

NATO expansion is 'wrong solution,' speakers say

A press conference was held on campus to protest the expansion of NATO in Eastern Europe

By Michael Burnham
Community Editor

"NATO is a nuclear alliance ... you can't solve social and cultural problems with nuclear weapons. We're offering them a military only solution, but we're offering them the wrong solution," said David Knight, chair of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament in Great Britain, during a press conference at the University's Collier House on Friday. The conference was held to protest the potential expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to three Eastern European nations.

University students and activists from throughout the state discussed the effects of potential NATO expansion in Eastern Europe with Knight and Dr. Alla Yaroshinskaya, an advisor to Russian President Boris Yeltsin, at the Collier House and the Kaufman Senior Center as part of a national tour against NATO expansion.

Eugene was chosen as one of 15 stops in the United States for the "No to NATO Expansion Speakers Tour," which was sponsored locally by Oregon Peace Works and Lane County Women's Actions for New Directions.

Knight and Yaroshinskaya, who is also a nuclear weapons expert, were the featured speakers at the Friday afternoon press conference at the Collier House. At the conference, the speakers discussed the potential problems the expansion of NATO in Eastern Europe might pose to the United States and other European countries.

The discussion comes after the 16 countries that compose NATO agreed to invite Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland to join NATO at a summit in July of last year. Plans call for them to be formally admitted when NATO holds a 50th anniversary summit in 1999. However, the decision

must first be formally agreed upon by each of the NATO members before the countries can join the organization.

In his recent State of the Union Address, President Clinton called for the Senate to allow the three countries to join NATO as a means of "protecting those who join the family of nations" and "isolating those who don't."

But David Knight disagreed with Clinton's charge to expand NATO and isolate non-NATO European countries such as Russia. "Eastern Europe wants to join Western Europe, and they think NATO will give them greater economic security, but it won't," Knight said. "NATO is not economic, but military. You can't have security where some are included and some are [excluded]."

But according to Yaroshinskaya, NATO expansion and the deployment of nuclear warheads in potential NATO countries would be detrimental to the welfare of Russia and other Eastern European countries.

Yaroshinskaya noted that Russia withdrew its nuclear warheads from Eastern Europe in 1991, but she noted there are currently more than 500 weapons with nuclear capacity in NATO countries. She added that the official Russian position in the matter is against NATO expansion, and that a further NATO presence in Eastern Europe might politically divide Russia against the rest of Europe.

Knight also noted NATO expansion will allow the United States to further intervene in European affairs and allow Europe to continue to be "divided" politically. He said a divided Europe would be unable to challenge the United States as an economic world power.

"[Expansion] will keep Europe divided — not bring it together," he said.

But according to Robert Darst, assistant professor of political science, NATO expansion would serve as a way to prevent Russia from expanding into Eastern Europe. Darst said one reason the



Dr. Alla Yaroshinskaya, Russian advisor to Boris Yeltsin, speaks to an audience about the possible effects of NATO expansion in Eastern Europe at the Kaufman Senior Center Friday night.

United States and other NATO countries are pushing to extend their presence into Eastern Europe is to prevent a "re-emergence of Russian expansionism."

"It does not constitute a clear challenge to the Russians, but it puts [NATO] in a better position to deal with it," he said.

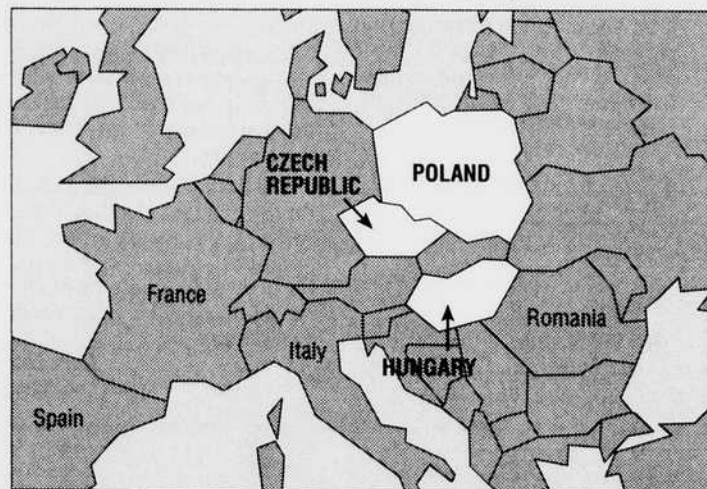
Darst also said proponents of NATO expansion say a larger presence in Eastern Europe would provide a way for the United States to expand its "zone of capitalism."

But according to Knight, the expansion of NATO is primarily driven by economic reasons.

"It is the arms manufacturers who are pushing for NATO expansion the most," he said. "It is quite clear that there is a lot of money to be made there for arms manufacturers."

Knight alluded to the fact that in order for the new countries to join NATO, they must first upgrade their military and purchase nuclear weapons to meet NATO standards.

But he said that the money



CARA STRAZZO/Emerald

used to pay for these arms would come from the United States and other NATO members because the potential members would be unable to pay for the weapons themselves.

"It will be the American taxpayer who will have to bear the brunt of that," he said.

Knight suggested that the money that would be spent on arms

should instead be used to boost the economies of Eastern European countries so that they could instead join the European Union, which is a united group of economically stable European nations.

"If the United States wants to spend money on economic strengthening, that would work," he said.

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