

# Europeans Seek Technology Transfer Agency

*Proposal is response to U.S. export controls, which are seen in Europe as a hindrance to cooperation on R&D and an obstacle to European firms in competing for U.S. defense contracts*

**Brussels.** European governments are being asked by a group of parliamentarians to consider setting up a new Technology Transfer Agency to coordinate their political responses to recent moves—in particular those originating in the United States—to place controls on the international flow of advanced technology.

The main purpose of such an agency would be to assess the impact of such controls on joint research and development projects being supported by different member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Its consideration by NATO governments was suggested in a resolution passed in Brussels on 16 November by the North Atlantic Assembly, which is made up of 184 legislators from the organization's 16 member countries.

Included in such an assessment would be an estimation of the "opportunity costs" of rigid technology transfer controls and of a failure to cooperate closely on major technological projects. According to members of the assembly's Scientific and Technical Committee, these include the cost of duplicative research which would have to be carried out in parallel in more than one country of the Western alliance.

Such an agency, it is also being suggested, might be used as a vehicle for identifying future opportunities for international collaboration in research and development on an alliance-wide basis, in order to rationalize and reduce the costs of the West's overall R&D effort.

According to Canadian Liberal senator Earl Hastings, chairman of the committee's subcommittee on advanced technology and technology transfer, recent visits to France, Canada, West Germany, and the United States have convinced the subcommittee that technology transfer is a "vital and complex issue that has grave consequences for the alliance because it could lead to the deterioration of transatlantic relations."

Government officials with whom the subcommittee has spoken in each country tended to downplay the difficulties caused by restrictions on the flow of advanced technology, said Hastings, but industrial companies were very concerned about the present and future

problems of worldwide technology transfer. Particularly where regulations were seen as denying access to advanced technology developed by U.S. companies, and where cooperative efforts with the United States were consequently not as effective as they might otherwise be. As a result of the controls on the transfer of technical knowledge, he said, "research funds are being wasted on duplicative programs" with the eventual result that "we may be producing second-rate weapons systems."

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A report of the subcommittee's activities prepared by Lothar Ibrügger, a member of the West German parliament, calls attention to several ways in which a new technology transfer agency could be used as a mechanism for coordinating Europe's research efforts.

"At present, European R&D is not coordinated, leading to a waste of European resources," says Ibrügger, pointing for example to the time spent on negotiating the siting of new research facilities such as the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility or the supersonic wind tunnel. "If the alliance countries wanted to cooperate with the United States, they must first learn to cooperate among themselves. If Europe could coordinate its own research and development activities better, it could compete better with the U.S., and then it could cooperate better."

Ibrügger's report lists several cases where European companies have suggested that excessively enthusiastic application of export controls by the United States has threatened their own activities—for example, by denying them access to the latest semiconductor components, even where in some cases these components have subsequently

been freely available outside the United States.

Perhaps more significantly, at least from a political point of view, the report suggests that there are a growing number of major high-technology companies, particularly in West Germany, who feel that the current application of the export laws is giving American companies an unfair advantage over foreign competitors in bidding for lucrative Defense Department contracts.

One company visited by members of the subcommittee which is said to have expressed this view particularly strongly was the Munich-based aerospace firm Messerschmidt-Bolkow-Blohm (MBB).

According to subcommittee members, executives at MBB have made little secret of their concern over contracts such as those for a Long Range Stand Off Missile, now being considered by the U.S. Air Force, for which several teams made up of both U.S. and European manufacturers are now preparing feasibility studies. MBB's fear is that, because the development of this new cruise missile could include stealth and other technologies which the United States is not prepared to release even to its allies, European companies involved in such preliminary studies could be placed at a disadvantage compared to their American competitors when—and if—orders are eventually placed by the U.S. Air Force.

An alliance-wide technology transfer agency might help minimize such difficulties, suggests Ibrügger, by addressing the broader task of promoting and coordinating the alliance's exploitation of technology. For example, the agency would establish the ground rules for intra-alliance technology transfer, coordinate military and civilian R&D, and generally help to stimulate technological innovation.

"Essentially the agency could provide an R&D information and coordination service for the alliance nations," says Ibrügger's report. "By studying the shape and scope of various national programs, the agency could suggest 'trade off' projects to alleviate the difficulty of choosing the lead nations on particular R&D efforts."

