

Enough Is Enough

“What does ‘security’ mean at this moment in the nuclear age? Our 41 Polaris-Poseidon submarines *alone* can guarantee deterrence. Regardless of what program the Russians carry out, more efficient counterforce weapons add nothing to American security.”

During the past six years, our nuclear policies have been focused almost exclusively on the strategic balance between the United States and the Soviet Union. The Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), which have occupied the center of the stage in our disarmament negotiations, have been directed almost entirely at seeking precise symmetry in nuclear weapons capabilities even though this was obtained by adding to our arsenals rather than limiting them. Fears that an appearance of nuclear inferiority would be translated into political weakness have driven our nuclear weapons programs to the point that our stockpiles of strategic warheads have quadrupled since 1968. Nuclear testing has accelerated to compete with the Russians in sophistication of weapons design, while funds for improved protection of weapons materials have been withheld.

Meanwhile, India has tested its first nuclear explosive, ostensibly for peaceful applications but, nevertheless, simultaneously demonstrating a weapons capability. Israeli leaders have acknowledged a potential to make atomic weapons so that even if these are not now actually available, they could easily be a factor if another conflict breaks out in the Middle East. The energy crisis has given renewed impetus to international programs developing nuclear power. These programs will soon make fissionable material usable for weapons much more readily available throughout the world. Terrorists are operating with ever-fewer inhibitions, and we have not learned how to deal with them. Given this rapidly changing situation, our myopic views on nuclear security need urgent re-evaluation.

On November 24, 1974, President Ford and Secretary General Brezhnev met at Vladivostok to sign a strategic arms limitation agreement which was described as a “break-through” placing a “cap” on the arms race. However, when President Ford finally revealed a few of the specifics of the agreement almost a week later, it became apparent that this was the opposite of an arms control agreement. The ceilings, 2,400 strategic delivery vehicles and 1,320 missiles carrying MIRVs (multiple warheads which can be aimed at separate targets), were established significantly above approved present or future levels. The limits of the 1972 Moscow Interim Agreement were even breached, and no restrictions were put on the replacement of old weapons by new ones, thus promoting, in addition, a qualitative arms race.

Even though the Soviet Union had not yet started MIRV deployment, the ceilings allowed it to place MIRVs on



virtually its entire modern land-based ICBM force, and no limitation would be put on the number of their warheads. The U.S. could add 4,000 warheads to its already large arsenal by deploying the proposed 10 new Trident submarines: a decided step backward from the Interim Agreement, which would have at least required older submarines to be taken out of the fleet before 10 new Tridents could be added. Secretary of Defense James R. Schlesinger has also stated the Vladivostok Accords may require procuring even more than 10 Tridents and restructuring our strategic forces. Clearly, unless the Congress demonstrates unusually firm restraint, Vladivostok can become only a mechanism for sanctioning mutual arms build-ups that in times of economic stress might otherwise be difficult to justify.

Meanwhile, the American public has for six years been bombarded continually with new scare stories of the mounting Russian nuclear threat and with proposals for new U.S. weapons to match it. The Russians have been testing four new ICBMs, one larger than all of their previous monsters; a recent test series neatly coincided with Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's October arrival in Moscow to revitalize SALT and to lay the groundwork for the Vladivostok meeting. For its part, while Kissinger was in Moscow, the U.S. put into the pot its SALT “bargaining



chip,” the announcement of the launch of a Minuteman ICBM from the large C5A transport plane. The use of such a launching platform would make any freeze on the numbers of land-base ICBM launchers meaningless unless some verifiable method for including such weapons in the freeze can be devised. Such timing was certainly not accidental but part of the typical negotiating game plan, which in the past has resulted in an accelerated, not slowed, arms race and contributed to the failure of such agreements to control nuclear arms.

Schlesinger has declared moreover, that if the defense budget is cut, we will have only the shadow, not substance, of a first-class military power; inflation, he said, was cutting into our weapons procurement. But how does the perception of inferiority, which the Secretary and others try to create in order to obtain more military funds, realistically affect our national interests? Does it make any sense for both superpowers to play their endless game of piling more weapons on top of more weapons to match the potential stockpiles of the other side? Do more weapons really equate with more security even in the narrow U.S.-U.S.S.R. context? In light of the broader world situation, may we not be aiming at the wrong target? What does “security” mean at this moment in the nuclear age?

