
Interview: Astrophysicist Rolf Engel

West German missile expert: 'Soviets have gained clear superiority'

Rolf Engel is the author of the most authoritative work on missile technology and military exploitation of space available, *Moskau militarisiert den Weltraum*, Verlag Politisches Archiv, 1979. *EIR* will soon publish an extensive review of Mr. Engel's book, an extremely rare work.

Mr. Engel, now 72 years old, is an astrophysicist who has spent his life working on rocket and missile technologies. Following World War II, he worked at the Office of Aeronautics Research in Paris. He was an adviser to the Italian government for five years, and also became director of the Aeronautics Department of Messerschmidt-Boelkow-Blohm in Munich, West Germany. Mr. Engel's views are his own, but also represent the thinking of a large number of West Europeans who most deeply realize why the United States and Western Europe can afford no delay in developing a program for beam-weapon defenses in the interest of the Atlantic Alliance.

Perhaps the interview below and our review of Mr. Engel's book will contribute to "lifting the lid" on West European views of the often tragically short-sighted strategic U.S. decisions of the post-World War II years. "It took a long time for the U.S.A. to realize that the U.S.S.R. was determined to drive for a confrontation," Engel says in the interview, and he is not convinced that the lesson has really been learned.

"Europe is the ideal hostage with which one can hope to force the U.S.A. to make concessions. The following description of the Russian space revolution should make clear and express what the majority of Europeans expect from the U.S.A., which actually *wants* to protect Europe, before it is too late," Engel writes in the introduction to his book. One note from his book on Adm. Elmo Zumwalt's recollection of a discussion with Henry Kissinger in November 1970 provides background to some of Engel's remarks in the interview.

"Kissinger, Zumwalt remembered, believes that the

U.S.A. has past its historic zenith, like so many cultures and peoples before it. The United States is on the way down, and can no longer be shaken awake by historic challenges. It is his [Kissinger's] task to move the Russians to concede to the Americans the best possible conditions that they could get at SALT. It simply cannot be denied [Kissinger says] that the forces of history are working for the Soviets. . . . The American people have no one but themselves to blame for this situation, because it no longer has the strength to keep up with the Russians, who are the 'Sparta' to our 'Athens.'"

EIR: Mr. Engel, in your judgment of the present balance of forces between the United States and U.S.S.R., what basic parameters do you think determine the strategic situation?

Engel: A sober examination of the Euro-strategic and global-strategic potential of the two superpowers shows that the Soviets have a clear superiority in medium range and intercontinental ballistic missiles; there is equivalence with respect to global naval forces, and the U.S.A. has superiority of strategic airforces. But U.S. superiority in intercontinental bombers does not unconditionally represent a margin of advantage, in view of Soviet air-defense forces.

EIR: How did we get into this situation historically?

Engel: Historically, the basic facts are these: The U.S.A. did in fact win the War [World War II], but the U.S.A. did not "keep a firm grip on the helm." The Eisenhower Administration gullibly believed that more wars were just not in sight for one or two generations. Stalin, on the other hand, gave the order just after the end of the war to develop the technology for large missiles, since—as he said—"the enemy closest to us is 10,000 kilometers away." It took a long time for the U.S.A. to realize that the U.S.S.R. was determined

to drive for a confrontation. This historic failure of the U.S. is still influential in U.S. policy, and I am afraid it can only be corrected with great difficulty.

EIR: The 1970s were characterized by the SALT and ABM treaties, and yielded clear advantages to the Soviet Union. Did the Soviets ever take these negotiations seriously? Or, if they didn't, can that be proven?

Engel: The U.S.S.R. only signed the SALT and ABM treaties to put the brakes on technological progress in the United States in these areas. Only a few weeks after concluding the SALT I treaty, the Soviet Union began to get their fourth generation of ICBM missiles ready for deployment with a comprehensive series of tests. Their argument was that the SS-16, SS-17, SS-18 and SS-19 merely represented the "allowed" modernization of the previous generation of missiles.

EIR: How could the U.S.A. ever allow itself to be pulled into such a treaty? What role did people like Henry Kissinger play?

Engel: At the beginning of the SALT and ABM negotiations, the U.S. administration was forced by domestic policy considerations to present some "success" in the area of arms limitation. Domestic policy considerations—that was the Vietnam War. Dr. Kissinger was merely the enforcer of this policy, but domestic political pressure was what counted.

EIR: The CIA recently presented a report on large-scale Soviet ABM activities. How do you evaluate this report?

Engel: The CIA reports on Soviet ABM efforts merely summarize facts and details that have been known to alert observers for a number of years. There are, for example, testing grounds built in Sary-Shagan on the Balkash Lake, which cover an area of about 100 by 150 kilometers. Experts estimate that the rate of rocket testing here is about three times that observed in Plesetsk or Tyuratam. The lion's share of these tests are ABM and air-defense rockets.

EIR: Comparing civilian and military space efforts of the U.S.A. and U.S.S.R., where do you see their respective emphases? What is the purpose of the extensive manned space missions of the Soviets and their new super-rocket, the G-1?

Engel: The planners in the Soviet Union have been aiming for more than 20 years at building one or more large battle stations in orbit. This aim is clearly indicated by the series of Salyut-Soyuz couplings as well as the fact that they are still working on the G-1 workhorse rocket, despite all the failures they have had with it. The U.S.A. is only now beginning to realize that battle stations in orbit will be decisive for power positions in near-earth orbit.

EIR: The United States has considerably increased its efforts to develop new systems for defense against ballistic

missiles, the beam-weapons effort. Back in 1958, the German professor Eugen Saenger pointed out that such systems would mean that we can technologically overcome war. Would you agree to that?

Engel: I welcome and encourage U.S. efforts to limit the threat represented by ICBMs by developing beam weapons. These beam weapons are the only means to build an effective ABM system. But they will not overcome war, the way Eugen Saenger thought 30 years ago, because the Soviet Union is working on the same systems. The decisive question here is who will be the first to build such systems.

EIR: What is your evaluation of Soviet efforts to develop new systems of defense?

Engel: It is true that the Soviets give first priority to offensive weapons, but defensive weapons are promoted on the scale of a close second priority. This fact is not always appreciated in the West.

EIR: What concrete military threat do you see for Europe?

Engel: The entirety of the Soviet arms build up since 1966 is directed primarily against Western Europe. The Soviets believe that their ICBMs are all they need against the U.S. Soviet conventional forces, including their medium-range nuclear missiles, are aimed and designed for a blitzkrieg against Western Europe.

EIR: How should Europe, especially the Federal Republic of Germany, respond to this threat? Do you think the current "appeasement" policy is the appropriate reaction?

Engel: The détente policy of European, particularly West German governments, was a clear failure. There is no example in the 60 years of existence of the Soviet government that indicates that a policy of "meet them halfway" has ever resulted in the Soviet Union reducing the development and expansion of its power. Only hard determination and the appropriate military measures have—temporarily—contained the expansion of Soviet power. Threats mean nothing. The Soviets must know that an attack against Western Europe entails large risks for their own rule. If they know that, then they will become more cautious and be willing to negotiate.

EIR: Without the U.S.A., Europe can hardly defend itself. What can and should be expected from the United States?

Engel: Without the United States, West Europe can not be defended at all. But that does not mean that the U.S. administration alone determines policy with respect to the other great power. It has been known for years that the European situation is often evaluated superficially and wrongly by the succeeding State Departments and U.S. Senate. The Reagan administration would be well advised to analyze the complicated political, economic, and social situation of its Western allies more closely, and to take account of this in making foreign-policy decisions.