltic states and former Soviet republics is unacceptable for Russia. The Russian public would not accept NATO using former Soviet military infrastructure in these countries.

Rifkind told us to discuss these issues both at 16+1 meetings and unilaterally. He said that the US could not speak in the name of NATO.

The Russian side welcomed the Berlin decisions on modernising NATO, including the strengthening of the European component and peacekeeping functions.

Talks with Kinkel and de Charette - relations with both became closer and more trusting. Kinkel raised the possibility of establishing a NATO-Russia Council in which Russia would be represented on an equal basis.

Chirac mentioned in June 1996 the idea of a “chain”: reform of NATO, followed by dialogue between Russia and a new NATO with the aim of establishing special NATO-Russia relations, and then negotiations on its enlargement, including forms and content. He said that Kohl supported this idea as well.

De Charette said that he would put his energy into thinking about creating a European security architecture with the aim of giving an impulse to the fundamental renewal of NATO - the French attached great importance to this.

“Solana Front Stage - US Back Stage”

At this point the US was showing signs of irritation at the way Russia was talking in parallel with other NATO members. It seemed that the Europeans were also aware of this. Perhaps this was the reason for a determined push by the US to start negotiations on the NATO “track”, in other words with Solana.

We prepared ourselves seriously for these negotiations. From the summer of 1996 we had been preparing an agreed position (MFA, MoD and SVR) to be presented to Yel'tsin. But we still felt that it was not time to begin negotiations, we had to do some more “sounding out”.

I later established good relations with Solana, although I understood that he was obliged to stick to the general line, dictated in the main by Washington. But for the moment there was a lack of synchronisation in our dealings: when I asked concrete questions, Solana would reply that he could not speak on the part of the 16 without discussion with them beforehand. At the same time, he was asking me to give concrete answers to his questions in order to thoroughly expose the “reserves” of our position - this was absolutely clear. I told him: “Don't be offended, but it seems to me that we're in a prison cell and one of us is the “informer”.”

Solana knew that we were attracted by the “chain” as described by Chirac, and he used the term “parallelism”. I tried to explain to him that we understood the transformation of NATO, the development of NATO-Russia relations and the problem of enlargement as three interconnected processes. Solana put three pens on the table, and said that he as a physicist understood that these three lines coincided somewhere in infinity. I replied that I was not a physicist, that I knew Lobachevskiy geometry, but lived on the earth and not in infinity, and therefore wanted these problems to coincide in our discussions. It was clear at this point that Solana did not have any mandate to negotiate, which again convinced me that we were right to have chosen the line of “more haste less speed”.

The meeting with Christopher in New York on 23 September convinced me of this further. He argued that time was short with the OSCE Lisbon summit and the NATO Ministerials in December fast approaching, and that we needed to broaden the forms of co-operation between NATO and Russia at the same time as the new members joined NATO. Christopher wanted us to work fast to allow the Presidents to lay a basis by December of constructive relations between NATO and Russia.

Christopher stressed that he had received “contradictory signals” as to whether the Russian government was prepared to move in this direction. The main thing we had to decide, he said, was whether to task Mamedov and Talbott to develop a framework document in time for the middle of November.

In order to sweeten the pill, Christopher added a few words about being ready to discuss the problem of CFE modernisation and to touch on some of our concerns, in particular levels of deployment and other limitations. But then Christopher put the question point blank. Were we intending to continue the dialogue with three countries (France, UK and Germany)? “It is important to agree”, he said, “that the Russo-American channel is the main one, but that the Americans can and will keep their allies and Solana informed”.

I replied that Russia needed a fairly detailed document which defined its relations with NATO, and not a declaration along the lines of “we will not attack each other”. If we were going to create a NATO-Russia Council we had to agree on the basis on which it would work, the nature of the problems it would and would not deal with, as well as which decisions were binding or not. I emphasised that the framework principles of CFE modernisation should be reflected in the document since we could not accept an agreement with NATO without settling the issue of the non-approach of the NATO military machine towards our territory.

I told Christopher that the main thing for us was to prepare a document which would define a mutually acceptable development of our relations with NATO, which would promote the transformation of the Alliance from a Cold War instrument to a new organisation, but which would also minimise the negative consequences of enlargement for Russia. “If we can’t get such a document, we will not sign another”.

