
Interview: Gen. Lemos Ferreira

Strategic defense: Europe should join in a 'Manhattan Project'

EIR interviewed Gen. Lemos Ferreira, the Chief of General Staff of the Portuguese Armed Forces, in Lisbon on March 14. Gen. Lemos Ferreira had already expressed views favorable to the Strategic Defense Initiative on March 3, shortly after a visit to SHAPE headquarters in Belgium. Text excerpted.

Lemos Ferreira: The Strategic Defense Initiative is controversial. For many, it is difficult to distinguish what is essential and what is not. For many, the SDI is a strange thing. With big spaceships armed with lasers and blowing away at the whole world, it is "star wars." This view of a "war in space," placing all at the mercy of the great powers, implies that we might all disappear! It would be a laser holocaust, not just Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but everything.

Well, they do not know what they are talking about. We will tell them, through the Atlantic Alliance, internationally: The Soviets have been developing their arsenals for 10-20 years, they have an edge in quality. We cut our aircraft from 10,000 to 7,000 and then again—not they. To the contrary, they have no welfare of populations to take in consideration, no public opinion to reckon with.

Now, Chernenko is dead, the new man is in, the machine works.

So it is very important to give the public the right idea. Look at NATO: Its main mission is to preserve peace. For this, parity is needed. But parity *on our own terms*. There must be a balance, spending to that aim, but we must not jeopardize welfare, schools, housing. And the Soviets are not faced with this. We can push them, and then they might have to come to the negotiating table. A large increase in the funding and the technological work and the spending on our side—such are our terms, our cards. Let's face it: The proper terrain on which to fight them is not matching their every aircraft, their every warship, etc.

The SDI? It is a second industrial revolution. Why spend \$25-30 billion? It is not just *spending*, to send some very fancy things into space and aggressively fight there. We must tell people, *there is no such spending without a very large*

spinoff. People now are very happy with transistor radios, integrated circuits, computers—that all comes from the American space effort of the 1950s and 1960s. Larger rockets were needed after the Soviets had launched theirs, so the U.S. had to miniaturize. It has now become a fact of daily life. It has implications for medicine. The spinoffs are immeasurable, *and cannot be measured in terms of insurance accounting*. We must tell people: *Spending in the SDI is investing*, the payoff will be multiple. We're not going to space "to fight."

A major difference, though, exists between the Americans and the Russians: The Americans seek technological discovery and the economic spinoff. All the object of the Soviets is military, with some added side-effects. Who put up space stations first? The Soviets. The Americans seek science as well—how the universe came about. But why do you think the Soviets broke all records of space-flight duration? For military reasons.

EIR: What about Europe's view and position on the SDI? The Soviets are intent on decoupling Europe, and the battle is not won yet. The danger of a "New Yalta" remains. Gorbachov—and Marshal Ogarkov, who has not been demoted, but promoted to a position of extraordinary power—are dead-set on preventing the SDI. What is your own view on those points?

Lemos Ferreira: I am very pleased with what you said about Ogarkov. Reading the newspapers, but knowing their military system, I knew that he had not been pushed aside. You never know from the outside who is really who there. Gorbachov is not quite the real power.

EIR: For the Soviets, returning to Geneva was somewhat like going to Canossa. The Ogarkov doctrine is quite simple: Go to war if need be to stop the SDI—but try to decouple Europe beforehand, if possible.

Lemos Ferreira: I agree fully. They are looking for decoupling, and decoupling could be a threat, in business as well as in political terms. The so-called Nunn Amendment itself

is pure decoupling. The Atlantic is a bridge with two pillars, but the bridge will fall should one of the pillars fall. Enhanced European cooperation is required, but reviving the Western European Union is not an option, I think. Between the EEC, NATO, and WEU, all efforts are converging somehow. But the most important thing is that resources must be pulled together to avoid decoupling.

The main issue is the role and place of West Germany. You cannot circumvent the fact of the present division of Germany into two states. It is one nation. And then, the Soviets want world dominance, like long-term chess-players, with their carefully calculated moves. They have time, and they are moving. Look at what they have gained since the last world war! Look at terrorism, which is not a fingertip-controlled thing, but small groups, each with its own philosophy. But how do they get directly activated? There is a connection.

