

The SALT debate: war or peace?

The following article is by Executive Intelligence Review's Science and Technology editor, Dr. Morris Levitt, a physicist, who counts studies of advanced weapons systems among his specialties.

The announcement at the White House on May 9 by Secretary of State Cyrus Vance that the United States and the Soviet Union have reached basic agreement on a new strategic arms limitation treaty, SALT II, has opened the way to a momentous national debate on U.S. strategic policy. The debate over ratification of the treaty in the Senate, which has already effectively begun, will either be a vehicle for dissipating the already slender war-avoidance potentialities of SALT, or provide the basis for transforming U.S. strategic purpose into an effective peace-winning instrument based on cooperation with the other advanced sector nations for development of the Third World.

The outcome will depend on which of two diametrically opposed conceptions of SALT becomes hegemonic. If the debate remains in its initial rut of simple pro and con arguments about the specific provisions of the treaty, then win, lose, or draw, the world will be moved closer to the brink of thermonuclear war. Such a debate coheres with the conception of SALT emanating from the top of Britain's International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS), and administered by Secretary Vance. That is to make SALT an instrument of U.S.-Soviet conflict management in the Third World within the broader strategic context of the New York Council on Foreign Relations' "controlled disintegration" scenario for the world economy. With that outlook dominant, it is a foregone conclusion that "conservative" opposition to the treaty will provide the springboard for NATO chief Alexander Haig's presidential campaign, while "ultra-left" opposition will lead a simultaneous drive for a shutdown of science and technology. That is exactly the kind of contradictory—but lethal—strategic policy embodied in Bertrand Russell's flip-flops in the late 1940s between espousing virtually simultaneously nuclear disarmament and nuclear first strike.

Instead, the debate on SALT ratification must be shifted to the fundamental issue of bringing U.S.

strategic policy into correspondence with the views on SALT and detente now prevalent in the Soviet Union, France, and West Germany. The Soviets have made clear that they view SALT as inseparable from the framework of effective detente that they have shaped in crucial agreements for economic, scientific, and military cooperation with President Giscard of France, Chancellor Schmidt of West Germany, and in the multi-party Helsinki accords. This view has been further reflected in recent proposals for enhanced scientific cooperation in fusion research and other areas by leading Soviet scientists.

The underlying strategic issues

Behind the public debate for the credulous by the credulous on what are ostensibly the major issues of "national security" involved in SALT, quite a different discussion is being conducted by Anglo-American inner circles.

The latest evidence that Secretary Vance's objective is to sanitize U.S.-Soviet relations in order to win Soviet concessions on North-South policy was spelled out in Vance's address last week to a community college conference in St. Louis. There Vance reiterated the necessity for a world of "multipolarity," the codephrase coined by National Security Council chief Zbigniew Brzezinski for the CFR's "controlled disintegration" Project on the 1980s. As put more bluntly by Vance, in terms similar to those used earlier by fellow CFR project manager George Ball, "multipolarity" means that while the U.S. will not try to run the whole show in the Third World, the other industrial nations including the Soviet Union must respect the basic Anglo-American imperative of imposing International Monetary Fund conditions for further winding down technology transfer and economic development in the Third World.

This approach to the Soviets, implicit in Vance's SALT policy, was fully spelled out in more highbrow form last week in the German weekly *Die Zeit* by Christoph Bertram, head of London's International Institute for Strategic Studies. In a major piece entitled "Does the Third World Have an Effect on the East-West Relation—May It Even Have a Strategic Signifi-

cance for the Superpowers?", Bertram argues that the "old model ... of East-West polarity ... no longer corresponds to reality." Instead, Bertram argues that "with the decay of the earlier system of order" which subsumed Third World conflicts "under the discipline of East-West deterrence," the wars of the 1980s will erupt in the Third World. These will be due to "disputed borders, regional drives for hegemony, and religious conflicts"—precisely the British-directed destabilizations presently occurring.

