

GOP imposes defense freeze on the President

by Kathleen Klenetsky

To the chagrin of the Kremlin and its collaborators in the West, President Reagan achieved significant accomplishments on his European trip, not least of which were the cementing of the U.S.-West German alliance, and some headway in obtaining European political acceptance of the Strategic Defense Initiative.

But Moscow and its pals may yet have the last laugh. Even before he returned to Washington, the President made a decision that could jeopardize all of these important accomplishments and more: namely, agreeing to a freeze in the FY1986 Pentagon budget, which was sponsored by Senate leaders of his own party.

Just days ago, the President had warned that such a move would be an "irresponsible act." Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger has repeatedly told Congress that cutbacks in the Pentagon budget would have a devastating effect, not only on the nation's ability to defend itself, but on the international political-military situation. In Senate testimony last February, Weinberger stated that a 3% increase in military spending represented "half the bare minimum necessary" to ensure U.S. national security, while a freeze would "send a signal that we simply lack the will" to defend ourselves and would "decimate the ability of the [Pentagon] to continue programs now in effect."

Senate: freeze defense

No sooner had the President's decision been communicated to Capitol Hill, than an eager Senate, meeting in the wee hours of the morning May 10, voted 49-49—with George Bush casting the tie-breaker—in favor of a new compromise budget package.

Cooked up by Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, in consultation with White House chief of staff Don Regan and

OMB director David Stockman, following the May 2 Senate rejection of a White House-Senate Republican compromise that would have limited defense spending increases to 3%, the new measure will allow military spending to increase only as much as inflation. It will also eliminate the Social Security cost-of-living increase for at least a year.

Under the package's provisions, spending authority for defense would rise from \$292.6 billion to \$302.5 billion in fiscal 1986, compared with Reagan's request for \$322.9 billion. Increases of no more than 3% over inflation would be allowed for FY1987 and 1988.

Vice President George Bush was flown in from Phoenix, Arizona, to cast a tie-breaking vote—putting the administration officially on record in favor of a freeze.

The Eastern Establishment press could hardly contain itself, gloating that Reagan's concession on defense represented "a dramatic retreat" from his earlier position, which could, in the words of *The New York Times*, "effectively end his military buildup."

Reagan's acceptance of the defense freeze underscores the absolute necessity of ridding the White House and the Congress of people like Don Regan, Treasury Secretary James Baker III, and Bob Dole, who are forcing down the President's throat policies which are completely at odds with his pro-defense outlook.

The Baker-Regan-Dole gang are now effectively implementing the International Monetary Fund's demands, finalized at the mid-April IMF Interim Committee meeting and agreed to by Secretary Baker, that the U.S. must reduce its budget deficit, even if this means impoverishing millions of Americans and turning the world over to Soviet imperial domination.

If Reagan continues to listen to the advice of these Eastern

Establishment agents, he will find himself presiding over an economic collapse far worse than the Great Depression, and an international strategic situation in which the Soviets will be able to dictate terms to the United States without firing a shot.

Even now, there are numerous indications that the defense budget is in for even deeper cuts than a freeze would mandate. On May 9, the "92 Group," a gang of 92 "moderate Republican congressmen" chaired by Rep. Carl D. Pursell of Michigan, issued an alternative budget proposal, entitled, "A Blueprint for Balance," which calls for an absolute freeze in defense spending. In other words, it would eliminate the inflation allowance permitted by the Senate freeze. Although the Senate rejected a similar measure on May 10, the so-called "KGB Freeze" sponsored by Sens. Charles Grassley (D-Iowa), Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.), and Joe Biden (D-Dela), there is strong support for the measure on the House side.

What makes the defense-budget debacle even worse is that top figures in the Reagan administration have recently been publicly emphasizing that the Soviets are rapidly developing a first-strike capability. The President himself, in his speech to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France on May 8, charged that the Soviet Union "has chosen . . . to build nuclear forces clearly designed to strike first, and thus disarm their adversary." In a reference to the SSX-24, the President added that the Soviets are "now moving toward deployment of new mobile MIRVed missiles, which have these capabilities, plus the potential to avoid detection, monitoring, or arms-control verification."

Similar accusations have been leveled recently by White House Science Adviser George Keyworth, and by Lt.-Gen. James Abrahamson, SDI program director.

In his Strasbourg address, the President used the Soviet first-strike capability to motivate the SDI. "Fortunately, there is a third possibility," of guaranteeing the peace, other than "endless nuclear arms competition" or depending upon arms control, he said. "It is to offset the continued Soviet offensive buildup in destabilizing weapons by developing defenses against these weapons. . . . The state of modern technology may soon make possible for the first time the ability to use non-nuclear systems to defeat ballistic missiles." He stressed that the "Soviets themselves have long recognized the value of defensive systems, and have invested heavily in them."

Yet, Reagan's push for the SDI will prove futile if a defense freeze is ultimately enacted. The SDI budget has already been savaged by the powerful House Armed Services Committee, which voted 35-11 in closed session May 7 to cut \$1.2 billion from the SDI budget, reducing the administration's requested \$3.7 to \$2.5 billion—far less than estimated Soviet spending on similar technology. Among the specific cuts recommended are \$350 million from kinetic-energy weapons research and \$240 from directed-energy weapons.

Perle: Cuts invite Soviet 'breakout'

The House vote came just hours after a high-ranking administration official warned a Senate committee that the Soviet Union is on the verge of a "breakout" from the ABM Treaty. Testifying on Soviet treaty violations, Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle bluntly told the Senate Armed Services Committee that congressional cuts in the U.S. defense budget represent an open invitation to the Soviet Union to continue its blatant "pattern of violations" of arms-control treaties, including the 1972 ABM agreement.

"There is a very real concern the Soviets may be in the process even now of breaking out of the ABM" treaty, Perle warned. "Soviet deployment of substantial levels of prohibited ABM defense can have great military significance. . . . A Soviet monopoly in ABM defense capability—or a base for a rapidly deployable one, covertly developed and deployed in violation of the ABM Treaty—is a serious threat to our security and the peace."

Perle specified that Soviet work on a surface-to-air missile with ABM capabilities, and the Krasnoyarsk radar installation, indicate that Moscow may have the potential to quickly upgrade an air defense system into a territorial ABM operation. These Soviet developments mean "a possibility that a significant fraction of our retaliatory forces could be intercepted when the Soviets put the pieces [of its ABM system] together."

He revealed that the administration is "looking at a series of military response options to a Soviet ABM 'breakout,'" ranging from "an increase in our strategic force capability . . . to actions that would result in improvements of our near-term deployment potential for missile defenses of our own."

But, warned Perle, "We must have Congressional support if we are to credibly threaten a [military] response" to a potential Soviet ABM breakout, and congressional attacks on the defense budget, specifically the freeze endorsed by the Senate last week, are guaranteed to encourage further Soviet violations.

Perle also stated that in his "personal view," the U.S. should break out of the SALT II agreement, which expires on Dec. 31, because continuing to honor it would require the U.S. to dismantle significant numbers of its strategic offensive forces. It is a "peculiarity of Americans," Perle noted, that "we should abide by a treaty that [the Soviets] are violating."

Yet, House Armed Services Committee chairman Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.)

the entire SDI in jeopardy. According to reliable reports, Aspin will introduce an amendment later this month which will make funding of the program predicated upon reductions in U.S. strategic offensive forces. In other words, if the Reagan administration fails to cut back on the U.S. nuclear arsenal, already inferior to the Soviets, Congress will deny the U.S. the possibility of developing a defense against nuclear attack.