

The Bomb, the Freeze, the Future

—Guest Room—

A Freeze Must Precede Reductions

—Matthew A. Evangelista—

Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev recently announced a unilateral "freeze" on deployment of Soviet SS-20 missiles in western USSR. President Reagan's press secretary denounced this initiative as a "propaganda gesture," and Mr. Reagan himself has said that Brezhnev's proposal for a mutual freeze in Europe "simply isn't good enough because it doesn't go far enough."

Senator Kennedy agrees. He and Senator Hatfield have introduced a joint congressional resolution to freeze all nuclear weapon production on both sides as a necessary first step toward mutual reductions. The Reagan Administration rejected the bilateral nuclear freeze proposal as "dangerous."

It is well known — from Mr. Reagan's

'It makes no sense to counter a Soviet conventional attack with nuclear weapons...'

campaign speeches, at least — that the President favors "deep reductions" in nuclear arsenals. A look at his administration's military programs makes one wonder, however, if perhaps the Reagan "arms control policy" isn't something of a "propaganda gesture" itself.

Accelerating Weapons Programs

The Reagan Administration is currently continuing and accelerating the major nuclear weapons programs developed during the Carter years: the MX, Trident, Pershing II, and air-, sea- and ground-launched cruise missiles.

In order to supply the warheads for these

Hunt Seat

weapons, the President has endorsed an unprecedented increase in plutonium production. According to The New York Times, the goal is to add 17,000 new warheads to the current stock of 25,000-30,000. Isn't it a bit disingenuous to claim to favor reductions in nuclear arsenals while increasing your own by 60 percent?

What about Brezhnev's freeze? Is it pure propaganda, as the Reagan spokespeople contend? They correctly point out that Brezhnev's moratorium pertains only to those SS-20s stationed west of the Urals, and that some of the ones on the other side could conceivably hit targets in western Europe.

However, the same argument can be made for the Soviet strategic arsenal. Those missiles can be targeted on Western Europe, but no one doubts that most are aimed at the United States. Likewise, the SS-20s in central Russia are most likely targeted on the Middle East and on US submarine- and carrier-based nuclear weapons in the Persian Gulf. "Worst-case" analyses can only be carried so far.

The Reagan Administration's main argument against both the Brezhnev proposal for a moratorium and the Kennedy-Hatfield resolution is that they would freeze the USSR into a position of superiority in Europe. The evidence for Soviet superiority, however, is based on isolating an artificial category of "intermediate-range, land-based missiles," and insisting that the Soviets have a 3-0 advantage. It ignores thousands of shorter-range "tactical" weapons, French and British missiles and aircraft, and the so-called "forward-based systems" — NATO nuclear-armed aircraft. Finally, it neglects to include some 400 submarine-based missiles from the central US strategic systems which are permanently assigned to the NATO supreme commander in Europe.

Basis for Talks

The Reagan policy of misconstruing the nuclear balance in Europe and its historical context leads to a dismissal of the Brezhnev freeze as "propaganda," rather than considering it as a basis for negotiation.

As early as October 1979, two months before the NATO decision was taken, Brezhnev offered to reduce Soviet medium-



—Scientific American

range missiles targeted on Europe if NATO would forego deployment of Pershing and cruise missiles. In the same speech, he announced the unilateral withdrawal from East Germany of 20,000 troops and 1,000 tanks. At the time, President Carter derided Brezhnev's proposal, calling it "an offer to disarm the willingness or eagerness of our allies to defend themselves."

Many observers urged that Brezhnev's offer be taken seriously as a starting point for negotiations. Instead, the NATO decision went forward and the SS-20 arsenal grew in response.

There is every reason to believe that implementation of the decision, involving deployment of the new American missiles starting in 1983, will lead to a greater build-up of SS-20s. A moratorium on both sides

offers the only hope for future reductions.

The Brezhnev freeze initiative, although modest in scope, offers the possibility for a reversal of three decades of nuclear arms racing in Europe. The U.S. began the race in 1948 (before the Soviets had an atomic bomb) by deploying nuclear-capable B-29 bombers to England.

U.S. "tactical" nuclear weapons were introduced in the mid-1950s, and in 1957 the decision was made to deploy Thor and Jupiter intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) from bases in Europe. In response to NATO's European-based missiles and aircraft, the Soviets deployed their first IRBMs, the SS-4 and SS-5, in 1959 and 1961, respectively. By 1964 the Soviets had deployed a total of 590 of these missiles.

In the meantime, the U.S. had replaced its land-based IRBMs with submarine-based missiles assigned to NATO. These systems, along with the forward-based aircraft, have undergone frequent modernizations since their original deployment. In the late 1970s, the Soviets began their modernization program by replacing the twenty-year-old SS-4s and SS-5s with the new SS-20s. These missiles are of greater range and accuracy than the earlier models and are armed with three warheads, although the total power of all three is substantially less than that of one SS-4 or SS-5 warhead. The new missiles cover essentially the same targets as the earlier ones, and thus do not constitute a significantly greater threat to Europe.

As a Defense

The very existence of nuclear weapons in Europe poses the greatest threat to the continent. On the NATO side, nuclear weapons were originally intended to defend against a Soviet conventional attack, although war games at the time revealed that Europe would be destroyed in the process. Soviet nuclear weapons were deployed to counter NATO's nuclear weapons.