The strategic significance of this shift is that "in spite of considerable agreements, weighty differences in interest" exist between the *Western* industrial powers in their policies vis-à-vis the Third World because of different raw materials dependencies.

The punch line: given both the increased instability and increased financial-strategic value of raw materials in the Third World, East-West relations and detente will increasingly be conditioned by Soviet conduct in that sphere. The carrot: Soviet access to raw materials and participation in the new order. The stick: If the Soviets don't go along, then "the East-West relationship (will) be increasingly strained."

The SALT debate

The IISS strategic outlook of controlled conflict is reflected in the statements of "support" for SALT made at the White House announcement of the agreement by Vance and Secretary of Defense Harold Brown. As opposed to the Soviet view of the inseparability of SALT and detente, Vance stated that "we have demonstrated through the SALT process that even as we compete in some areas, the United States and the Soviet Union can and must cooperate." In this vein the *Washington Post* quoted an aide to a pro-SALT Senator as saying that the key is "SALT without detente."

Simultaneously, Brown intoned that "if the Soviet Union will emphasize cooperation rather than competition, SALT will also allow a healthier state of U.S.-Soviet relations." Secretary Vance's speech in December 1978 to the Royal Institute of International Affairs further illuminates this perspective. At that time Vance told his peers that a SALT treaty would permit the U.S. to transfer military resources from strategic nuclear deployment to theater (tactical) nuclear forces and to NATO forces.

Soviet reservations

The ambiguity of the "SALT process" has not been lost to the Soviets, who in at least four major ways have expressed their reservations: first, they refused to issue a joint announcement with the U.S. and instead said nothing for 17 hours after the Vance statement. That silence was only broken with a bulletin on Radio Moscow of the form "according to the U.S. State Department. ..." Third, the journal *Literaturnaya Gazeta* wrote that no one should have "any illusions

that this agreement ... will put an end to the arms race," and that, moreover, "there are going to be some heated battles around the SALT pact in Washington." Finally, according to TASS of May 11, the Soviets only *tentatively* agreed to a summit meeting in Vienna during June 15-18 to finalize the agreement.

The agreement itself will require another two to three weeks of negotiations by U.S. and Soviet specialists in Geneva to translate the agreed upon principles into treaty language and to finalize all the quantitative details. The many items and protocols in the proposed treaty boil down to the following:

The ceiling on the total number of delivery vehicles, whether missiles or bombers, will be lowered from the present level of 2400 down to 2250 by 1981. Each side is further restricted to a maximum of 1200 missiles armed with MIRVs (independently targetable multiple missiles or warheads), of which no more than 820 can be land-based.

The net result is that the Soviets would have to *reduce* their present number of ICBMs or bombers by 100, while the U.S. eventually scraps several hundred bombers. While the Soviets retain numerical superiority in missiles, especially of the heavier variety, this is offset by a much more impregnable U.S. submarine fleet, a restriction from a potential 40 to a limit of 14 on the number of secondary missiles that can be mounted on Soviet ICBMs, and maintenance of an overall 2 to 1 U.S. warhead advantage. All knowledgeable analysts agree that this adds up to roughly equivalent nuclear strike forces, and that verification of the respective force levels is not a significant problem.

Despite this basic parity, and the obvious advantages of avoiding an uncontrolled arms race, assorted "yahoos" and treaty "critics" are already opening fire on the treaty, putting the two-thirds Senate majority required for U.S. ratification of the treaty in doubt. Watching this spectacle, Chancellor Helmut Schmidt of West Germany commented on the upcoming treaty debate: "I think there might be changes and not for the better. This process has taken far too long."

The Haig option

If not headed off by a proper strategic debate, a protracted Senate wrangle will create the climate for the Haig presidential option as Carter is subjected to a "League of Nations"

While Haig has already jumped on his white horse to express his misgivings on SALT, Vance's hand is simultaneously being strengthened. The Brahmin Secretary will be off to London soon for meetings with "pro-SALT" Prime Minister Thatcher's new Foreign Minister, Lord Carrington, backed up by support from Steven Rosenfeld of the *Washington Post* for a free hand at the summit.

