

# UNDER COVER

## Flights of Fancy

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That things often are not what they seem was verified once again in Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger's assault on the news media for revealing that January's space shuttle would launch a new communications satellite designed to monitor a wide variety of the Soviet Union's internal telecommunications. In fact, the NASA space shuttle program was a military program to begin with. The administration's belated effort to hide space activities under the national security blanket acknowledges the fact that the all-out competition in space warfare capability is already launched in earnest. The Soviet space shuttle has been tested, and its deployment is just around the corner.

Is our new Strategic Defense Initiative—the attempt to create a defensive shield against nuclear-tipped ballistic missiles—really good for us, as our president states, or does it put our nation at greater risk? Two articles in the winter issue of *Foreign Affairs* illustrate two ways of approaching the questions of how best to control the nuclear arms race and how to evaluate the Strategic Defense Initiative, dubbed the “star wars” proposal. One, a real attempt to separate “truth” from “fact,” was written by the exuberant director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency; Kenneth L. Adelman, the other by the “Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse,” Messrs. Bundy, McNamara, Kennan, and Smith. (This is the same quartet that two years ago in the same forum advocated the renunciation by the United States of any intention of first use of nuclear weapons.)

Mr. Adelman, for his part, says a number of things that need saying. One is that during the period of the SALT I Treaty, the Soviet Union added six thousand nuclear warheads to its arsenal. Another is that we expect altogether too much from arms control agreements. As Hans J. Morgenthau noted a while ago, “a mutually satisfactory settlement of the power contest is a precondition for disarmament.” The corollary is that “men do not fight because they have arms. They have arms because it is necessary to fight.”

The only kind of arms control agreements we can reasonably achieve, Mr. Adelman argues, is “arms control without agreements.” And, indeed, this has been the traditional way of handling such questions—“if you don't do that, we won't do this.” The liability of this approach, Adelman concedes, is its “blandness.” People want a comprehensive arms control agreement that will be hailed by the media as a “peace treaty.” But all we can really do is work for incremental agreements, mindful of the history of efforts at controlling nuclear weapons.

The “Four Horsemen,” in contrast, offer not so much an argument as a petition—the sort one passes on the streets of New York: ban the bomb, support the IRA, down with apartheid. This from a quartet with a combined experience of some 280-plus years. The four claim that the choice before the American president is “star wars,” offering complete destabilization, or “real” arms control. They express the fear that the first victim of “star wars” will be the ABM

Treaty, seemingly unmindful of the fact that what with both the Soviets and the U.S. conducting space programs and experimenting with antiballistic missiles, only the most benign analysis of the situation would lead to the conclusion that the ABM Treaty is anything but hollow. Their advice: to stop efforts to neutralize nuclear weapons. It is a version of the suggestion in the last century to close the patent office. Technology moves forward, for better or for worse.

The idea that we are suffering not so much from a lack of information as from an inability to understand what we are facing is becoming the most disquieting truth of all. That Mr. Adelman is generally right in his approach to these nuclear issues may be a step toward getting the debate on track—an examination of what the world is and of ways to make the best of it.

The two days of discussions at Geneva on January 7 and 8, ostensibly to deal with arms control, had been so downplayed by both sides that even the prospect of future talks was hailed as a triumph. After all, one cannot send Dan Rather to Geneva only to come back empty-handed.

Each side continues to jockey for power while using the language of peace. The Soviets and the U.S. claim an ability to deal with each other on questions of arms control despite “basic differences in their social systems.” Yet it is precisely those unaddressed issues of political philosophy that brought about the arms race to begin with. When will we get around to discussing them again?

And still—quite incredibly, given the tenor of the current Soviet-U.S. discourse—we will celebrate this August the tenth anniversary of the signing of the Helsinki Accords. Here, in rough terms, the West recognized Europe's post-World War II borders in exchange for three “baskets” of principles on the subjects of defense, science, and basic human rights for all the signatories in Eastern and Western Europe. The idea that there is a moral source of individual rights independent of the state was something that went down hard with the Soviets—and in practice has been widely violated. The Communist version of the state comes from Marx and his times. It was a traditional view of the development of society, one that John Dewey phrased well in his *Ethics*:

Justice is a privilege which falls to a man as belonging to some group—not otherwise. The member of the clan or the household or the village community has a claim, but the stranger has no standing. He may be treated kindly, as a guest, but he cannot demand “justice” at the hands of any group but his own. In this conception of rights within the group we have the prototype of modern civil law. The dealing of clan with clan is a matter of war or negotiation, not of law; and the clanless man is an “outlaw” in fact as well as in name.

The best chance for world peace, in this view, is when one of the superpowers scores a technological breakthrough and disarms the other side. That is world government with a savage twist. An alternative is for both sides to continue the slow discourse on the nature of man and the state, broadening the considerable areas of agreement. If the reason for war declines, the expectations for arms control agreements would be seen in a more hopeful perspective.

**ROBERT J. MYERS**

*Robert J. Myers is President of CRIA.*