Now NATO's nuclear weapons have two rationales — to deter a conventional attack or a nuclear attack. It makes no sense to counter a Soviet conventional attack with nuclear weapons as long as the Soviets have nuclear weapons too.

It's high time to de-emphasize the use of nuclear weapons in European defense policy and move toward establishing nuclear-free zones on the continent.

Brezhnev's proposal to freeze deployment of SS-20s targeted on Europe and begin unilateral reductions in Soviet medium-range missiles should be welcomed as a first step in this direction. But as Ronald Reagan says, it "isn't good enough." Both sides must agree to stop production of all nuclear weapons systems, especially now, before production begins on the new "counterforce" weapons — the ones designed for fighting "limited" nuclear wars. Only when the current nuclear arms race is halted can we expect to see the reductions that Presidents Reagan and Brezhnev both claim to desire.

Matthew A. Evangelista is a graduate student in the government department.

Thinking About Disarmament

—William Levinson—

"Refusal to think about the unthinkable makes the unthinkable not only thinkable, but probable."

—Herman Kahn

The first chapter of "Thinking About the Unthinkable" is titled "In Defense of Thinking." Too much of today's discussion about nuclear weapons and nuclear warfare is based on emotion and lack of knowledge, while too little is based on accurate information and rational thought. Before choosing to believe the Nuclear Freeze Campaign or the Cornell Peace Council, or the Reagan Administration for that matter, every citizen should obtain books about nuclear war from his library or from his local civil defense office and learn enough to formulate his own opinions. It is not necessary to have a college technical background to understand most of the material.

The leaders of the Nuclear Freeze Campaign want your support. How is a bilateral freeze on nuclear weapon deployment to be accomplished? Is Tinker Bell, the Good Fairy, or a *deus ex machina* going to wave a magic wand and freeze all nuclear weapon deployment?

How do the nuclear freeze advocates propose that their treaty be verified and enforced? I don't think that they can answer this question; I think that they want a quick and simplistic solution to a very complex problem and that they have given no thought to the practical ramifications of what they are proposing.

Verification Problems

The SALT I treaty is verified, more or less, by orbiting satellites. SALT I places limits only on the number of missile silos, submarine launching tubes, and possibly intercontinental bombers, that each side may have. Satellites can count silos. It's pretty hard to hide a submarine or bomber. However, a satellite cannot even tell how many missiles are in a silo, let alone how many warheads are on each missile.

There is already reason for concern that SALT I is not working. Russian silos use compressed air to push the missiles out

before the rocket engines ignite, and the engine blast does not injure the launching apparatus. If a reload missile were available, it could be raised into position and fired with little delay.

I am thinking specifically of the SS-18 missile, which carries ten half-megaton warheads and which is as accurate as the Minuteman III, which carries only three 170 kiloton warheads. The Russians have 308 SS-18 silos. We don't know whether each silo contains one missile, two missiles, or several missiles. The only way to determine this would be to have bilateral on-site inspection, which the Soviets have traditionally refused. We (and the Soviets) know, however, that American silos do not contain reloads because American missiles fire their engines in their silos and wreck the launching pads.

It is hard enough to count missiles. How

'We must not pressure our government into accepting a bad treaty...'

do the peace groups propose to count warheads, even with on-site inspection? An atom bomb will fit in a six-inch artillery shell or a suitcase.

Suppose, for example, that the Russians allow on-site inspection of an SS-18 missile which has a single 20 megaton warhead. What prevents the Soviets from having a ten warhead nose cone hidden nearby? The payloads are probably interchangeable.

Other Hardware

Now what about items not covered by a treaty? For example, antiballistic missiles are limited by mutual agreement, but surface-to-air (SAM) missiles are not. The Russians have about 12,064 SAMs, many of which have ceilings of about 20 miles and which can carry atomic warheads. Why couldn't these missiles be used to shoot down incoming warheads?

Let's study some recent history, which will show that disarmament treaties are notoriously unreliable. The Washington Treaty, signed in the 1920s, limited battleships and battlecruisers. Japan, America, and England all had some completed or partially completed battle cruisers that had to be disposed of in order to comply with the treaty. The solution was simple. The heavy guns and turrets were removed from the ships and replaced by flight decks. It's comforting to know that Pearl Harbor was bombed from two such aircraft carriers instead of being shelled by illegal battlecruisers which would, incidentally, have done a far less effective job.

Then there was Hitler's promise to Chamberlain, "Give me Czechoslovakia and I won't take any more." I guess Hitler was a liar. I seem to recall a "scrap of paper" which guaranteed Belgium's neutrality, and finally the Kellogg-Briand treaty which (get this one, folks) outlawed war.

Inferiority & Bad Treaties

There is also the argument that a nuclear weapon freeze would freeze the United States into a position of strategic inferiority. I think that we began to slip behind the Russians in 1975 or 1976. President Reagan is the first President and indeed the first politician of any stature who has had the guts to tell the American people the truth; that the use of thermonuclear weapons is not unthinkable, that while a nuclear war would be extremely destructive there would be a winner and there would be a loser, and that, under the present circumstances, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics would be the winner.

Bilateral disarmament is a desirable goal, but any disarmament treaty must be equitable and compliance must be verifiable and enforceable. We must not pressure our government into accepting a bad treaty or make our negotiators feel that they have to bring back "something, anything" from the bargaining table in order to satisfy the voters. A bad treaty is worse than no treaty; it is America's own death warrant.