In response, Christopher banged on the Cold War drum, saying that he did not view the Charter which we were preparing (he stubbornly insisted on the term “Charter”) as something binding and concretely detailed.

The next day I met Kinkel. He asked about my impression of the talks with the Americans. I said I had the feeling that we had moved backwards. We were being offered the chance to discuss special relations with NATO but at the same time we were being told that such discussions should not influence the plans, dates, format and character of the enlargement of the Alliance.

Kinkel put his hand on my shoulder and said: “As German foreign minister, I categorically reject any *diktat* towards Russia. We are not up against the clock, so we will not do this in a hurry.”

Kinkel confirmed that it was essential to speak with Russia about the details and conditions of enlargement, including, of course, military infrastructure on the territory of new members.

Our German partners, perhaps, better than the others, understood that it was counter-productive to pressurise us, and tried to help us come to an agreement.

Meeting with Clinton after his speech to the UN General Assembly. Clinton tried to smooth over the negative result of my meeting with Christopher, speaking warmly about Yel’tsin and emphasising his commitment to the idea of creating a democratic Russia. Unexpectedly, Clinton singled out the special importance of joint, co-ordinated actions (between US and Russia) since we faced a probable conflict between India and Pakistan with the threat of a slide towards use of nuclear weapons. The same can be said about the Middle East, Clinton said. There can be no peace settlement here without the joint participation of Russia and the US.

On Europe, Clinton said that he wanted to do everything possible to create a united Europe which was essential for peace and stability, including beyond Europe's boundaries. "This is achievable if we can create special and clearly defined relations between Russia and NATO to which I am deeply committed. I did not say this in order to propagandise you. This is my sincere conviction, and I would like you to know it." The conversation was clearly going over time. Christopher kept looking at his watch.

"NATO-Centric Model of Security in Europe"

Although supporting NATO enlargement, Clinton may not have shared the views of those in the US establishment who would have liked to isolate Russia and exclude any possibility of influencing the terms of NATO enlargement. This was an important factor in preparing a document which would satisfy us. I also recommended activating our foreign policy with the aim of creating a comprehensive European security architecture in order to level any dividing lines created by NATO enlargement. Many in the West saw NATO as the core of a European security model. Enlargement was not the only means of achieving this aim. (Notes the role of PfP, and the interest it held for aspiring members and other countries alike.) NACC and PfP were conceived at a time when we had the OSCE and the Council of Europe which were not functioning badly.

Russia participated and participates in these structures with the aim of making them influence the character of NATO away from its traditional functions, and not because we agreed with a NATO-centric model of European security.

OSCE Permanent Session in Vienna: irritation at behaviour of representatives of former Soviet republics (not named) who chose to avoid speaking in Russian at the Permanent Session, and spoke instead in broken English or French.

In my speech, a "pre-negotiating step" on NATO-Russia relations, I focussed on several features of the European security model, emphasising that all international organisations in this sphere should be activated: UN, OSCE, Council of Europe, NATO (together with PfP), EU (complemented by WEU), CIS. OSCE should be at the centre of this new configuration. I was not arguing that the OSCE should be at the top of a hierarchy, and that NATO and other organisations should be subordinate to it. The OSCE should have a co-ordinating but no command function.

The Lisbon OSCE Summit in December 1996 showed that Russia's voice was being listened to. Reference to the declaration on a security model for the 21st Century which stated that it was impermissible for countries to strengthen their security at the expense of others, and that the interests of countries which were not part of military-political alliances should not be ignored.

The Lisbon Summit marked the beginning of work on a European Security Charter. Those who favoured NATO enlargement understood correctly that the fewer supporters of the Charter, the closer they would be to their aims.

Reference to friendship with Admiral Sir James Eberle (Director of Chatham House). Eberle proposed fusing NATO with the OSCE. An idea for the future, perhaps.

“Fairytale “Meshcherino” and Beyond”

Negotiations on relations between Russia and NATO began in Brussels in the middle of December at a “16+1” meeting with NATO followed by a session of the NACC. In Brussels, I spoke to Solana, Christopher and Kinkel.

On 10 December 1996, the NATO Council made its statement about the absence of “plans, intentions and reasons” for deploying nuclear weapons further East. This turned out to be a good omen.

In a telegram to Yel'tsin, I noted that some “satisfying nuances” were appearing in the positions of NATO countries. These included agreement that modernising the CFE Treaty goes in tandem with study of the issue of NATO infrastructure on the territory of new members. Another important issue for us was a permanent mechanism of consultation with Russia which would make obligatory our participation in solving issues which concerned our interests.

