

anyway. It depends on what you mean by SDI whether you find it acceptable or unacceptable, possible or impossible.

In any event, as you know, the Canadian government has taken a rather modest and prudent line about it and said that research is justified because we know that the Soviet Union is carrying on research in the field of strategic defence but the Canadian government for its part is not going to set up a research programme of its own to respond to the American invitation, which was extended to the Allies to join in the venture. It seems to me that the jury is still out on SDI. In fact, there are all sorts of juries, and they are all still out. You read accounts of, lets say, congresses of computer experts who debate whether the United States can or cannot find the small army of software specialists to write the software for the system. And you are aware of all the range of alternative weapons that are being considered, some of which, as research progresses, seem to be somewhat more promising, and others which it seems are being abandoned because the testing programme suggests that no, they will not pan out.

There are so many unknowables in it that I think it is very difficult to make more than the most tentative or preliminary kind of judgement. I think that all would agree, from President Reagan on down - it's so obvious, you wonder if it is worth saying - that it would be utterly foolish for any United States President, even if a particular system becomes technically possible, to authorize the deployment of a system which is quite plainly going to be destabilizing. You cannot imagine the American President doing that.

There we are. We are presumably years away from decisions of that kind. Meanwhile it seems to me that everybody is agreed on that. Whether you are justified in going from there to a quick conclusion that strategic defence is not going to be any more important in the next generation than it has been in the last decade or so, and that in the end there will never be a substitute for mutually assured destruction, and virtually total reliance on mutual deterrence of offensive systems, that I do not know. Personally, I would be reluctant to make a judgement of that kind. It may be that we can find ways to go at least some distance toward the goal that President Reagan has talked about, which involve us in finding some substitute system for guaranteeing our security other than relying on these threats of massive mutual annihilation.

[HILL] Anyway, while you were there there was no sort of programme of consultation, of analysis, on SDI, in NATO? There was no sort of SDI working group set up?

[TAYLOR] Not as such. There were pieces of consultative machinery that had been set already for other purposes which locked onto the SDI problem simply as one more element in the nuclear dilemma, and certainly some of our allies pressed very hard for a discussion of the strategic implications of SDI as such - a sort of special debate on the subject - but that had not been arranged by the time I left.

[HILL] Was there a lot of discussion in NATO in this period on the nuclear dilemma? I mean many people have argued that if the US contemplates using nuclear weapons in defence of Europe, that means that potentially the Soviets might retaliate against the United States. In earlier periods people talked about "Windows of Opportunity", because of Soviet deployments of new types of missile systems and the failure of the Americans to deploy equivalent types. Dr. Kissinger got into a great phase of questioning Western nuclear credibility at one time, and then the whole debate seemed to die down.