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mind. All this leads not only to the disruption of the military balance but also to the loss of the capacity for nuclear deterrence, which destroys the foundation of strategic stability. In these conditions, of course, we cannot speak of eliminating nuclear weapons, or of their reduction. Quite the reverse, the sides would have to increase offensive nuclear weapons, and that would result in an unrestrained arms race. Incidentally, new discoveries made under the programme for the development of space strike weapons could also be applied for the development of new types of conventional weapons for ground forces, for the air force and for the navy.

This destabilization would also take place if the development and deployment of unlimited ABM systems is carried out by both sides. The difference in the scope of scientific and technological groundwork, in geographic conditions and in economic capabilities would result also in differences in the pace of deployment of ABM systems by the sides. Consequently, only one of the sides would acquire initially the capability to counter a retaliatory nuclear strike. The situation which has been described earlier would occur.

Acute destabilization, however, would already be observed in the course of the deployment of a large-scale ABM system. At a certain stage of such deployment, the defensive ABM system would grow into a qualitatively new offensive strategic system capable of destroying satellites, aircraft, air command posts, stores and other ground targets. In this connection, the possibility arises of sharply increasing the effectiveness of a first nuclear strike by the integrated use of offensive arms on Earth and space strike weapons. Does that correspond to strengthening stability?

Even in hypothetical conditions of an absolutely simultaneous deployment by the sides of an initially limited, and then comprehensive ABM system, strategic stability would be undermined. In that case, both sides acquire the capability to make a first surprise strike against the space ABM means of the other side, to put them out of operation using their own strike space weapons, i.e. to eliminate the "shield" while simultaneously dealing a nuclear first strike, but now with impunity.

In other words, with the availability of a "space shield" the side which was the first to attack would be the winner. Nothing remains of strategic stability.

Furthermore, in the case of the implementation of the "star wars" plans a completely new factor appears which would be conducive to an accidental beginning of a nuclear war, a factor previously unknown in history. That factor is connected with the need to use fast and extremely complicated automatic equipment in space strike systems, as well as with the necessity of transferring the decision-making function concerning the initiation of hostilities to automatic machines, to computers.

A space ABM system cannot function in the traditional scheme. The time that elapses between the appearance of the missiles in the atmosphere and their destruction must not exceed 100 to 300 seconds. It is necessary during this period to detect and identify targets and distribute them among interceptors, perform targeting operations and destroy the missiles. Naturally, in these conditions there is no time for submitting reports to the leadership or even for checking the operation of the computers. It is the