

U.S. stiffens resistance to Russian SDI blackmail

by Nicholas F. Benton and William Jones

The breakneck pace of moves toward a U.S.-Soviet "New Yalta" concord slowed down in August. New resolve expressed by the Reagan administration to complete the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), to confront the Soviets for violations of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty, and to protest military aid to Moscow's failing puppet regime in Afghanistan while Soviet troops withdraw, are signs that the deal between the superpowers has become too much to swallow, for some layers in the U.S. elite.

The first significant occasion for this was the periodic review of the ABM treaty, which got under way Aug. 24 in Geneva. The United States denounced the Soviet refusal to dismantle the Krasnoyarsk radar system as a "significant violation" of the ABM treaty, and said that until this was done, there could be no possibility of a START agreement, or other future accords on space or strategic defense.

The Soviet response was quick and ferocious. Arms negotiator Viktor Karpov placed the question of the SDI squarely on the negotiating table, saying that the U.S.S.R. would dismantle the massive Krasnoyarsk system *provided* the United States agrees to extend the ABM treaty for 9-10 years, and to abide by the "narrow interpretation" of the treaty—which would outlaw deployment of the SDI. The Soviet Foreign Ministry's official spokesman, Gennadi Gerasimov, accused the United States of violating the ABM treaty with its SDI research. "The United States is trying to accuse us of what they themselves are doing," he said.

A U.S. shift in the making

The stiffening of the U.S. resolve has been under way for several weeks, and coincides with developments in the presidential election campaign, where the SDI is emerging as a central issue of debate.

The U.S.-Soviet review of the ABM treaty, mandated to

occur every five years under the terms of the treaty, had been postponed while the Soviets were aggressively trying to get Reagan to accept a "narrow interpretation" of the treaty, in order to block progress on the SDI.

However, when that failed at the Moscow summit in May-June, the date for the review was finally set, and Reagan sent his team into the meeting with guns blazing. His target was the egregious Soviet violation of the ABM treaty represented by the huge phased-array radar facility at Krasnoyarsk.

He prepared the ground by sending a sharp letter to Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachov in mid-August, asserting that the radar is a violation of the treaty, and demanding that it be dismantled, without conditions.

Krasnoyarsk is only one component, albeit the largest, of a network of Soviet phased-array radars that give the Soviets full coverage of their land mass against attack. Since construction of such radar facilities requires the longest time of any component of a national ABM system, the presence of this ominous network of now-completed Soviet radars has compelled President Reagan, in his letter to Gorbachov, to assert that Krasnoyarsk may be evidence that the Soviets are preparing a nationwide ABM defense—in other words, a full abrogation of the ABM treaty.

Reagan instructed the U.S. team at the Geneva treaty review talks, led by William F. Burns, director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, to take this tough stand on Krasnoyarsk as a non-negotiable demand.

When the talks ended after a week, the U.S. side put out a statement denouncing the Soviets for their refusal to dismantle Krasnoyarsk. "A large phased-array radar near Krasnoyarsk constitutes a significant violation of a central element of the ABM treaty. Such radars take years to build and are a key to providing a nationwide defense, which is prohibited

by the treaty," the statement said. "Since the Soviet Union was not prepared to satisfy U.S. concerns with respect to the Krasnoyarsk radar violation at the review conference, the U.S. will have to consider declaring this continuing violation a material breach of the treaty."

"Material breach" is official treaty language whose assertion gives the United States the right to declare the treaty null and void. This would fulfil the Soviets' worst fears, since constraint of the ABM treaty is their only hope for containing U.S. progress on the SDI.

However, in addition to holding out the threat of declaring Krasnoyarsk a "material breach," the United States also said in its statement that "the continuing existence of the Krasnoyarsk radar makes it impossible to conclude any future arms agreements in the START or defense and space areas."