As the final set piece in the overall scenario, a

New Bonn-Paris-Moscow initiative for 'post-SALT' Europe

The governments of West Germany, France, and the Warsaw Pact countries have set in motion a major new initiative, intended to become operational after the signing of a strategic arms limitation treaty (SALT II), according to late reports from Europe. This closely-coordinated maneuver is aimed as a "one-two punch" against the "SALT without detente" approach advocated by the Carter Administration.

The Warsaw Pact annual Foreign Ministers meeting, held in Budapest, Hungary May 14 and 15, issued a call for a conference of the signatories of the 1975 Helsinki Final Act on Security and Cooperation in Europe—all of Europe plus the United States and Canada. The purpose of the conference, according to initial reports on Radio Moscow, would be "to consolidate trust, ease the threat of military confrontation, and reduce armed forces and armaments in Europe." The statement called for the signing of a treaty banning first use of either nuclear or conventional arms, and for the speediest possible conclusion of SALT II and moving ahead to SALT III.

Immediately following the Warsaw Pact announcement, the West German Defense Ministry informed the *Executive Intelligence Review* that the ongoing NATO Defense Ministers' meeting in Brussels had agreed to a plan, put forward by West German Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and French President Valery Giscard d'Estaing, for negotiations over the Warsaw Pact proposals to begin as soon as the SALT treaty is signed.

These moves are the outcome of recent top-level discussions between the French and West German heads of state and their counterparts in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. Giscard met with Soviet President Brezhnev in Moscow at the end of April, and Schmidt traveled to Bulgaria for discussions with Bulgarian President Todor Zhivkov during the first week in May. The Schmidt-Zhivkov talks stressed above all the need to avert the danger of World War III, as Zhivkov warned that a new world war "would surely be the last, as hardly anyone would survive to fight another."

peculiar left opposition to SALT has emerged. Led by such antitechnology ultras as Federation of American Scientists director Jeremy Stone, and antinuclear FAS physicist John Holdren, this faction's "kill science" purpose dovetails with Vance's own publicly stated attitude toward preventing further scientific and industrial development in the Third World. Ostensibly peeved at SALT II because it does not really provide for arms reduction, this "left opposition" also dovetails with the threat to science and technology posed by both sides in the ongoing *Progressive* magazine "H-bomb" case.

The technology question

Because that case exploits the lack of a clear line of demarcation between basic science and justifiably classified weapons parameters, the present clause in SALT II calling for future restrictions on "qualitative" weapons developments in SALT III is very ambiguous in meaning. Under present conditions such a clause could serve as the basis for an attack on both Soviet science as well as for undermining U.S. weapons oriented labs which are focal points of high powered U.S. science and technology.

Ironically, the "military hero" Haig himself raised

exactly the same issue as the "left" when he lumped his opposition to SALT with the premise that the U.S. has continuously "underestimated the Soviet capacity for technological progress"—exactly the capability that Vance and Co. would like to eliminate.

The MX hustle

Meanwhile, other "conservatives" in the Senate are being roped into a less subtle tactical ploy. The hottest political provision in the treaty is that both sides will be limited to the introduction of just one new weapon system. On the U.S. side, this boils down to whether or not the U.S. will beef up its submarine force, by definition an effective second strike capability, or whether it will go ahead with the MX mobile missile. The latter has first strike overtones, and is also favored by rabidly pro-China Senator Scoop Jackson (D-Wash.) as well as by the utopian Air Force faction and Secretary Brown. A push for the MX would simultaneously be seen as a provocation to the Soviets, as an attack on the submarine-leaning Carter, and as a rallying point for conservatives who would be rounded up later by Haig.

