

any way be included in the total limits for strategic bombers. But, as the Soviet side has always emphasized, the Backfire is now incapable of reaching the U.S. — which is why the Soviets have insisted it cannot be classed as a strategic bomber!

*“One Little Paper”*

Against this background, Vance arrived at Geneva surrounded by “stacks” of already rejected proposals, imaginatively packaged by the press as something new. On the other hand, Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko pointedly remarked: “I’ve brought one little paper” — which no doubt read “stop your foolish and dangerous ideas about concessions from us.”

As it became clear that there was no “breakthrough”

story, the U.S. press dramatically switched its reportage to the “results-are-in-the-eyes-of-the-beholder” method. According to the *Washington Post*, “Each side’s Assessment Fits Its Own Needs.” The Geneva meeting, wrote Moscow Bureau chief Peter Osnos, is how you see it: “is the glass half full or half empty?” By Sunday, regardless of the contents of Osnos’ glass, even the *New York Times* had to admit that “major snags” remained.

At a press conference on his departure, the U.S. Secretary of State tried to keep up some semblance of an agreement. Vance danced around a description of a “three-tiered” proposal, while the press corps scratched their heads and asked for more than just “scanty” details.

## Proxmire: USSR Will Strike If Forced

*What follows are excerpts from the April 1977 report of the Joint Congressional Committee on Defense Production, chaired by Sen. William Proxmire (D-Wisc). The Committee examines three scenarios of Soviet nuclear attack against the U.S., and concludes, similarly to the U.S. Labor Party, that the military leadership of the USSR will initiate such an attack only if forced by strategic encroachments from the West:*

**Case I: Calculated Risk**

...the committee could find no credible or realistic scenario in which the Soviet Union would initiate a nuclear war or threaten to initiate a nuclear war as a means of achieving some Soviet objective, since there are no credible or realistic circumstances in which the Soviet leaders could believe that the risks and costs of such an option would be less than the gains...

**Case II: Irrational Leadership**

...In the absence of other, strong justifications for them, massive expenditures for civil and industrial defense against the low probability of an irrational adversary alone do not seem justifiable.

**Case III: Last Resort**

...As Secretary of Defense Brown has noted in the remarks quoted earlier, the ordinary forms of deterrence will not discourage a desperate leader or leadership from nuclear attack.

For example, an effort by the West to “roll back” the Iron Curtain and to “liberate” the Soviet republics or client states in East Europe might be so threatening to the Soviet regime, to Soviet communism, or to the Russian people that the initiation of an nuclear war to forestall this roll back would

appear to be the lesser of two evils. Likewise, an overt or implied threat by the United States and/or its allies to launch a direct nuclear attack on the Soviet Union might be perceived as sufficient cause to warrant the desperate step of trying to implement a pre-emptive strike on the United States, no matter how costly the retaliation would be. Any strong threat to the core values of a nation, therefore, is enough to upset normal calculations of deterrence and to run the risk of igniting a nuclear war no one wants by making it an option of last resort.

In reviewing various estimates of the willingness of the Soviet Union to initiate nuclear attack or war, the committee could find no authority who believed that the Soviet Union cared to launch a nuclear attack except under conditions of extreme provocation. Most sources, in fact, considered that the Soviet Union wishes to avoid war...

When viewed in this light many of the questions about Soviet offensive forces and the purposes of passive defense measures take on a different meaning...Population protection becomes, not a malevolent effort to achieve the impossible “war-winning” capability, but rather a prudent effort to make the devastation of thermonuclear war slightly less awesome in its consequences...

Nor could the committee find any basis for the claim that Soviet civil defense programs had any aim other than responding to a nuclear war that might be thrust upon the Soviet Union. This, in the committee’s judgment, is a very different objective from attempting to promote world-wide communism by attaining nuclear superiority through uncertain, untried and partially effective civil defense programs...