

## President Reagan leaves the trap door open

by Richard Cohen in Washington, D.C.

On Jan. 15, the day before a heavily promoted presidential address on U.S.-Soviet relations, a senior White House spokesman officially confirmed at a White House background briefing that the administration's proposed fiscal year 1985 budget will include a sizable program for Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD). In the same breath, however, the official specified a dangerous proviso which, having been accepted by the President and his inner core of advisers, will, according to sources close to the White House, be difficult to reverse. The proviso is that the public will not be mobilized behind the BMD effort, nor will it be a visible feature of administration budget testimony in 1984.

Reportedly, the decision to keep the BMD effort under wraps was an offshoot of an election-year package which included a decision to tone down presidential "anti-Soviet rhetoric." Reagan's new image was to be the high-visibility feature of his internationally televised Jan. 16 address. The speech itself was to be a step in advancing a plot choreographed by White House Chief of Staff James Baker III, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Lawrence Eagleburger, and Eagleburger's mentor, Henry A. Kissinger, then seconded more cautiously by Secretary of State George Shultz, National Security Adviser Bud McFarlane, and Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Richard Burt.

### Angling for a new channel

The broadcast plus a unilateral U.S. arms concession were scheduled to provide Shultz with enough tribute to appease Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko at their Jan. 19 meeting in Stockholm. A successful Shultz-Gromyko meeting would then provide Kissinger and his collaborators

enough leverage to convince a resistant President to allow what he has opposed up to this point—an official Kissinger-dominated channel to Moscow.

The Kissinger effort was unveiled at a meeting of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) in Brussels on Jan. 15. There, Kissinger proposed that the United States and the Soviet Union appoint special envoys to embark on a "global review of the entire relationship" in order to begin preparations for a summit meeting between the two heads of state. He added that the representatives should have total access to the U.S. President and the Soviet Politburo.

Operating through the Aspen Institute's Preparatory Group on East-West Relations, the former Secretary of State has already set up private back channels to Gromyko's foreign ministry. Short of an official revival of talks, Kissinger has promoted what U.S. Ambassador to the Intermediate Nuclear Force (INF) talks Paul Nitze identified at a Jan. 17 Washington press conference as "back-channel" negotiations with Moscow aimed at replacing the frozen Geneva talks with behind-the-scenes dealing. Nitze reported that the scheme had been discussed within the administration but was rejected.

At a Jan. 13 National Security Council meeting, President Reagan and certain advisers blocked a key aspect of the Kissinger plan, a proposal for a unilateral revision of the U.S. position at the Mutual and Balanced Force Reduction (MBFR) talks in Vienna. The anticipated MBFR concession had been pushed by Baker and Eagleburger as necessary to satisfy the Soviets' overtures. Such a signal would have significantly lowered the Soviets' perception of the risk to themselves in provoking a confrontation with the United States.

To amplify that point, a senior State Department official

reported on Jan. 13 that during the following week, the administration would present to Congress a 55-page report detailing "Soviet violations or probable violations which have occurred with respect to a number of arms control commitments and obligations." Coming at the same time as the crucial NSC meeting and only hours before the Kissinger-staged operation was to move into high gear, the long-awaited administration report on Soviet SALT violations documents seven major areas of possible break-out, including the construction of a large radar station near Krasnayarsk in central U.S.S.R., "almost certainly" a violation of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

Following the Jan. 13 NSC meeting, the White House engaged in a balancing act, trying to garner the supposed political benefits of Reagan's performance of Jan. 16 and Shultz's discussion in Stockholm while moving to nullify their strategic impact.

On the day before Shultz's meeting with Gromyko, addressing a Stockholm meeting of the Committee on Disarmament, the Secretary of State echoed a speech given by Vice-President George Bush in the fall of 1983—a speech which brought exceptional Soviet attack at that time. Shultz assailed the "artificial and cruel" division of Europe since World War II. Indirectly attacking the Yalta agreements, the Secretary argued that Moscow was responsible for the "barrier that has cruelly divided Europe."

Even before the Shultz-Gromyko session, Paul Nitze, after meeting with President Reagan, contradicted the dangerous hype coming out of Baker's operation and State Department sources, stating, "I've seen nothing that they've [the Soviets] said, and no direct indications other than that they are serious about having broken them off [the arms control talks]. It is not that hopeful."

### **A balancing act**

If the President had capitulated to Kissinger's requests at the Jan. 13 NSC meeting, the perception of presidential weakness and manipulability that would have registered in Moscow would have been calamitous. However, while the President stubbornly resists the Pugwash arms-control trap, he has refused to push it out of the way.

Sources close to the White House say that the President under pressure has been bamboozled by recent White House and private polls which "reflect heightened popular concern about nuclear war" which translate into electoral vulnerabilities for the President. These polls, manipulated by Baker and his West Wing collaborators, dovetail with similar arguments from the State Department regarding fears in Europe. The Jan. 16 speech, timed to reach the maximum European audience, showed a potentially fatal logic accepted by the President and his advisers, a logic which leads them on the one hand to promote a 17 percent increase in the FY85 defense budget, a massive antiballistic-missile defense program, and reported rapid advances in three offensive systems that could greatly enhance the U.S. deterrent by the end of 1984—and on the other, to do everything possible to hide

these actions from the public.

Indeed, Reagan campaign planners have decided that to ease the President's "warmonger" image in the United States and Europe, the real threat of nuclear war itself must be discounted as a central feature of the campaign.

The President keynoted what promises to be a central theme of his re-election campaign on Jan. 13, speaking before a group of Republican women in Washington. "I don't care how many presidential candidates are out there telling you that we're threatened by imminent nuclear war. We have never been as far removed from that possibility as we are today." Reagan went on to argue that the reversal can be attributed to his rearmament program.

In his Jan. 16 internationally televised speech, the President went even further, arguing that "1984 finds the United States in its strongest position in years to establish a constructive and realistic working relationship with the Soviet Union." He emphasized that Moscow must be "reassessing" its previous provocative posture for fear of the administration's \$1.7 trillion rearmament program, the new assertiveness exemplified in Grenada, Lebanon, and the successful emplacement of the Euromissiles, and a strong foundation based on the so-called U.S. economic recovery.

Because of this, Reagan posited, "America's deterrence is more credible and is making the world a safer place; safer because now there is less danger that the Soviet leadership will underestimate our strength or question our resolve." The President went so far as to assert that we are further from war than we have been in a generation.

Yet, although the President has presided over a serious process of rearmament—the MX missile, B-1 bomber, Trident II missiles, and stealth aircraft which could enhance U.S. deterrence—these weapons systems are still two years from deployment. Although intelligence sources reported the deployment by no later than early 1985 of significant classified offensive systems that would challenge existing Soviet superiority, 1984 is left as a year of acute vulnerability.

In this context, on Jan. 21, *EIR* founder and candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination Lyndon H. LaRouche plans, during the course of a nationwide television address, to outline an urgent program for a national emergency mobilization, centered about the crash development and deployment of advanced ballistic missile defense (see page 48).

Mr. LaRouche's intervention will come on the heels of a dramatic revelation in the Jan. 17 issue of *Aviation Week* magazine (see excerpts, page 54). Quoting an informed White House source, *Aviation Week* reported on the existence of a classified CIA report which details a Soviet effort to construct a nationwide ABM system. The report, which the White House source calls "unusual in its strength and clarity," warns that a Soviet "breakout" (open abrogation of the commitment to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty) is possible this year. Administration strategic planners agree that if such a "breakout" were to occur, it would mean a situation in which the Soviet strategic advantage would become decisive.