

(Mr. Kornienko, USSR)

has nothing to do with the first. No, in this case there is an intrinsic interrelationship between the two questions which, objectively speaking, cannot be uncoupled.

Assertions about the defensive and hence allegedly innocuous nature of the space weapon system now being developed can deceive only those who are either ignorant or eager to be deceived.

First, the weapon systems now being developed under the United States SDI programme undoubtedly also possess an offensive potential. For instance, a weapon capable of destroying from outer space a missile in the boost stage is certainly capable of destroying any other target on Earth.

Second, even if one disregards for a moment -- which one should not -- the potential capabilities of those systems in clearly offensive operations, still the construction of a so-called space shield is only meaningful as part of an aggressive design. While not being capable of neutralizing a first nuclear-missile strike, in other words, being unable to perform a truly defensive mission, such a shield would at the same time afford protection from a retaliatory strike after the side that had built the shield had dealt a first nuclear-missile strike -- in other words, committed aggression.

Indeed, it was not by chance that the USSR and the United States concluded in 1972 the Treaty prohibiting the deployment of a large-scale ABM system, despite the fact that the Treaty deals with genuinely defensive weapon systems, which cannot be used for striking the territory of the other side. By doing that, the leaders of the two countries showed that they were wise enough to abandon the simplistic notion that defensive weapons are always a blessing. Nowadays, the notion of "defensive weapons" is not at all synonymous with the notion of "defensive doctrine".

Nor is it by chance that under the 1972 Treaty the two sides undertook "not to develop, test or deploy ABM systems or components which are sea-based, air-based, space-based, or mobile land-based".

It is sometimes argued that the SDI programme does not yet involve the development of space weapons but includes only scientific research intended to find out whether such weapon systems can be developed.

But, in the first place, this again is not true. Whereas, at the outset, in 1983 when the SDI programme was proclaimed, its objective was indeed so formulated for the sake of camouflage, later, in an official publication issued by the White House on 3 January 1985, with reference to the work already done, the aim of the programme was stated as being not to find out whether it was possible to develop a space-based ABM system but to determine how this could be accomplished. The Pentagon's documents submitted to the Congress qualify the SDI efforts as belonging to the category of "advanced development". So much for the stage of "finding out"!

Secondly, even to formulate the objective of developing a space-based ABM system, regardless of the stage of its practical implementation, is in direct contradiction with the spirit and letter of the 1972 ABM Treaty. That this is so can be seen from the following hypothetical situation. Suppose a State Party to the Convention on the Prohibition and Destruction of Bacteriological Weapons, which, by the way, was also signed in 1972, suddenly