We were now seeing changes in the position of the Alliance as a result of Russia's strong and at the same time constructive position.

Since NATO was beginning to turn towards our real concerns, we decided to start the negotiating process.

Underlining the cardinal importance of this decision, Yel'tsin told Kohl in Zavidovo on 4 January 1997: “The issue is too serious for us to be able to get out of it with some insignificant phrases. If our concerns are not removed, Russia's strategic position will seriously deteriorate, and our trust in the West will be radically undermined.”

We and the West were facing an issue on which the fate of post Cold War Europe depended.

Solana headed the NATO delegation which came to Moscow. The MFA guest-house “Meshcherino” proved to be an excellent venue. The talks took place far away from journalists, and nobody “played for the public”.

Description of Meshcherino and surrounding park. Solana and I walked after lunch for about two hours and talked “one to one”. M I Kalinin had previously lived in this building, G Dmitrov, the Secretary of Comintern had also lived nearby. Mao Tse-Tung and Kim Il Sung had also been here, and now we had a delegation from NATO originally created to fight communism!

From the outset both sides showed that they wanted to make the meeting as business-like as possible.

Solana said straight away and for the first time that he had a mandate to negotiate from the 16 member states. He added that he saw it as his task to create and maintain a consensus with the 16 on the one hand, and between them and Russia on the other.

I felt that the crackling fires inside and the freezing air outside “melted” Solana. On the whole, he was in a rather tense state, perhaps sensing that he did not have much flexibility since he depended on instructions.

Nevertheless, I felt for the first time during our walk that Solana wanted to move forward, understanding the significance of the outcome for his role in history. (Footnote: I do not exclude that Solana was not at the forefront of those who instigated the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia in April 1999, despite his public statements of support. I think that it is not without his initiative that he left NATO for an almost identical position in the EU.

Solana accepted that NATO was an important institution, but not the only one in the area of European security and stability. Solana said that he saw NATO-Russia relations as a series of different elements which had to be brought together into a picture of political and legal obligations as well as unofficial and confidential mutual assurances.

He proposed breaking down the document into five sections: principles of relations, areas of consultation and co-operation, mechanisms of consultation, mechanisms of communication between the armed forces of each side, other areas of co-operation (science, ecology, fight against terrorism, illegal drugs trade, defence conversion etc).

Solana expressed a number of ideas which could interest us. However, he stubbornly avoided discussion of essentially military issues, which had obviously not at this point been sanctioned by the Alliance. Of course, this discrepancy did not suit us. Solana understood this and said a key phrase which determined the limits of his possibilities: "Meet the Americans, and make sure you find out their position on this."

Solana left Meshcherino, we believed, not disappointed. But he took away with him our main signal, ie that agreement on the set of military issues must be an integral part of the whole document. He obviously took away one more impression: however much Russia was interested in joining the G7, the World Trade Organisation and the London and Paris Clubs (he talked warmly about this possibility if the Charter was signed), we would not take any "payment" for softening our position in the interests of NATO. These issues should not have any bearing on the document, nor should they be included in it.

A second round of talks took place in Brussels. After Meshcherino we were expecting a serious discussion of concrete issues. But this did not take place. We understood that the NATO side did not yet see how the Alliance would address the military questions. We were offered general arguments or repetition of separate statements about its policy and objectives. We opposed incorporating these mechanically into the text. The military-political component in our opinion had to be central, and contain concrete provisions. This requirement could not be compensated for by movement in other areas.

The NATO side agreed with us that the document should be signed by Russia and the 16 members of NATO, and that it should include a provision about the transformation of NATO.

Our main job was to reduce the costs of enlargement for Russia, hence our insistence on agreement on the military issues. S I Kislyak, Col-Gen L G Ivashov, Lt-Gen Zlenko, R-Adm V S Kuznetsov and others carried the burden of defending Russia's interests and finding agreement which would create stability. Our interagency co-ordination (including also the SVR) was irreplaceable throughout the "negotiating marathon".

In Brussels we handed over our written drafts of the four sections of the document. We were sure that we would be able to start work with texts at the next stage of negotiation.

The third round was scheduled for March 9. Assistant Secretary General G von Moltke arrived in Moscow beforehand. From his conversations with N N Afanas'yevskiy it was clear that the pendulum had swung back the other way.