To answer these questions, we must go back to the fundamentals of nuclear weapons. In recent years, our eyes have become glazed by a forest of thousands of ICBMs with millions of tons of high-explosive power. We must look again at the trees and refocus our attention on what one primitive 15-kiloton bomb did to the city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945. The city was completely destroyed; blast and fire left large areas a pile of rubble; one hundred thousand people were killed; many died weeks or months later from lingering radiation sickness; others were permanently scarred with burns from the radiating fireball. These were the aftermath of just a single “small” nuclear explosion.

But the people of Hiroshima and Japan were relatively lucky. They were not exposed to radioactive contamination from fall-out because the bomb was exploded 1,800 feet in the air, and all the radioactive fission product debris was carried away and dispersed in the upper atmosphere. However, on March 1, 1954, we were accidentally given another graphic demonstration of the effects of nuclear explosions after a 15-megaton thermonuclear weapon was tested at Bikini Atoll in the mid-Pacific. This explosion, nicknamed Bravo, took place on the surface of a coral island, and the radioactive debris combined with dust particles fell

back to the surface. More than 5,000 square miles were covered with lethal radioactive contamination; still larger areas were heavily contaminated. Fortunately, most of the material sank relatively harmlessly below the surface of the ocean, but one Japanese ship, the Lucky Dragon, which was in the fall-out path about 100 miles away, was heavily contaminated. One fisherman died later of liver damage, and the 22 remaining crew members suffered severe after-effects. After the same test, the inhabitants of Rongelap Atoll at the extreme southern edge of the fall-out pattern, and more than 100 miles away, were exposed to just sublethal radiation exposures. They experienced severe skin burns, radiation sickness, and now 20 years later are developing thyroid growths, some of which have been found to be cancerous. However, they too were relatively lucky. None were killed, but had they been a mile or two farther north, or had the wind veered a few degrees farther south, they would have all been dead.

Again, these accidents were the aftermath of only a single explosion in the almost uninhabited Pacific Ocean. Had this been a Soviet attack on one of our ICBM silos at Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, most of that State, including St. Louis some 150 miles to the east, would have been blanketed by lethal fall-out. Thousands of megatons would have to be used if the Russians wished to reduce significantly the size of our ICBM force. As a result of the SALT I Interim Agreement on Offensive Weapons signed in Moscow in May 1972, the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. agreed to freeze the numbers of land and submarine based ballistic missile launchers at the existing high levels. But even these astronomical numbers were not enough for either side, and the Vladivostok Agreement now sanctions still further additions to the nuclear stockpiles. The Soviet Union has started testing four new ICBMs and a new submarine ballistic missile (SLBM). The U.S. has continued to add to the number of warheads and bombs at a rate of more than three each day, so that we now have about 8,500, all with at least three times the explosive power of the Hiroshima bomb. At the present time, the Russians are far behind with only about 2,800 strategic warheads, since they only started testing MIRVs in 1973, five years after we did.

But does this numbers comparison have any meaning in the real world? The Russians apparently think it does, for Schlesinger reported on January 14, 1975, that they have now at last started to deploy MIRVs on one of their new model ICBMs. By the 1980s, they too could have 7,000 warheads unless their appetites are curbed by then. This seems doubtful since they insisted in the recent Vladivostok Agreement on having the right to put MIRVs on missiles to match not only our presently approved programs but, in addition, the number on more than 10 new Trident submarines. Because their ICBMs are larger than ours, this will permit them to have even more warheads than the U.S. or the same number with higher explosive power than ours.

U.S. planners apparently also take these skyrocketing numbers seriously, for we too insisted at Vladivostok on being allowed to still further expand our existing missiles force with MIRVs. Furthermore, in anticipation of the Russians proceeding with all their programs, the defense establishment has started work on a whole new generation of nuclear weapons, missiles, and MIRVs. Our new war-

heads will have higher accuracies and greater yields – the present 200 kilotons, more than 10 times Hiroshima, is not enough. These improvements are justified as needed to obtain a better counterforce capability: i.e., to be able to destroy Russian weapons more efficiently in nuclear conflict. But can any of these programs be rationalized in light of Hiroshima and Bikini Bravo? Do we actually wish to fight a nuclear war?