This is the harshest language the present administration has ever used with the Soviets on arms control negotiations, turning the tables from earlier "unconditional" Soviet demands that progress on START be tied to U.S. constraints on SDI, by now saying the United States considers progress on START "impossible" unless Krasnoyarsk is dismantled.

The statement quoted President Reagan's December 1987 remark, "No violations of a treaty can be considered to be a minor matter, nor can there be confidence in agreements if a country can pick and choose which provisions of an agreement it will comply with." It closed by stating, "The U.S. will not accept Soviet violations or a double standard of treaty compliance, and reserves the right to take appropriate and proportionate responses in the future."

Weinberger, Teller lobby for SDI

The evidence of an administration shift on the SDI was compounded, when the "big guns" of the pro-SDI policy faction intervened into the public debate.

On Aug. 30, the *Washington Times* carried a commentary by Caspar Weinberger, excerpted from a book by the former defense secretary on defense in the next decade. "The Strategic Defense Initiative must play a central role in our defenses in the 1990s," wrote Weinberger. Outlining how the Soviet Union has spent \$150 billion on all forms of strategic defense in the last 10 years alone, Weinberger attacked the guru of the "preordained era of decline," Paul Kennedy, author of the book *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*. "Such predictions [of decline]," said Weinberger, "evoke memories of the Club of Rome's dour and quite wrong forecasts in the 1970s about overpopulation, environmental Armageddon and exhaustion of the world's resources. . . . The fundamental problem with these flawed analyses, is that if enough people accept them at face value, they could well become self-fulfilling prophecies."

Later in the day, in a debate on the SDI in Washington sponsored by the Heritage Foundation, nuclear scientist Dr. Edward Teller, the foremost scientific proponent of the SDI, also emphasized the need for a partial deployment of an anti-

missile defense system. "We must deploy something now," said Teller. "Even a modest defense—even if it is against the most primitive attack—will be better to bring home to the American people that it can be done. . . . Thus we have pulled the esoteric discourse about SDI away from the stratosphere."

That Teller was not adopting a position of "point defense" rather than that of a defense shield, was underlined when Teller commented that he initially thought Reagan was wrong when he announced that a missile defense would mean that one could eliminate the nuclear deterrent entirely. "I thought he was promising too much by trying to eliminate nuclear defense. During the last two years, I realized that President Reagan was right and I was wrong."

The interventions by Teller and Weinberger were evidently intended to steer the presidential campaign of Republican nominee George Bush into a more forceful position of support for the SDI. Teller stressed that "one of the candidates has said that he will try to get some defense for the U.S. before his term is over."

Where does Bush stand?

During his first blitz through California at the end of August, Bush defined the SDI as a major issue at stake in the coming elections: "My opponent has called SDI a fantasy," said Bush at a Los Angeles rally on Aug. 24. "Let me tell you something: the appalling danger of nuclear missiles is no fantasy, it is a nightmare. He would leave America totally defenseless against missiles and I will not. I will go forward with the Strategic Defense Initiative and make a safer world."

It seemed, however, that Bush was not entirely comfortable in his new role as heir to the Reagan SDI legacy. Statements by Bush to the *New York Times*, where he said that a "full deployment" of the SDI would be "very expensive," sent warning signals to the conservative Republicans that Bush was perhaps faltering in his commitment to the program.

On Aug. 31, columnist William Buckley sounded the alarm in a *Washington Post* commentary entitled "Bush and SDI: What's Going On?" Commenting that Bush had used the word "research" without using "testing," and that he feared that the SDI would be very expensive, Buckley admonished Bush for giving "the enemies of the system the two arguments they most frequently use. Those, combined with Bush's implied suggestion that the workability of SDI is problematic, have the effect of sinking official approval of the program."

In an effort to counter this impression, Bush became more aggressive on the issue. In an address to workers at Engineered Air Systems Inc. in St. Louis, Bush said that he would pursue a program of "full funding for research along lines we've requested and when ready to deploy—deploy. If the question is, Will it cost money?" said Bush, "The answer is yes."