

## Eye on Washington by Stanley Ezrol

### New views of the 'Soviet Empire'

I viewed several performances in mid-April by the inhabitants of two local think tanks, the Georgetown University Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins. The CSIS held a press briefing April 15 to publicize what it describes as the most ambitious private study of the Soviet bloc undertaken in the postwar period.

This session attempted to modify CSIS's previously vigorous airing of the idea that the "Soviet Empire" would soon collapse. Although the Polish crisis had been proclaimed by CSISers Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, David Abshire, and others to herald the beginning of the end of "communism," Walter Laqueur, who previously shared his office with the U.S. Friends of Solidarity organization, announced that the Polish situation disproves the hope that the "Empire" will crumble from its peripheries. He cautioned against counting on any dramatic changes in Kremlin policy, and emphasized the high level of stability which has characterized Soviet political life.

A dour Robert F. Byrnes of the University of Indiana, director of the CSIS Soviet bloc study and a former CIA and NSC official, declared that Poland would not soon prove fatal to the Soviets, but is like a slow "cancer . . . they will rock along with . . . for some time." He concluded with the assessment that "their empire is in decline, but the West is also in decline. The big question is which side is going to fall apart first."

Angela Stent, who is also at CSIS, while agreeing that the East will not soon disappear, tried to

give an account of the Kremlin's predicaments. "The key problem is over-centralization . . . it is still essentially the same Stalinist economic system. . . . It stresses heavy industry over all else," she added darkly. No one in the audience remarked on how that Stalinist economy had mobilized during and after World War II, and had produced a hydrogen bomb months before the United States and years before the think tankers of the 1940s had expected that it could even manufacture an A-bomb.

### SAIS and global warfare

SAIS followed this performance with a day-and-a-half event titled "Global Instability and U.S. National Interest: Is Intervention an Appropriate Response?" The purpose of the conference was to elaborate how low-technology warfare could be used against non-white populations, along lines advocated by Gen. Maxwell Taylor and Robert McNamara.

To present this projected Hundred Years War scenario in palatable form to its prospective architects in the audience—officials from the Pentagon, CIA, State Department, and NSC, as well as the major think tanks—Robert "Blowtorch" Komer was on hand, the 30-year-veteran of Pentagon policy planning who became Undersecretary for Policy in the Carter administration after planning and executing the Vietnam War as a prototype for the wars of the 1980s.

Komer announced that it is time for "another strategic change . . . a shift back to reliance on conventional forces. . . . There will be a greater likelihood of conflicts in the '80s than there was in the '70s," he proposed. "There will be many conflicts in the volatile Third World."

He asserted that a doctrine of "coalition warfare" is required which divides tasks between the United States, whose forces he referred to as "the horses," and allies in Europe and the Third World, whom he termed "the rabbits" or "the locals."

"We should provide air and sea support," he said. "Let the locals provide the ground troops. . . . I would not neglect counterinsurgency. . . ."

When I asked Komer why he left the development of high-energy beam weaponry and other advanced potentials out of his projections, he replied, "Oh, I can think of many occasions in history when forces with inferior technology and superior leadership did well. . . . I can't think of any wars yet which have been fought with nuclear weapons." He told another questioner, "I am also a population-control fanatic. . . . I once told the Premier of Turkey that his problems was he had too many Turks. . . . I think we should use our military support to press for programs like this."

On April 16, Komer's keynote was elaborated in workshops on Central America, East Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East. Peter Clement of the CIA moderated the Africa panel, where an African diplomat asked why it was necessary for the United States to support the South African regime. "I want to answer that question positively, I really do," lisped Clement. "I'm basically a liberal, but as a liberal there is one area where I agree with Jeane Kirkpatrick," and pointed out that democracies are in the minority in the world. "I think there is something of ethnocentrism involved in perpetrating our system on everyone else," he told the "rabbit."