

## **Confining the military to defense as a route to disarmament: The role of non-offensive defense in ending the Cold War\***

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### **A personal note: How the Freeze movement change my career**

I was very excited by the Freeze movement and wondered how I could use my expertise to strengthen its credibility. I concluded that freezing the production of nuclear-weapons materials, plutonium and highly-enriched uranium could be my part. I was already involved in the nonproliferation effort to oppose the proposed “plutonium economy,” which envisioned the future being powered by plutonium production reactors. Ending the production and use and eliminating stocks of nuclear-weapon-useable “fissile” materials has been the biggest part of my research and activism ever since.

### **Background: My involvement with Gorbachev’s arms-control advisors**

In 1983, I was the chairman of the Federation of American Scientists, and we received a letter from a group of Soviet academicians led by Yevgenyi Velikhov asking whether we had changed our opposition to ballistic missile defense following President Reagan’s “Star Wars” speech.

We said that we had not changed our views and we were invited to Moscow and Tbilisi over Thanksgiving to brainstorm about possible ways to end the nuclear arms race. Fifteen months later Gorbachev took over as General Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and we learned that the group we had been brainstorming with was advising Gorbachev.

Until the end of 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed, I went to Moscow for meetings – mostly with Velikhov’s group – 25 more times.

A couple of these trips – one Randy Forsberg organized – were related to how implementation of the concept of non-offensive defense could help wind down the massive conventional confrontation along the inter-German border.

### **Non-offensive Defense**

My first exposure to non-offensive defense came at a Pugwash meeting in Budapest in June 1986. Pugwash had a working group on the subject led by:

- Anders Boserup of Copenhagen University
- Robert Nield of Cambridge University
- Albrecht von Mueller of the Max Planck Institute in Starnberg, Germany.

Their ideas were exciting and, when Velikhov and I organized a scientists’ forum on nuclear disarmament in Moscow in February 1987, I invited them to make presentations.

One of Velikhov’s group, Andrei Kokoshin, was already advocating non-offensive defense and, at his urging, I included it in my public report on the scientists’ forum to Gorbachev.<sup>1</sup>

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\* Symposium: Toward a Theory of Peace: Randall Forsberg and Her Legacy, Cornell University, 14 Sept. 2018

Three months later, in May 1987, Randy organized a workshop on non-offensive defense in Moscow to which she invited me.<sup>2</sup>

In September 1987, I met with Boserup, Neild and von Mueller again, at the annual Pugwash meeting in Gmunden, Austria. I suggested that we write a letter on non-offensive defense to Gorbachev. We did so the next month and received a positive response a month later.<sup>3</sup>

### **Gorbachev's move**

I recall discussions at Randy's Moscow workshop of how a stabilizing restructuring of the conventional confrontation in Europe might begin. I think we suggested a unilateral Soviet reduction by 1000 tanks.

A year and a half later, on 7 December 1988, we saw that Gorbachev was far bolder than we imagined. In his speech at the UN, he announced:<sup>4</sup>

...we have made the decision to withdraw six tank divisions from the GDR, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and to disband them by 1991. Assault landing formations and units, and a number of others, including assault river-crossing forces, with their armaments and combat equipment, will also be withdrawn...The Soviet forces situated in those countries will be cut by 50,000 persons, and their arms by 5,000 tanks. All remaining Soviet divisions on the territory of our allies will ...become unambiguously defensive, after the removal of a large number of their tanks.

This laid the basis for additional much larger cuts in the 1990 Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe, including 13,000 additional Warsaw Pact and 4,000 NATO tanks.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Frank von Hippel, "A U.S. Scientist Addresses Gorbachev," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 43, no. 4 (May 1987): 12–13.

<sup>2</sup> See the special September 1988 issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* (44, no. 7) on non-offensive defense for which Forsberg wrote the final article, "Toward a non-aggressive world."

<sup>3</sup> "Analysts Address Gorbachev" (with a response from Gorbachev) in *Federation of American Scientists Public Interest Report* 41, no. 2 (February 1988): 14–15 (Anders Boserup, Robert Neild, Frank von Hippel and Albrecht von Müller).

<sup>4</sup> [https://astro.temple.edu/~rimmerma/gorbachev\\_speech\\_to\\_UN.htm](https://astro.temple.edu/~rimmerma/gorbachev_speech_to_UN.htm)

<sup>5</sup> *Budgetary and Military Consequences of the CFE Treaty: An Update* (U.S. Congressional Budget Office, 1991), Table 1, <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/20564>