

Wood: I don't believe that there is any doubt on the part of anybody in the West that the Soviets have very extensive programs in the development of beam technology, charged-particle technology, neutral-beam technology, laser technology of various sorts, ranging from the infrared to the ultra-violet. These are all extensively documented in the open Soviet and international literature. So there can be no doubt that the Soviets have a large program in these areas.

These programs are generally assessed in the West to be substantially larger in size, in number of people working, in resources being expended, and so forth than comparable programs in the West, but that's more a matter of judgment. It is undeniable that these programs all exist and exist in an unclassifiable fashion, that is, they are known and assessment of them is available to anyone who studies the open literature. As to what the Soviets have on ballistic-missile-defense programs, I think that it's very widely agreed in the West that the systems around Moscow and in European Russia are not just anti-aircraft defense capabilities, but represent substantial capabilities against tactical ballistic missiles and intermediate-range ballistic missiles. Furthermore, these programs are the only ones in the world—the Soviet Union is unique in having a deployed anti-ballistic-missile system of some level of capability. This system is capable of being advanced because of the Soviet operational experience with it. Because of its production-line capability, it is capable of being advanced relatively very rapidly, compared to anything that could be advanced in the West, to a full-scale robust antiballistic-missile system, that is to say, one which can be effective against intercontinental ballistic missiles as well as intermediate-range ones.

EIR: You indicated in your talk a time-frame for various kinds of U.S. strategic defense, and you distinguished between a serious program on the one hand and a crash program on the other. What would be a serious program and what would a crash program look like?

Wood: Actually I spoke of three levels of programs. The first one is the one the U.S. is engaged in at the present time—research only. This is rather undeniably the case. It is not oriented toward a system that could be deployed and operated, but it is simply research. The second level, as I said, would be a serious program of the type that characterized the Apollo effort to put a man on the moon in a decade in the '60s. There were definite goals, definite timetables, definite national commitments to go out and do it.

A crash program is the intensity level of the program that existed for example, in the United States during the Second World War to realize nuclear weapons—the Manhattan Project.

These are the three kinds of programs that can possibly exist. The United States is in the first phase program—no goals, no timetables, no anything, except a commitment to spend modest amounts of resources on research to explore what might be technically possible.

Interview: Prof. A. A. Vasilyev

'We do not want a technical discussion'

EIR interviewed Prof. A. A. Vasilyev, department head, U.S.A. and Canada Institute, U.S.S.R. Academy of Sciences, at Erice on Aug. 22.

EIR: One year ago, the Soviet delegation here at Erice was prepared to talk about international cooperation for war avoidance and peaceful coexistence through anti-missile defense, as shown in the "troika" declaration of Academician Velikhov, Professor Teller, and Professor Zichichi. Now the Soviet delegation is not willing to talk about that. Why?

Vasilyev: That is really not an honest question. We are ready to talk to American scientists—to the Union of Concerned Scientists and to the American Federation of Scientists, for example. We have met with them. The Americans here are only from the x-ray laser group, and so they are a very partial representation. They want to involve us in a purely technical discussion. We cannot accept this. We want to discuss with all American scientists and not just about technical questions. Anyone who says that strategic defense will end the arms race is not right. We have distributed a study and the Americans disagree. Then let them say that in addition to the 10 points we make there, that there is another, an 11th point, that changes the whole result. But not just in a technical discussion. They claim that defense, on the one side, will be made cheaper. But that will not end the arms race. When one side builds defense, the other side will resort to anti-defense, leading to anti-anti-defense, and so forth. The arms race would go on. Special weapons would be developed to stop cruise missiles and other low-flying objects. You know what Soviet proposals have been in this area. We want to stop the militarization of space. We also want mutual reductions in the numbers of nuclear weapons.

EIR: Your Marshal Ogarkov in his speech on May 8 said that weapons systems based on new physical principles are a reality of the immediate future. Doesn't this mean that the Soviet Union is also building lasers and beams for anti-missile defense?

Vasilyev: I don't know. But when you start an arms race, then you get the dynamic of an arms race! I can only repeat what I said before: We want to stop the militarization of space and reduce the number of nuclear weapons on both sides. Thank you and good-bye!