This prompted a telephone conversation with Solana: I told him that we were expecting a constructive reaction to our written ideas. What we had heard from von Moltke was taking us backwards (for example, the presentation of the principles from the section on the transformation of NATO in many ways departed from the what we had previously agreed). The consultation mechanism, according to von Moltke, should be aimed at an exchange of positions and on finding consensus, but without the requirement to reach consensus decisions on joint peace support actions conducted together with Russia. Von Moltke and his team refused to discuss our proposals on military issues. They said that modernising the CFE Treaty was for Vienna, but we did not want the document to become hostage to expert discussions in Vienna.

I told Solana that he had agreed that NATO would respond to our list of military infrastructure installations, but that the NATO military representative was not ready for this. If this was really the NATO reaction, then this was disappointing and did not augur well.

Solana said that had not had a chance to speak to von Moltke, and that he would bring a draft of the Charter to Moscow, although perhaps not all the Russian points would be included.

Solana said that he had not slept for days, and then pronounced the sacramental phrase. "Will you be going to Washington next week?"

In Moscow as well, Solana was not ready to discuss our proposals on military issues. Nothing new was said on nuclear weapons. It was again proposed that we postpone work on the section about CFE modernisation.

We had the impression that our NATO partners were not in a hurry and were, perhaps, slowing down movement towards concrete agreements. Their tactics were becoming ever clearer: a genuine effort to solve the general political and organisational questions, while slowing down the solution of the military problems.

We concluded that we had reached an impasse, and that the NATO side was awaiting our contacts with the Americans. I was due to see Clinton and Albright, but the NATO side was waiting, for the most part, to see what happened at the Russo-American summit in Helsinki, which was to take place on 20-21 March 1997.

"Madeleine Albright - State Secretary and Person"

Unlike Brzezinski, Albright cannot be called anti-Russian. In her speech at her Senate confirmation hearings, she said that the US would be able to work together with Russia in the struggle against weapons proliferation, securing nuclear arsenals and reacting to humanitarian crises and threats to peace. Albright said that

Russia had a right to defend its interests, but that the US would never recognise these rights with respect to spheres of influence beyond Russian borders.

Albright came to Moscow on 20 February. I told her that there were two obstacles to developing partnership between the US and Russia: the US approach to integration on the territory of the FSU (we did not want the US “warming its hands” on the complicated relations between Russia and a number of former Soviet republics. The second irritant was the issue of NATO enlargement.

Albright ducked the first question. On NATO she repeated that the timetable for enlargement would be observed, but added that in working out the NATO-Russia document, we would have to take a number of steps, in particular, the modernisation of the CFE Treaty. Albright identified four issues: no moving forward of military presence, consultations and mechanism for holding them; a provision on not moving forward nuclear weapons, transformation of NATO. She said that we could take these as the basis of our work, and that the US had ideas on all four areas.

It seemed to me that she attached special importance to her words when she said that there had been opportunities for improving relations with Russia during the past year, but that they had been missed. “Let’s not miss them now.” When she met Yel’tsin on 21 February, Albright made this point again. Undoubtedly, she made a strong impression on Boris Nikolayevich.

“Priority Contacts” in Washington

During a telephone conversation between Yel’tsin and Clinton, it was agreed that I would go to Washington to prepare the Helsinki Summit documents, including joint declarations by the Presidents on European security. This meant finding solutions to problems of NATO-Russia relations which were still far from being “put down on paper”.

The meeting with Clinton showed that he was sincerely interested in the success of the talks with Yel’tsin.

During the meetings in Washington we succeeded in:

- (a) confirming the binding character of the document on NATO-Russia relations
- (b) including in the joint statement for Helsinki an assurance from Clinton that there would be no increase close to Russia’s borders of permanently deployed NATO combat forces. This went beyond the unclear statement made by NATO on the eve of the Washington talks (14 March).
- (c) obtaining US agreement to include a statement on non-forward movement of nuclear weapons both in the Helsinki declaration and the Russia-NATO document.

The joint declaration also included a provision about OSCE as a universal organisation which can play a special role in European security as well as mention of elaborating a Charter on European security on the basis of the decisions of the Lisbon OSCE summit.