[MUTUAL ASSURED DESTRUCTION]

Since nuclear war on any scale would be an unparalleled disaster against which no defense is possible, the basic posture of our strategic policy has long been to avoid its breaking out. We have relied on making the consequences of initiating a nuclear aggression so devastating and so certain that any nation would be deterred from taking such action. Such deterrence has been achieved by having a retaliatory force capable of producing unacceptable damage in the aftermath of any feasible surprise attack. The key element needed in a strategic deterrent force is survivability, since only a few retaliatory weapons on target can produce widespread devastation.

The U.S. strategic arsenal has long satisfied and surpassed this criterion by even the most conservative standards. Our 41 Polaris-Poseidon ballistic missile submarines alone, which will soon be able to fire more than 5,000 nuclear warheads at the U.S.S.R., can guarantee deterrence, but as a hedge against some unforeseen weakness in this system, it is backed up by 1,054 ICBMs and nearly 500 intercontinental bombers.

Secretary Schlesinger, however, since taking over the reins in the Pentagon, has said that we do not yet have enough. In addition to a force which can retaliate massively against the Soviet Union following any possible surprise attack, he believes we must have a more efficient capability for destroying Russian missiles in their silos – i.e., an improved counterforce capability. He calls attention to the large payload of the Soviet ICBMs and to their belated initiation of a MIRV test program. Once MIRVs are extensively deployed on the large Soviet missiles, they could be viewed as a threat to the U.S. fixed land-based ICBMs although not to our bombers and submarines. Schlesinger admits that the realistic dangers even to our Minuteman force are minimal, but nevertheless he believes we must match their potential counterforce capability by increasing the yield and particularly the accuracy of our own ICBMs. Our next generation of missiles will have terminally-guided maneuverable re-entry vehicles, nicknamed MARVs, which permit our warheads to zero in on their targets.

Even though he admits our deterrent would still be credible, Schlesinger believes that U.S. inferiority in counterforce capability would be perceived as a sign of weakness by the Russians and our allies. He fears the Soviet Union might launch an attack against our ICBMs and other strategic bases, relying on U.S. reluctance to retaliate for fear of having our cities destroyed in return. Such paranoia results from a failure to understand the lesson of the single 15-megaton surface explosion at Bikini. Thousands of megatons would be needed to knock out our ICBM force;

(Continued on page 59)

The Riddle of Governor Jerry Brown

Part II—The Policies

“Brown talks of a more simple, less consumption-oriented life, but he is asking the hard-pressed as well as the comfortable to make do with less. Can that be done in the absence of a shared vision of the good and just society?”

Our political speech tends to be meager and rigid, unlike general American speech, which can be rich, varied, and flexible. Politicians keep using the same tired words and nobody pays attention any longer when they speak. Journalists use the same old words to describe what it is the politicians are doing and saying and their descriptions, therefore, do not always help us to be clear or certain about politics. For a long time things did not change very much in politics and the “same old words” could serve adequately. Even now, when considering the *dramatis personae* of national politics, the old language looks almost good enough.

And yet, Reagan and Rockefeller and Ford and Scoop Jackson and Humphrey and Muskie all seem to belong to some time past, some other era of our national life. They seem, somehow, to have survived the Sixties but not to have lived through them. Can the same designations that serve for them serve also for much younger people who not only survived the Sixties but lived intensely through them and were politically formed by their events? I think not.

If one calls the Brown Administration in California a

“liberal” administration, and means by that designation that he expects Brown to perform in office roughly the way Jackson or Humphrey, or, say, Hugh Carey, would perform, he is bound to be disappointed. He would be making the same mistake about Brown and his people that the California media have been making.

There are ways in which Brown fits comfortably into the moderate or liberal wing of the Democratic Party. There are ways in which he is very conservative, notably in his belief that suffering and injustice are inescapable in the human condition; that it is as important to understand this as it is to struggle against the suffering and injustice. That belief is the foundation of Brown’s conservatism, if he is a conservative at all. It is not, however, the foundation of what the media call his “conservatism,” by which they mean his insistence on a balanced budget, on restraint in governmental spending, and on strict accountability for all that is spent. That fiscal restraint, which is shared by all of Brown’s major appointees, has its sources in a conviction that for the time being, at least, the cupboard is bare so far as new taxes are concerned and a belief that the major

by Francis Carney