

Eye on Washington by Nicholas F. Benton

Pentagon report 'horseshit': Soviet

Dr. Henry Trofimenko, a spokesman of the Soviets' U.S.-Canada Institute, was provoked by this reporter into accusing the Pentagon's annual *Soviet Military Power* report of being "horseshit" before a stunned audience of 150 and national C-SPAN cameras during the plenary session of the annual International Studies Conference here April 17.

Trofimenko flew into a rage when I quoted from the 1987 edition of the Pentagon report to challenge some absurd statements he made about arms control during his speech.

Testing his skills at the new Soviet policy of *glasnost*, which is supposed to include smiles and jokes, Trofimenko proved he still has a long way to go. He was on a panel with a colleague, Sergei Rogov, and two U.S. counterparts, Helmut Sonnenfeldt and Raymond Garthoff, who did their best to encourage the congenial mood that characterized Soviet leader Gorbachov's recent meeting with U.S. Secretary of State Shultz in Moscow.

While both Sonnenfeldt, who worked under Henry Kissinger at the National Security Council and State Department in the 1970s, and Garthoff, who is a "State Department liberal" and former ambassador to Bulgaria, sought to accommodate the Soviet panelists' attempts at *glasnost*, they could not keep the Russians' boorish totalitarian personalities from erupting.

Trofimenko's opening speech was salted with weak attempts at humor, especially ridicule of the Strategic Defense Initiative (he called it the "ideal

Astrodome"). The substance of his remarks was that U.S. administration policy is based on a will to maintain a strategic preponderance, or superiority, and that this is behind the push for the SDI. This must be abandoned, he argued, for arms control to succeed.

Rogov followed Trofimenko by enumerating the specific proposals that Gorbachov had set forth to Shultz in Moscow in the "spirit of new thinking that now exists in Moscow."

Sonnenfeldt and Garthoff read written statements in monotones that had little apparent relevance to the issues at hand.

I led off the question period with a three-part question, which drew out revealing responses from the two Soviet spokesmen:

1) Did the statement by Soviet Dr. Zhdanov in the March 19 *Izvestia*, calling for a cooperative, crash effort to find a cure for AIDS, represent official Soviet policy? Trofimenko answered scornfully, "I am not a medical expert, but I am sure that Dr. Zhdanov meant what he said. We, of course, do not have any significant problem with this virus in the Soviet Union, but it is a very serious matter, and, of course, we would cooperate. I believe there is already some cooperation with the Europeans, and it would be good to work with the Americans, too."

2) You claim the United States seeks superiority, yet Soviet military doctrine from Sokolovskii to Ogarkov is a "war-winning" military doctrine, and U.S. Defense Secretary Weinberger, when he released the latest edition of *Soviet Military Power*, said the Soviets have not just violated, but broken out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty, with 17 years of research into lasers, the deployment of battle-management, phased-array radars across the U.S.S.R., and battle-field lasers that were seen in action in

Afghanistan last year. Your own publication, *Red Star*, admits now that you have deployed an operational anti-satellite (ASAT) capability. Is this not true?

Trofimenko became enraged. "As to this *Soviet Military Power* you speak of, this is horseshit," he snorted. "It is public relations," he growled, "It is not substantiated."

Comrade Rogov tried to salvage *glasnost* with a little levity. "You know," he chimed in, "last year's edition of that report was printed in Russian, and my young son was reading a copy of it, and he came to me and said, 'Daddy, now I know we're number-one!'" Nobody laughed.

Trofimenko was now strident. "As to the idea of military supremacy, it is true, of course, that this was our doctrine at a time when we were faced with an overwhelming U.S. superiority, surrounding us on all sides. But war-winning doctrines tend to be adopted when nations feel they have no possibility of winning. When that is not the case, they stop talking about it."

3) If you were a European nation, what would you think of a nuclear-free Europe (as Gorbachov proposes) given the massive Soviet conventional force advantage bearing down on you? It was Rogov's turn to get agitated. "First you complain that we have intermediate-range missiles, and we agree to remove them. Then you complain about short-range missiles, and we agree to remove them. And what do you do? Now you complain about conventional forces."

The encounter emboldened two others who had been hidden in the predominantly liberal audience to follow me to the microphone and confront the Russians. *Glasnost* may have worked on Shultz, but it became a bust at this affair.