“The Last Step - the Most Difficult”

Solana phoned on 26 March to compare notes on the outcome of the Helsinki meeting. I told Solana that we needed to receive feedback on our written proposals regarding:

- (a) the transformation of NATO
- (b) the Russia-NATO consultation and decision-making mechanism
- (c) areas of co-operation

On all these points, our positions were not far apart, and it would be good if we could start agreeing texts.

Secondly, and most importantly, I told Solana that we needed to concentrate on the military-political section, which we had barely started. I proposed to Solana that before the next round of talks on 15 April we sketch the outlines of this section with a clear understanding of what we agreed on and what would go into “brackets”.

On the whole, Solana agreed.

A few days before our telephone conversation, the first contact had taken place between NATO and Russian military negotiations. The Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, K Naumann came to Moscow and made a favourable impression due to his rationality and openness. Some of his ideas were close to our own. This was encouraging, but we still had no written proposals from Solana. We needed to set in concrete the provisions we had agreed with the Americans in Helsinki concerning non-forward movement of NATO nuclear weapons as well as to agree how to implement them. On nuclear weapons, we proposed that NATO be obliged not to create preconditions for their basing or storage. Naumann agreed with us on this. But Afanas'yevskiy indicated after a meeting with von Moltke that NATO was not ready to codify its agreement not to create storage facilities or use former Warsaw Pact infrastructure which remained on the territory of “potential” members of NATO.

It was not easy to find a way out of this labyrinth. Yel'tsin spoke to a number of European leaders. I visited Kinkel and de Charette so that they would speak to Solana before he came to Moscow. Both Ministers showed a readiness to move negotiations forward and agreed that Solana should not come to Moscow with empty hands. De Charette even named a date and place for the signing of the NATO-Russia document: 27 May in Paris.

I met President Chirac on 9 April. I felt that Chirac wanted to be as helpful as possible in order to remove the obstacles to the signing of the document in Paris, ie a few weeks before the NATO Summit in Madrid. We were also interested in ensuring that the document was signed before NATO announced further enlargement since it laid down conditions for enlargement and neutralised a number of the most unfavourable consequences of this for Russia.

But we were not interested in “socialist obligations”, ie completing the five year plan in record breaking time. We wanted a thoroughly well thought out, well balanced agreement which addressed our interests.

So we had to find the solutions at our fourth meeting with Solana in Brussels on 15 April. Here as well, we were disappointed by the NATO position on the military part of the document. It did contain some constructive points, but on the whole

our proposals were either ignored, or NATO wanted to replace them with “statements of intent”. NATO proposed including in the text without any concrete obligations the statements on nuclear weapons (10 December 1996) and conventional forces and armaments (14 March 1997). NATO proposed simply quoting these. Nothing more. We said clearly that this was unacceptable for us.

Agreeing positions on CFE was assuming special importance. We wanted something more than just national ceilings, and were looking for restrictions on NATO’s overall totals so that these could be limited in the process of NATO’s enlargement. We were not given such guarantees, but accused of having a “bloc mentality”. But how could we think any differently if NATO continued to exist as a military bloc?

In the area of military infrastructure, NATO limited itself to some proposals on “transparency”. We were not opposed to this, but it was essential that we agree that NATO would not develop beyond its present territory infrastructure which would allow basing of forces and deployment of strike groups which would create a security threat for other states.

We had reached a virtual dead end in our talks. We therefore agreed to have a bilateral Russo-American meeting in Moscow, 1-2 May.

We met Albright, Talbott, Davis, Kornblum, Collins, Vershbow and others. On the Russian side there was Afanas’evskiy, Mamedov, Vorontsov, Kislyak, Markar’yan, Spasskiy, Belous, Tarasov (translator’s note: all MFA) plus Ivashov and Kuznetsov (MoD). This gives an indication of the level of the talks. This was further underlined by Yel’tsin’s call to Albright during the talks.

(Detailed synopsis of meeting) CFE and argument about “group” limits. “We need to exclude the possibility of unchecked growth of NATO’s military potential.” Albright spoke of a “new” NATO and a “new” Russia, saying that NATO was no longer a military bloc. The issue was not resolved, so we moved on to non-deployment of nuclear weapons and combat forces outside the territory of the existing 16 members. I stressed the importance of settling the issue of storage facilities for nuclear weapons as well as infrastructure for basing of forces which were not permitted on a permanent basis.