In the events in Africa [the decolonization of 1974-75 in Angola, Mozambique, and other Portuguese-speaking nations of the continent—ed.], the U.S. State Department made a major mistake, thinking that we should withdraw and evacuate—with the idea that no vacuum would be created. We withdrew and the Soviets moved into the vacuum. All whites left Africa, leaving the local populations without support.

EIR: We have been told that Henry Kissinger told Mario Soares at the time, “Don’t return to Portugal. You are the Kerensky of the Portuguese revolution. Why don’t you stay in the United States?”

Lemos Ferreira: In 1974-75, the Soviets did not want Portugal. It was too early for their plans. They wanted Africa.

EIR: You spoke of the Soviets as chess-players who have time on their side. But isn’t President Reagan’s SDI exactly what takes time away from them?

Lemos Ferreira: Exactly! That’s why they’re so angry about it! They play their card, they play on fears. That is why it is so important to tell people about the connection between the SDI and the emerging technologies. The SDI presents the Soviets with the option: “Can we produce the same weapons fast enough?” If *we* go faster with the SDI and with the new technologies, can they, the Soviets, catch up? They have to make a choice.

It is also dangerous. In the last 15 years, the Soviets have accumulated military power. Look at their tanks: T55, T62, T72, T80—there is always something new coming on line. It is the same with aircraft, with the Navy. Their new power projection is obvious. Right now, they are switching to aircraft-carriers after having trained with helicopter-carriers. Now, what do people think these things are for, like their tanks? To be flower pots along the roads?

EIR: What is your sense of the Soviet game in the Mediterranean?

Lemos Ferreira: They are playing northern Africa very much. There have been bread strikes and riots in Tunisia, in Morocco—although not in Algeria, and of course, not in Libya. Of course, Qaddafi to them is an unreliable ally; he’s even unreliable to himself. But Morocco, this is our neighbor, and even we do not pay it sufficient attention. Morocco is a card played by the Soviets not so much Machiavellianly, but opportunistically. The same goes for Greece and Turkey. The Turks are used to the Russians, they do not let themselves be taken easily. Nor is this the case for the Greek people. But politically, it is now problematic. *The southern flank could suddenly break down. It is a soft belly of NATO.* If Greece bolts, the whole region is interconnected. Portugal and Morocco are two small countries, the entry point of the Mediterranean. Spain has an Arab role, but a rapprochement with Morocco is difficult, for obvious reasons. But *we* can have a rapprochement with Morocco.

EIR: How could Portugal join in the SDI?

Lemos Ferreira: There are many officials in Europe who think: We do not have the means to do it, the SDI looks fine, but we’re not involved. Other countries ask: What’s my part in it? If the United States is able to go to Europe and try to share in a “two-way-street” fashion, this will help to brush aside the difficulties, the resistance. People will think: We are part of the project, we have something to gain.

It is of course difficult sometimes for the United States—well, for the State Department—to deal with different countries one by one. We are a people! It’s not like filling in boxes on a tax-return form. They call Spain and Portugal “Iberia.” What does that mean, please? Geographically, it is correct, but less so strategically, and politically, it is incorrect. These are two different entities with two different roles. If you’ve been independent for 900 years as a nation, there is a reason for that.

So, Spain and Portugal: Don’t force us to work together. We’ll work better if we take the initiative of collaboration. We work very well with the Spaniards.

Now, to come back to your question, with the SDI, what is needed is *a Manhattan Project, an Apollo Program*. But the next five years are dangerous. If the Soviets think: “We can attack now, not later,” they will be tempted. We must stop this temptation. *If* the Soviets should strike, they will strike on the direct route, not on the periphery, with mass effect, the mass impact rolling on, in the shortest possible time. They play chess? Fine. But if they have to roll on, the armor will roll on.

Now, with the SDI, Europe, and technology, we must share in the economic development. Portugal, on our own scale, can contribute. This is a very important element in the viability of small countries. In Portugal, the IMF is applying a lot of negative pressure, no pressure on the positive side. The IMF’s list of demands is a list of “*nos*.”