

Book Reviews

Learning strategy on the job

by Courtney Gilliat

Deadly Gambits by Strobe Talbott. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985, 380 pages, US\$17.95.

Deadly Gambits is a sequel to *Endgame*, the story of SALT II by the same author. The book, written between 1980 and early 1984, deals with two sets of Soviet-US arms control negotiations: INF (the Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Talks) and START (the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks).

In the Prologue, the author describes both the decisions and the background to these decisions on arms negotiations inherited by the Reagan administration from the Carter regime. Reagan and the new group around him were not very interested or very knowledgeable in foreign affairs. They believed in general terms that the Russians were stronger militarily, especially in large ICBMs, and wanted to redress this balance by a major US military buildup. They also wished to make a clean break with the past as far as arms control was concerned, both with the people involved, in so far as possible, and with the concepts behind SALT I and SALT II. They believed that unnecessary concessions had been made in the cause of détente and compromise.

The result was a new team with new players. They rejected the past and criticized both SALT II and the dual-track NATO decision to negotiate while preparing to deploy Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe. However, Reagan was persuaded to reaffirm US adherence to the NATO decision, fearing a disruption of allied unity should the US withdraw its support.

The book is divided into two parts, covering first the IMF negotiations, then the START talks.

Talbott describes in detail the development of the US zero-option position in the IMF talks. He follows it all the way through its troubled history within the US government. The infighting between the State Department and the Department of Defense and the various other players such as the National Security Council (NSC), the Joint Chiefs, the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and the White House are all clearly described. The various protagonists are identified by name, especially the two Richards: Richard Burt of the State Department and Richard Pearle of the Department of Defense. The influ-

ence of these third echelon players on policy was unusually pervasive because of their intelligence and expertise.

The final act was the "Walk in the park" (and its sequels) between the US IMF negotiator Nitze, and Kvit-sinsky. Since there was ultimately no agreement on the reduction of Soviet missiles, the final result was the deployment of a total of 572 US Cruise missiles and Pershing IIs in Europe and the walkout of the Soviets at the Geneva talks.

The second part, dealing with the START talks, is more complex and more difficult to follow. There was, if anything, more infighting within the Reagan administration in these talks and much less certainty on just what final outcome was desired. There was a great division of opinion on the units of measurement, i.e., how important was "throwweight," or were launchers and numbers of missiles only, the best units of account? What about aircraft and other forward-based systems?

The attitude of General Rowney, the chief US negotiator for START, is heavily criticized by Talbott. Rowney seemed to take delight in being unnecessarily difficult during the negotiations and did not have the respect that Nitze enjoyed in the IMF talks.

To try to resolve the internal impasse, President Reagan established the President's Commission on Strategic Forces at the beginning of January 1983, headed by Lieutenant-General Brian Scowcroft, a former Kissinger assistant on the NSC. The report supported deployment of the MX missile and suggested a more flexible approach to the 850 launcher ceiling on both sides, with sub-ceilings for smaller missiles. It also placed emphasis on de-mirving of missiles and the development of single warhead missiles. This could lead to less vulnerability, less inducement for preemptive strikes, and so greater strategic stability.

START talks were complicated by ongoing events such as President Reagan's speech of March 1983 suggesting the Strategic Defense Initiative, by the development of new ICBMs by the Soviets, and by accusations of breaches of the unratified SALT II treaty by both sides, as well as by leadership changes in the USSR and by events in Poland.

A number of negotiating approaches were developed, including the "build-down" proposal, but none was really satisfactory to the Reagan administration, and all were rejected by the Soviets prior to their walkout from the START talks in December 1983.