On CFE, the US presented a proposal for a significant lowering of national ceilings, but without any group restrictions. The only territorial limits were on the flanks, where our partners chose not to depart from the “bloc psychology”. We started to work from the American text, but it quickly became clear that our specific comments on the language were not being accepted. L Davis showed particular inflexibility.

I decided to invite the delegation home where my wife served dinner without any cooks or waiters. The street was cleared of parked cars, and the lift in our apartment block was specially repaired.

During dinner (Talbott loved the pel’meni), Albright, Talbott, Vorontsov and I went off into a corner. We had an open conversation. I told them that I could not go to the Duma and say that we were moving away from the CFE Treaty and allowing NATO to increase its level of armaments in line with enlargement. This would destroy all possibilities for co-operation in NATO-Russia relations. We need a formula to limit the growth of NATO’s military capability while at the same time

having “national ceilings”. Albright called over Davis and offered to delay her departure from Moscow.

On 2 May, Albright agreed to include in the text provisions on the requirement to respect “all levels” established in the original CFE Treaty. Together with the principle of consensus for establishing new “national levels”, this allowed us to set a limit on aggregate totals of all types of NATO weaponry in case of enlargement.

We also agreed compromise formulae on the issue of limiting future military infrastructure in Central and Eastern Europe. As a result, a provision was included in the Founding Act to the effect that infrastructure should be “sufficient” for the requirement accepted by Clinton on behalf of NATO (sic) not to deploy additionally on a permanent basis “significant” combat forces on the territory of new members.

These negotiations with the US State Secretary became the basis for reaching agreement on the key disarmament “basket” of issues in the NATO-Russia document.

“Home Straight”

Time was growing ever shorter before the signing of the document in Paris. We felt this when we met Solana in Luxembourg on May 6, but for a different reason. We discovered that the airport shut at midnight, and Solana absolutely had to fly out that night.

Some troublesome and alarming impressions remained from the Luxembourg meeting. We had supposedly moved forward after including a series of important points in the text from our agreements with the Americans. At the same time, there were a still a lot to be agreed. Solana was clearly agitated, and kept whispering the whole time with von Moltke, the deputy for political affairs. During one of the protracted whispering sessions, I even had to say: “Friends, what have we come to Luxembourg for - to play happy families (Russ: *igrat' v posidelki*) or to negotiate?”

We agreed to meet in Moscow which both sides understood would determine if we could find mutually acceptable solutions, as well as, to a large extent, the future of NATO-Russia relations.

As always, Boris Nikolayevich remained impervious to the tension, at least he did not show it in meetings with me or in telephone contacts with Western leaders. He was very calm when he spoke to Chirac on the eve of Solana’s arrival in Moscow: “I have to tell you that the work on the document is proving difficult. I have asked Primakov to be as constructive as possible. It is important that we now complete work on the document so that we don’t have to discuss it in Paris before signing. It is important that we have a text ready.”

As soon as I met Solana in Moscow on 13 May, I saw from his mood and his first words that he had not come to Moscow to find solutions. I understood: the decision had been taken in NATO to come to Paris with a document ready. However, we still had a lot of problems to clear up.

We worked late into the night. On both sides, our military men were most actively involved in finding the right language. This language was agreed with the NATO Ambassadors in Brussels who were constantly in touch with their capitals. The NATO team rang Brussels using their mobile phones from outside the MFA guest-house on Spiridonovka. In the other corner, our military men were speaking to the General Staff by phone about the most sensitive issues.

We succeeded in cleaning up the political part of the document. We began to find understanding in principle about the military section. But suddenly, contrary to what had been previously agreed with Solana and the NATO Allies, our partners began to “slip in” stronger language on preserving “in all events” the so-called flank restrictions of CFE. The formulae proposed by Solana were a direct step back from the compromises which had emerged before and even in Luxembourg. As a result, the section on conventional weapons lost its balance.

The next morning, Yel'tsin spoke to Solana by phone. In the end, the document was born. But there was still no agreement on what to call it. The NATO side favoured “Charter”, which would offer them more room in future for the interpretation of the binding nature of their commitments. We favoured “Agreement” or “Treaty”. In the end, we agreed on “Founding Act on mutual relations, co-operation and security between the Russian Federation and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation”.

So this was the end of the negotiating marathon which allowed us to reduce to a minimum the negative consequences of NATO enlargement for Russia's security interests, and which allowed the western states to avoid a dangerous aggravation of relations with Moscow.