Ibrügger had originally suggested that

the North Atlantic Assembly propose the setting up of such an agency. However, given its ambitious scope, the assembly adopted a more modest amendment under which member governments will be invited to "consider" such a proposal, leaving it for the time being up to them to take any further action.

However, according to committee member Peter Emery, a Conservative member of the British Parliament, the resolution is still significant in that it gives individual members of the assembly a mandate to go back to their own governments with formal requests for reports on the actions that have been taken to coordinate activities on technology controls, both in terms of defining the limits to East-West technology transfer and strengthening West-West technological cooperation.

At the minimum, he said, this would promote an initial dialogue between governments and their parliaments over the broader impact of technology transfer regulations "in a way that has never happened before."

Emery points to the European Space Agency as an example of the progress that can be achieved in international cooperation on technological projects provided ground rules are decided in advance.

"In the more general field of technology transfer, we have never come together in the same way to write such ground rules," he said. The advanced technology subcommittee, he added, might make suggestions on "the type of ground rules which could be developed leading to greater collaboration with the United States."

He admits that the proposal to establish a new agency is ambitious; several other members of the scientific and technical committee said that such responsibilities might be given to an existing body such as the Paris-based Coordinating Committee on Export Controls (COCOM) which is already responsible for coordinating the efforts of Western nations to regulate exports to the Eastern bloc.

There is a wide feeling in Europe, however, that COCOM is excessively dominated by the United States. Ibrügger and others see the proposed new agency as a way of complementing COCOM's work by helping to sketch out strategies for closer cooperation in a more positive sense. And Emery adds that "the fact that this suggestion comes from NATO parliamentarians rather than from government economists could itself give it a greater chance for success."—**DAVID DICKSON**

## NIH Bows to Part of Rifkin Suit

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has bowed to one of Jeremy Rifkin's legal challenges and decided to conduct environmental assessments of certain field tests involving genetically altered organisms. The recent decision narrows the legal issues to be argued in federal court next month in the ongoing battle between Rifkin and NIH over these types of experiments.

Rifkin contends that NIH did not properly evaluate the ecological consequences of testing genetically modified organisms in the environment before approving the experiments and, in 1983, took the agency to court. He asserted that NIH violated the National Environmental Policy Act by allegedly failing to conduct two kinds of ecological analyses defined by the act: an environmental assessment and a much more involved analysis called an environmental impact statement. In May, U.S. District Judge John Sirica ruled in Rifkin's favor when he stopped University of California researchers from conducting an NIH-approved field trial pending a decision on Rifkin's suit.

Now NIH has decided it will carry out the simpler of the two evaluations. NIH official Bernard Talbot says that the agency will basically repackage data it has already collected, adding some additional information to write the formal assessments. NIH has already drafted an analysis of the University of California experiment, which would involve bacteria genetically engineered to prevent frost formation in potato crops. NIH also plans to assess two field trials proposed by private companies, which have been approved by the recombinant DNA advisory committee and are awaiting a green light from NIH director James B. Wyngaarden.

Rifkin argues that in 1978 NIH should have analyzed the ecological consequences when it revised its recombinant DNA guidelines and set forth a policy concerning the deliberate release of genetically modified organisms. Now that NIH has agreed to perform environmental assessments of deliberate release experiments, the main legal issue boils down to wheth-

er environmental impact statements are also required. In addition, Rifkin argues that NIH has failed to develop an administrative program to analyze in depth the ecological consequences of these experiments. NIH will challenge Rifkin's assertions in the U.S. Court of Appeals here in Washington on 5 December.—**MARJORIE SUN**

## Soviet Psychiatrist Near Death from Hunger Strike

Anatoliy Koryagin, a Soviet psychiatrist who was jailed in 1981 on charges of "anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda" after publicly criticizing the political use of psychiatry in the Soviet Union, is reported to be near death as a result of a hunger strike. His condition has prompted several human rights organizations and scientific bodies to appeal to Soviet authorities for him to receive proper medical care.

Koryagin's apparent crime was that he diagnosed as sane several political



**Anatoliy I. Koryagin**

dissidents that Soviet authorities had confined to psychiatric hospitals. He examined the patients at their own request when he was a consultant to the Working Commission to Investigate the Use of Psychiatry for Political Purposes, an unofficial human rights group that was later broken up by the authorities and whose members were all arrested.

Koryagin was sentenced in 1981 to 7 years' imprisonment and an additional 5 years of internal exile. He was transferred in July 1982 to the notori-