

Russian demands defense cuts; lawmakers comply

by Kathleen Klenetsky

In an interview with the Spanish newspaper *El País* early in March, Moscow's top "Americanologist," Georgii Arbatov, praised the U.S. Congress for its "realistic" approach to defense spending. "We agree with a branch of American government: Congress," said Arbatov, mentioning the recent House vote in favor of a resolution calling for a comprehensive nuclear test ban. Arbatov scolded Reagan for insisting that "Congress finance his out-of-orbit budget."

Arbatov's faith in Congress is not misplaced. On March 6, just a few days after Arbatov's remarks appeared in print, the Republican-controlled Senate Budget Committee voted 16 to 6 to reject the President's budget request, with most Democrats, and some Republicans, complaining that the pitiful 3% increase the administration is requesting for defense is "too high." Some experts predict that defense budget cuts for Fiscal Year 1987 could range as high as \$70 billion.

The committee's vote is just a prelude to an expected "great debate" over American strategic policy, in which members of the Trilateral Commission and kindred branches of the Eastern Liberal Establishment are proposing a total overhaul of the American military, on the grounds that Pentagon management is "flawed." These advocates of a "New Yalta" deal with the Soviet Union, will use the pretext of budget constraints under the Gramm-Rudman bill to justify decoupling the United States from its allies.

The *London Times* reported March 3 that, because of the budget deficit, U.S. political leaders are considering cuts in U.S. spending for NATO defense which hitherto would have been unthinkable. This confirms what *EIR* alone had previously warned: that the Gramm-Rudman bill would necessarily lead to U.S. troop withdrawals from Western Europe (see, for example, *EIR*, Feb. 14, 1985, "Economic blowout in 1986: the real state of the Union," by Lyndon H. LaRouche).

Under the heading "Budget-Cutters Eye the NATO Sacred Cow," *London Times* reporter Bailey Morris wrote that there are "hard times ahead for European defense programs. The first hard fact is that Reagan's \$320 billion military budget for the next financial year is in trouble. . . . One study after another in recent months has taken aim at NATO as a 'huge sacred cow' that can no longer be fed by American taxpayers."

The Senate budget panel's vote came despite President Reagan's nationally televised speech of Feb. 26, in which he warned that new cuts in military spending would be "reckless, dangerous, and wrong . . . backsliding of the most irresponsible kind." The Soviets are engaged in a "relentless effort to gain military superiority over the United States," said the President, and they have invested "\$500 billion more than the United States in defense, and built nearly three times as many strategic missiles," between 1975 and 1985.

The President also said that it would be "absolute folly for the U.S. not to press forth" with the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

That latter point was underscored by SDI director Lt.-Gen. James Abrahamson, in testimony before the House subcommittee on research and development on March 4, in which he bluntly asserted that Soviet strategic military doctrine is "first strike."

If Congress does not allocate the \$4.8 billion requested by his office to push ahead with President Reagan's SDI program, the consequences, given Soviet aggressive intentions, will be "a very dangerous world indeed," Abrahamson stressed.

Abrahamson said that Russia's SDI effort dwarfs that of the United States: "Since the 1960s, the Soviets have been pursuing research into advanced technologies for strategic

defense" including "high-energy lasers, particle-beam weapons, radio-frequency weapons, and kinetic-energy weapons. Moreover, during this same period, the Soviets have had an active and expanding military space program."

By contrast, he said, by cutting 25% of SDI funding requests the last two years, Congress has forced the U.S. SDI program "to accept higher program risks, prematurely down-select certain promising technologies and in general pursue a more austere research program," including reducing the effort on "certain major technologies such as space-based lasers, prematurely."

But Congress is in no mood to take national security considerations seriously. The President's speech drew the usual catcalls from liberal Democrats in Congress; but Senate Republicans deserted him as well. House Majority Leader Jim Wright (D-Tex.) accused Reagan of taking money from health, education, and other social programs to finance "this unprecedented build-up in arms." The real question, he said, is "how much [defense] can we afford." Similar responses came from John Heinz (R-Pa.): "There is no doubt in my mind that the President's budget request will not be agreed to by Congress." Even pro-defense Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) conceded: "We may not be able to get as much as the President wants."