My appearance on May 23 in the State Duma was not easy. Aside from the military questions, our deputies were interested in whether the mechanism of consultation would give the NATO side the possibility to dictate their conditions. It is striking that the mirror image of this question was put energetically by US Congressmen. Would not Russia obtain a right of veto over the actions of NATO?

I stressed the importance of the provision in the Founding Act which codified direct Russian participation in all stages of peace-keeping operations carried out jointly by NATO and Russia, from planning to implementation. This provision, on which we insisted, settled the long-standing argument about the relationship between the command of the Russian brigade in Bosnia and the overall command of the NATO operation.

The atmosphere in the Duma was mixed, but generally favourable. The deputies passed a resolution which effectively expressed agreement to the signing of the document.

(Account of the signing ceremony)

Yel'tsin had several bilateral meetings in Paris with Heads of State. Many tried to persuade him to attend the NATO Summit in Madrid. Chirac told him that if he would attend, the issue of enlargement would be on the back burner, and that it would bring the NATO-Russia relationship to the forefront. The Russian President would be the main player, as he was in Paris.

During an impassioned plea from Clinton to Yel'tsin to come to Madrid, I could not restrain myself. I butted in and said: "It seems to me that the Russian President does not need to do this. The idea of opening the Permanent Joint Council does not outweigh the negative aspect - especially for Russian public opinion - of being in Madrid when NATO announces its enlargement. "You see, Bill", said Yel'tsin, "it's not that simple".

During a reception, Kohl leaned over to Yel'tsin and said quietly: "Boris, I understand your decision not to go to Madrid, you're absolutely right."

I took the hammer for the first time and confirmed the agenda of the Permanent Joint Council on September 26 1997 in New York. Of course, for some people what was happening was beyond the bounds of the permissible. A Russian representative giving the floor to NATO Foreign Ministers, including the US Secretary of State, and then commenting on each speech, singling out the main ideas and proposing to the rest that they concentrate on these. It seems that such a form of conducting meetings was not the custom in NATO, but now all participants of the Founding Act enjoyed equal rights, and this had to be taken into consideration.

Kissinger was not the only one to believe that the Founding Act was the beginning of the end of NATO.

We understood that real stability in different regions, as well as the direction and speed of the evolution of NATO and Russia depended on the outcome of co-operation between NATO and Russia.

A year later I met Solana in Luxembourg. I told Javier: "It seems to me that if there was no NATO enlargement, which we are looking around at the whole time, both Russia and you expecting unpleasant surprises from the other, then the PJC could become the centre of European security."

"I also think about this" replied Solana.

I also spoke about this later with Strobe Talbott. He also, to be absolutely accurate, was far from opposed to this idea.

"Two Scenarios"

Kosovo: Russian representatives, including myself, repeatedly told Milosevic that it was essential to grant wide autonomy to Kosovo.

The inevitable perspective of worsening relations between Russia and NATO, in particular the cessation of the PJC, it seems to me, helped to prevent an escalation of military action, and to stop a NATO ground operation against Yugoslavia.

Scenario One: European NATO members followed by the US conclude that armed force can only be used with a decision of the UN and the UN Security Council. Positive changes take place in NATO, including the strengthening of its European dimension, and reinforcing of links with regional organisations, particularly with the OSCE.

Nuclear weapons continue to be reduced. Start-3 is signed. Favourable circumstances for the unofficial nuclear states to join the NPT and CTBT. Signing of agreement on conventional weapons limitation. The world community unites its efforts to resolve conflicts, and builds a powerful barrier against extremism in all its manifestations, as well as terrorism, organised crime and the drugs business.

Scenario Two: is possible and should not be ignored: after Kosovo, Washington develops an emphasis on "NATO-centrism". With some degree of consent on the part of the European states, NATO displaces the UN or neutralises it as the most important mechanism in the system of international relations. Possible stop to strategic nuclear arms reduction as a result of the US creation of an ABM defence system. Russia increases its combat capability without sufficient economic strength. The overall situation has a negative effect on the internal political situation in Russia, and spurs on isolationist tendencies which are against the interests of the Russian people and the world community as a whole.

Democratic processes in China, India and other countries are delayed. There will be attempts to build a group defence against NATO's new role which gives itself the right to intervene in the internal affairs of other countries.

Russia, of course, has fought and will continue to fight for the first scenario. The negotiations on the Founding Act epitomise this struggle.

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