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## CONFERENCE REPORT

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# Experts warn Washington: U.S. must revamp strategic thinking now

by Carol White and Leo Scanlon

“There will be three minutes to decide,” warned physicist Lowell Wood, “and then all coastal command centers will be destroyed.” He was referring to the threat *now* posed to the United States by Soviet nuclear missiles, which Wood claimed are located on both the Atlantic and Pacific U.S. coastlines.

Dr. Wood was speaking at a National Press Club forum in Washington on beam weapons defense systems, hosted by the American Legion Nov. 30. The head of a special study group at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Wood has been aptly described by Dr. Edward Teller as playing the same role in the development of beam weapons to defend against nuclear missile attack that Teller himself played in the development of the hydrogen bomb.

Wood’s presentation of the grim reality of the strategic situation contrasted strongly with the inconclusive resolution of the National Security Council meeting which was held Nov. 29 to discuss beam weapons development. Although the *New York Times* reported that the NSC heard shocking evidence of the Soviets’ massive effort and rapid progress in beam development, it made no decision to move ahead with a crash program.

The issue now being debated is whether to develop beam weapons on a business-as-usual basis or to have a program modeled on the World War II crash effort to develop the atomic bomb before the Nazis—the Manhattan Project. Were the President to go public with evidence of flagrant and repeated Soviet violations of arms control treaties, some think it would immediately make clear what’s at stake in the beam weapons decision.

As *EIR* has documented, the Soviets are already in advance of the United States in developing beam weapons, an evaluation was substantiated by Dr. Wood in his talk, of which the transcript appears on the following pages.

Since the U.S.S.R. rejected President Reagan’s March 23 offer to negotiate a new strategic doctrine now that Nuclear Deterrence has broken down, it has been clear that the Andropov government is intent on world domination.

### Soviet empty chair

The Soviets’ frame of mind was shown when Second Secretary Vitaly Churkin of the Soviet embassy in Washington, D.C., canceled out of a Nov. 29 debate on beam weap-

ons with Criton Zoakos, *EIR* editor-in-chief, only hours before the scheduled debate at Georgetown University was to take place. As *EIR* reported last week, the debate was planned well in advance in full cooperation with Churkin, who had asked for the opportunity to reply to Zoakos’ charge at a Washington press conference Oct. 26 that “the Soviet Union is currently on a course toward deliberate thermonuclear confrontation, hoping to force the United States into a humiliating strategic backdown, yet willing to risk nuclear war in the process.” It was this assertion which Churkin at the last minute failed to rebut, withdrawing without any excuse.

The American Legion-sponsored meeting at which Wood spoke featured two additional speakers: Gen. Volney Warner, former commander of the United States Readiness Command and head of operations and logistics for the U.S. Army, and Michael Liebig, chief of *EIR*’s European Bureau.

### Immediate necessity: expand military production

General Warner pointed to the inadequacy of present NATO strategic thinking, which rests upon the assumption that a war in Europe could be fought as a conventional war. While endorsing an interministerial committee within NATO to develop beam weapons, he also warned of the critical necessity to upgrade U.S. deployment of Trident submarines, the B-1 bomber, Pershing II missiles, and to modernize the M-1 tank, Pershings, and personnel carriers.

Liebig demonstrated the necessity for the United States to cooperate with its European allies to develop and deploy beam weapons not only for strategic, but for tactical defense as well. He warned, “The United States is no longer threatened with a Soviet second strike because of the U.S. nuclear weapons in Europe, but rather the U.S.A. is threatened by a Soviet first strike.”

He added, “It is my conviction that the Soviet Union, once it has decided to take the immense risk of a continental offensive in Western Europe, would also simultaneously conduct a comprehensive first-strike against the territory of the United States, in the not-unfounded hope that the remaining American second-strike capability can be sufficiently limited to make it also a calculable risk, so that Soviet losses would not be that much higher than those of World War II.”

On Dec. 2 U.S. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger sought to reassure Europe that U.S. beam weapons development was intended to protect American allies as well as the United States. "It worries me very much," said Weinberger at an Atlantic Council meeting in France the following day, that the Soviets may be able to deploy beam weapon anti-missile defense systems in place before the United States. The next day, the NATO parliamentary assembly approved a report prepared by Canadian and British parliamentarians calling for a NATO-wide effort to develop ABM defenses.

