

An attempt at control

able to conclude that the pivotal issue for these negotiations was unmistakable. It would be the fate of President Reagan's Star Wars and the revolutionary new nuclear strategy that the White House was promoting.

In defence of Star Wars

Some special attention is merited for this subject because of its now central place in US arms control policy and its consequent importance to the Geneva negotiations. As noted above, the US is seeking a radical change in the Soviet-US strategic relationship. It is aimed at replacing the current system of stockpiling growing numbers of offensive weapons having greater power, accuracy and sophistication. This includes the complete arsenal of strategic bombers, ICBMs, submarine-launched missiles, Cruise missiles, intermediate-range ballistic missiles, MX (Peacekeeper), Midgetmen and the rest, together with their Soviet counterparts and leaders such as the SS-X-25. Soviet strategic warheads targeted against the US have nearly doubled to almost 9000 from about 5000 since the 1979 Treaty limiting some weapons on both sides. Also the complexity of arriving at effective arms control agreements is becoming more apparent as more precise and mobile weapons, with multiple warheads, appear on both sides. In part the new US approach may reflect the fact that all past efforts to negotiate nuclear arms reduction have failed, and a growing realization that without some change future prospects may be not better.

In sum President Reagan has expressed a desire to abandon the balance-of-terror policies known as MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) which the superpowers have pursued for the past fifteen or more years. His aim is to move away from exclusive reliance on the threat of devastating retaliation to deter an adversary from launching a nuclear strike. Instead the emphasis would be shifted in stages toward defensive systems destined to thwart ballistic missile attack, and ultimately to render nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete." "Would it not be better to save lives than to avenge them?" Mr. Reagan has argued appealingly.

Agreement between the superpowers to a stepwise reduction in offensive weapons would be a welcome accompaniment to the process of building defensive systems. If agreement comes before the actual deployment of new defensive systems, so much the better. In fact it is essential that the Soviets not move in the opposite direction of seeking to match potential US capacity in defensive weapons with *increased* Soviet capacity in offensive weapons. President Reagan clearly recognized this important limitation in his March 1983 speech (introducing SDI) when he noted, "If paired with offensive systems, any defensive systems can be viewed as fostering an aggressive policy, and no one wants that." In other words, the Americans have a responsibility to determine that Star Wars deployment would not in fact make matters worse by setting off a new arms race in offensive *and* defensive weapons.

It will obviously take some convincing to persuade the Soviets that this new approach to nuclear deterrence would benefit them as much as the US. The Soviets now would have us believe that the Americans are seeking an invulnerable space defence in order that they may be in position to carry out a disarming first strike against the Soviet

Union. In other words, they appear more convinced that the US just might be able to do what President Reagan would like it to do (i.e., erect an effective defence) than some of his own critics inside the United States. Leaving aside the question of US motives, if the Soviets become convinced that the US could make headway on SDI and possessed a capability to manufacture devices that would be effective against Soviet missiles, then almost certainly they would be obliged to commit themselves to the same kind of research (which they already have underway), hoping that this might benefit them in a similar way.

Then what?

When this research has proceeded to the point where one side or the other is in position to deploy new defensive systems, then one of three things could happen.

- 1) If the US were in the lead, an agreement might conceivably be reached wherein the US would refrain from deploying such systems in exchange for some fairly significant cuts in offensive weapons on the USSR side. Alternatively, both sides might agree to certain cuts or limits on the number of offensive weapons instead of a costly deployment of defensive systems which might be not wholly effective.
- 2) In a second scenario, the first country approaching deployment capability might simply pause, or limit its deployment to the one site allowed under the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (Grand Forks or Moscow) rather than breaking its commitment under the Treaty. Ultimately, both sides might agree to Treaty amendments and deploy together.
- 3) Either country could renounce the Treaty with six months notice and proceed to deployment if it saw substantial advantage in doing so, if the other side failed to agree to satisfactory weapons reduction or limits, or if it thought that defensive systems offered better hope for long term stability. Indeed some proponents of SDI would argue that scenario 3, by allowing for the deployment of effective defences against ICBMs, by reducing the utility of such weapons, would perforce lead both sides to reduce their dependence on them, thereby creating the conditions for deep cutbacks in nuclear arsenals.

Contrary to those who might anticipate a kind of preemptive deployment in accordance with the last scenario, US National Security Adviser Robert MacFarlane and other American officials have pointed out that it would be essential to allow for negotiating transition period of many years in which to work with the Soviets to bring about a stable transition to defensive weapons. This assurance of Mr. MacFarlane and others should be of some comfort to those who see the development of these new weapons as upsetting to deterrent stability, particularly during the transition period.

The importance in all these circumstances of the inevitable campaigns to convince (particularly NATO) countries of the merits of one position or another is more than obvious, and these campaigns are already well underway (e.g., high level Soviet visits to Britain, France, Japan,