

## Editorial

### *The SDI and the Soviets*

For a full year before President Reagan announced—on March 23, 1983—the policy which became known under the rubric, Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), Lyndon LaRouche and his associates were campaigning internationally on the urgent necessity of his taking such a step. There were several reasons for this, not least that the Soviets themselves were involved in a crash effort to develop such a program.

When it was first enunciated, President Reagan's SDI called for a multi-layered defensive shield. Over time this concept has been watered down, particularly as concessions have been made, on the one side, to the Danny Graham High Frontier crowd, who demanded that the program be developed on the basis of off-the-shelf technology; and on the other, to the Congress, which has refused to fund the program at any adequate level.

As proposed by LaRouche and also by Dr. Edward Teller, then an important adviser to the President, the SDI would have been developed instead on the basis of the most advanced physical principles, primarily those based upon laser and associated technologies.

Had we had from 1983 on, the kind of high technology-vectored, crash development of the SDI which LaRouche proposed, we would already be benefiting from spinoffs to the civilian economy in a way comparable to the benefits which accrued from national investment in research and development for the Apollo program. Unfortunately, this was not the case, and the United States has begun to lag technologically—and in productivity—behind its allies.

LaRouche had made a proposal which was incorporated into President Reagan's original initiative, that the United States freely share developed SDI technology with the Soviets, so that there would be no basis for them to fear a U.S. pre-emptive nuclear first strike. This offer, of course, was summarily rejected by the Soviets.

They activated every device in their repertoire, every agent of influence whom they could control to paralyze the U.S. initiative—while diligently pursuing their own advantage in the development and deployment of anti-ballistic missiles. To date, they are well in advance of

the United States and the Western alliance as a whole in the development of radio frequency weapons. More to the point, they are restructuring their armed forces to incorporate at every level, a war-fighting capability based upon the most advanced of the new physical principles first developed in connection with a defensive ABM shield.

There was an additional aspect of the LaRouche proposal which has ironically been borne out. LaRouche pointed to the fact that a crash development of the SDI was precisely the shot in the arm needed by the U.S. economy. Despite the erosion which even in 1982 afflicted the U.S. industrial base, the proliferation of laser-based technologies, and even the anticipation of this, along with the stimulus to the aerospace industry of increased demands for lift capacity, would do the job.

A similar expenditure by the Soviets would be much more of a tax upon their economy because of the cultural backwardness of Russia, which would constrict the extent to which their civilian economy could assimilate a cascade of new technologies. LaRouche made a more general observation, that the enormous Soviet military buildup which was being hidden under the pretext of *glasnost* and *perestroika* would pose such a burden on their economy that they faced the danger of an imminent breakdown crisis.

We now see just how right LaRouche was. The problem is that too many people have forgotten the conclusion that LaRouche drew. An economic crisis in the Soviet Union, he warned, would have the same effect on the Soviet leadership as baiting an enraged bear. The Soviets would be precipitated into military adventures by their knowledge that the logistical base of their military strength was in danger of eroding. The Russians would be most dangerous precisely when they felt weakest.

This made development and deployment of the SDI a matter of first importance. A strong Western alliance, with a strong economy, could well afford to help the Soviets make a full transition into a modern industrial economy. This is the direct opposite of the appeasement of the Gorbachov dictatorship, being urged today.