The nation thus has a clear-cut choice. It can either tolerate a sham debate on SALT whose purpose is to

mobilize support for sanitized, controlled conflict with the Soviets to implement the controlled disintegration of the advanced and Third World sectors—a policy which, with or without SALT, will lead to a thermonuclear confrontation with the Soviets in which the U.S. would be obliterated as a nation. Or we can seize this opportunity to engage in a great national debate on the nature of a true war-avoidance and peace-winning policy based on scientific and economic leadership by the U.S. for global development.

IISS head spells out coming East-West conflict

Following are excerpts from International Institute for Strategic Studies head Christoph Bertram's article "Does the Third World Have an Effect on the East-West Relation?" which appeared in the weekly Die Zeit.

The good old model of East-West polarity—here America, there Russia—has not altogether disappeared from our awareness. How deeply rooted it is, time and again becomes clear when events in the Third World—in Angola, in the Horn of Africa, in Southeast Asia—are forcibly fitted into the framework of East-West politics. However, the old model no longer corresponds to reality. The world has changed

First. The East-West opposition is no longer the only and most dangerous international conflict material. While Europe and the superpowers do not enjoy absolute security, they are nonetheless in an incomparably better position than the rest of the world.

Secondly, wars and conflicts in the Third World will increase in the coming decade. With the decay of the earlier system of order—which also made conflicts in the Third World more difficult because it could subsume them under the discipline of East-West determent—conflict materials again come to the fore....

The fourth point. Between the western industrial powers there exist, in spite of considerable agreements, weighty differences in interest in their policies vis-à-vis the Third World. These differences are principally due to their different raw materials dependency.

Now not every small war or every little conflict somewhere in the Third World is relevant to the security policies of the states of East and West....

In the case of three types of conflicts in the Third World, however, this is different: when a local conflict threatens to lead to a direct military confrontation between East and West; when war and unrest in certain regions of the Third World put into question the raw materials needs of our economies; and when, finally,

negative conclusions are to be drawn from the behavior of a state in faraway conflicts, concerning its reliability as an ally regarding the security situation in Europe, which touches us directly. . . . The second category is more important. There are many examples. A new oil embargo as the result of a Mideast war, continuous disruptions of supplies as the result of civil war, unrest, international revolution in areas which are decisive for our raw materials imports—as, for example, in the Persian Gulf or in the south of Africa. The problem exists. However, it lies not so much in the danger to the present raw materials supply. With regard to this disruptions might be possible to handle. The problem, rather, lies in the danger to future supply. A long-lasting guerrilla war between the white minority regime in South Africa and its black neighbor states or a growing unrest in Iran will not so much endanger the output of existing mines and oil wells, but it will endanger the massive investments upon which the future exploitation and thus access to sufficient raw materials in the coming decade depend.

The third category is the most difficult to describe.... Conflicts in the Third World very frequently attain a proxy or symbolic function; they are imparted from the outside with the East-West stamp and are evaluated as indicators for the status and the outlook for the East-West relationship. No wonder that the Soviet Union is astonished about the Western reaction concerning its African activities....

The system of international order of the last three decades has dissolved, and the structures of a new system are at least recognizable in outline. In the transition period military might will gain increasing weight. The readiness for intervention in the Third World will increase and simultaneously the reluctance in the Third World itself to force the solution of political problems with military means is diminishing.

Third, the danger of conflict in the Third World combined with the increasing worry in the industrial countries concerning safe access to raw materials gives a new political weight to events in the developing countries.

Cooperation between East and West in the northern hemisphere becomes increasingly questionable in the face of unchecked and militarily determined rivalry in the southern hemisphere. A separation between the two may be desirable but it is not possible to carry out. Soviet opportunism and Soviet expansionism in the Third World must weigh heavily on detente even if the security of the Western community is seldom immediately concerned....

...There is much which indicates that the Soviet Union will, in the face of growing internal difficulties, ...seek a way out by means of that ability to which she primarily owes her position as a world power: namely, the area of military might....