### Ten minutes to Armageddon under MAD

From the outset, Dr. Lowell Wood stressed the extreme danger, instability, and vulnerability to which the logic of Mutual and Assured Destruction has brought the United States. With the present state of U.S. defenses, coastal areas would be wiped out within three minutes of a Soviet nuclear strike from a submarine, and "it will take from six to eight minutes for these intermediate range missiles to reach the SAC command center in Omaha." With the Pershing IIs in Europe, neither side would have more than 10 minutes to make a command decision. The best news for the human race in 40 years, Dr. Wood affirmed, is the President decision to shift to defensive weapons.

Nuclear offensive weapons are easy to target at the launch site, but a total system should also target the missiles at midflight and when they are near the target. Dr. Wood sharply distinguished the system he advocated from Gen. Daniel Graham's High Frontier space-war apparatus, speaking of ground-based lasers which might be operated from the ground or "pop up" into space at the time of an attack.

The Livermore physicist laid out a program to put a defensive system up in five to eight years. When questioned, he agreed emphatically that this was "not our best effort, not a crash effort, but just a feasible, business-as-usual effort." Endorsing a crash program, Wood said that he "couldn't even imagine the possibilities for achievement if President Reagan were to get on nationwide television and mobilize the American people behind a crash program."

### Save Europe with beam defense

It was precisely for such a crash program that Uwe Parpart-Henke of the Fusion Energy Foundation argued on Nov. 27 at another seminar in the Washington metropolitan area. He presented in stark, measured terms the threat of a Soviet first strike against the United States and NATO alliance. He then demonstrated that only beam weapons provided the range of strategic and tactical defenses against Soviet military capabilities, while at the same time driving an economic recovery which could be the basis of true long-term national security.

The seminar at McLean, Virginia, sponsored by the Technical Marketing Society of America, drew an audience of about 75 including a virtual Who's Who of the space weapons community, for a day-long review of the field.

Parpart pointed out that the foolish adoption of the strategy of Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) made inevitable its corollary—the proposition that Europe is fundamentally indefensible by the U.S. strategic arsenal, and will be sacrificed to the Soviets when and if they reject MAD unilaterally with the onset of a war.

"The doctrine of 'flexible response' is the fundamental threat to the NATO alliance," said Parpart, "and it accepts the premise of Soviet strategic designs since the end of World War II: the separation of Europe from the United States. With the exception of beam weapons proposals such as that of the Fusion Energy Foundation, every other strategy is in fundamental agreement with this consequence of the flexible response doctrine."

Addressing himself to Lt. Gen. (ret.) Daniel Graham, the leading spokesman for the High Frontier proposal, who was in the audience, Parpart continued: "This includes the High Frontier proposal—and this issue should be debated here. With High Frontier you *cannot* defend Europe. If you want to de-couple Europe from the U.S. as the Soviets do, then go with High Frontier."

It was Parpart's attack on the sacred cow of arms control that most upset the equilibrium of Dr. Robert Bowman, head of the Institute for Space and Security Studies. "The greatest damage done by MAD has been to introduce to the thinking of all in the defense community the concept that we determine our security needs on the basis of negotiated deals made at places like the Pugwash conference," Parpart said. "We have to throw this out the window and start from the premise that we must do whatever we know how to secure our defense, and negotiate later—build beam weapons and then talk about it."

Bowman, the next speaker and veteran of the Pugwash arms control circuit, jumped to the podium and began: "I'll have to throw out the entirety of my prepared speech to rebut what has just been said." Dr. Bowman belongs to what the *New York Times* calls the "shadow cabinet," the group of arms control specialists who have built their careers around defending the MAD doctrine and are now sabotaging the President's beam weapons policy.

"We must start from the doctrinal standpoint that we must not do that which is likely to increase the risk of war, and do that which is likely to reduce the risk of war. Developing beam weapons will increase the risk of war," Dr. Bowman asserted, threatening that the Soviets will "launch a first strike" in response.

The audience counterattacked in the question period. Bowman was asked, "What do you propose to do about the fact that the Soviets are already on a first strike course?" Bowman's answer: "We must be careful what image we project to them . . . we should be careful to not project an image which will antagonize them." Two days later, Dr. Bowman appeared at the Zoakos-Churkin debate and insisted on presenting the anti-beam weapons position in the place of the absent Soviet embassy official.