

proof defence”; it simply wanted to “create uncertainties” in the minds of military planners on the other side. The response to this assertion was again: At what cost? Also raised was the question of whether those same “uncertainties” might engender dangerous misperceptions and strategic instability.

Al Carnesale, Professor of Public Policy and Academic Dean at the J.F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard, addressed the ten fundamental questions which he considered most important about the Strategic Defense Initiative. These were:

- 1) What was it?
- 2) What was it for?
- 3) Would it work?
- 4) What would it cost?
- 5) What would the Soviet Union do?
- 6) What about the Western Europeans?
- 7) How would it affect arms control?
- 8) How would it affect the risk of nuclear war?
- 9) What did morality and ethics have to do with it?
- 10) What should we do about it?

He reminded the audience that SDI was a research project investigating defence against ballistic missiles. It would not defend against bombers, cruise missiles, fishing trawlers or nuclear bombs “smuggled into our cities inside bales of marijuana”. So it could not be described as a comprehensive defence system.

What was it for? Accounts of its purpose ranged from President Reagan’s desire to make nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete, and the Secretary of Defense’s claims for a defence which is thorough, reliable and total, to the comments heard at the present conference, about a defence which simply “creates uncertainties” and complicated a Soviet attack. There was a big difference, he said, between defending our population and our military assets on the one hand, and merely complicating an adversary’s attack, on the other.

Whether SDI would work depended on the objectives. A perfect defence, one that would render nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete, was probably more an aspiration than a realistic goal. If the objective was merely to defend missile silos, that could be done with currently available technology. But was it worth the cost?