On the SDI front, informed sources on the Hill have told *EIR* that Reagan would be "supremely lucky" if the SDI were to be slashed by only one-third.

Defense 'reform'

If the Pentagon had only to face Arbatov's friends in Congress, that would be bad enough. But a new flank has been opened in the war on defense: Pentagon "reform." There are at least two major sources of this operation—the President's Blue Ribbon Commission on Defense Management (a.k.a. the Packard Commission, after its chairman, former Trilateral Commission member David Packard), and a scheme cooked up by Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies, and sponsored by Sens. Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) and Sam Nunn (D-Ga.), chairman and ranking Democrat, respectively, of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Early in March, both groups took important steps in the direction of reimposing on the Pentagon the worst aspects of former Defense Secretary Robert Strange McNamara's "systems analysis."

The Packard Commission, whose members include the likes of Wall Street investment banker Nicholas Brady, a close personal friend of both Fed chairman Paul Volcker and Vice-President George Bush, and Boston Brahmin Louis Cabot, issued an interim report Feb. 28, claiming that "there is no rational system" for reaching a coherent national military strategy, and proposing a sweeping overhaul of the defense establishment, including restructuring the Joint Chiefs of Staff, giving greatly enlarged powers to the JCS chairman, and changing Department of Defense procurement methods.

The commission report is being played up in the liberal press as a corrective to Pentagon "waste," but its real purpose, as the report itself acknowledges, is to justify further restraints on the defense budget, and to remove the military as far as possible from defense policymaking. One of its chief recommendations is that U.S. military strategy be keyed to pre-set budget levels, which "would reflect competing demands on the federal budget and projected gross national product and revenues and would come from recommendations of the National Security Council and the Office of Management and Budget." The process would also involve having the JCS chairman "frame explicit trade-offs among the Armed Forces."

The report was greeted enthusiastically by House Armed Services Committee chair Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), a former McNamara "whiz kid," and Senator Nunn, who said its recommendations were "compatible" with those he and Goldwater were fashioning. "The commission may have started out talking about toilet seats, but it ended up proposing to restructure the whole house," said Nunn.

The Packard Commission report has, unfortunately, won the approval of President Reagan as well.

A week later, on March 6, the Nunn-Goldwater blueprint was voted up by the Senate Armed Services Committee, overriding strong objections from Pentagon leaders. Senator Nunn said the "sweeping and historic" legislation—which eliminates 17,000 Defense Department jobs, restructures the JCS, and creates an undersecretary of defense for procurement—would help remedy problems "that have plagued our national defense for decades." Goldwater, boasting that the committee "has had to fight elements of the Pentagon every inch of the way," called the bill "the most significant piece of defense organization legislation in the nation's history."

But others disagree. Heads of all the military services sent fiery protests to Goldwater and Nunn, charging that the legislation would reduce the services' role in strategic planning and make a "hash" of the defense structure. According to the March 5 *Baltimore Sun*, Marine Corps Commandant Gen. P. X. Kelley was especially incensed over the proposals, asserting they would cause "significant degradation in the efficiency and effectiveness of the defense establishment—to the point where I have deep concerns for the future of the United States." Kelley charged that the legislation would also destroy the "corporate nature" of the joint chiefs.

Navy Secretary John Lehman stated that the legislation would undo Defense Secretary Weinberger's work in reversing "30 years of centralization and bureaucratization," and would also "make the offices of service secretary and service chief essentially ceremonial."

In their March 7 syndicated column, Rowland Evans and Robert Novak excoriated Goldwater for making an alliance with "the heirs of his nemesis of over 20 years ago, Robert S. McNamara. . . . Although the reform debate is ostensibly about how the defense establishment should be run, it actually is an inquest on how the military have run it."