

Eye on Washington by Nicholas F. Benton

White House edgy about Soviet SDI

Why was White House assistant press spokesman Dan Howard so testy Jan. 28 when I asked why the Soviet strategic defense program was left out of the administration's annual report to the Congress on National Security Strategy released that day?

A whole section of the report is on "Principal Threats to U.S. Interests," but there is no mention of what Defense Secretary Weinberger has stressed during his public speeches all month. Weinberger and acting CIA director Robert Gates have both spoken of the threat of a Soviet strategic defense "breakout."

The discovery of three new Soviet phased-array radars on the Western borders of the Soviet Union last fall by U.S. satellites, plus 18 years of Soviet research into the military application of lasers and other directed-energy systems, could mean that the Soviets are perilously close to breaking out of the Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) treaty altogether, with a sudden deployment of a nationwide defense system.

When I pressed Howard on the omission of this issue, he gave the same answer used by enemies of the U.S. SDI program. He said, "The three new radars do not technically violate the ABM treaty."

The point is not technical violation of a section of the treaty, but indications that the Soviets have always in-

tended to break the treaty, and prepared to "violate" it only at the point they announce an operational nationwide ABM system—or when "all birds fly" in a preemptive first strike.

Howard finally conceded that the issue is not technical violation of the ABM treaty, but Soviet ABM breakout potential. He disposed of it with a terse statement, "OK. Is it a threat? Yes. Is it an imminent threat? No." Just how far is the White House willing to "look the other way" concerning Soviet war plans in order to achieve yet another "arms control" agreement?

No question of Sprinkel's loyalty

My associate Stan Ezrol recalls the following: "In September 1982, the grapevine reported that the current chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, Beryl Sprinkel, then Treasury Secretary Donald Regan's Undersecretary for Monetary Affairs, had been responsible for preparing the United States' position papers for the annual World Bank/IMF meeting.

"These policy papers were the pride of Sprinkel's Mont Pelerin Society cronies. The Mont Pelerin Society had been founded at the height of the Nazi era to export the sentiments of the SS's well-wishers to economics departments throughout Europe and North America. Sprinkel, a beer-hall economist and ex-Chicago collections man, with manners and sentiments akin to, but somewhat cruder than, those of the fictional Archie Bunker, had transmitted Mont Pelerin's demands that World Bank and IMF lending be used to dictate starvation terms to developing and industrial nations alike.

"I bumped into Sprinkel at a huge

cocktail reception during that IMF/World Bank meeting. Beryl, needless to say, had been partaking heavily of the available refreshment, and was largely ignored by the crowd. I introduced myself and said, 'Mr. Sprinkel, I'm so pleased to meet you. They say you're responsible for everything.'

"The puzzled Sprinkel, asked, 'Wha? What's that?' I explained, 'The policy documents. The position papers. They say you did it all.'

"Sprinkel flushed with embarrassment and pride and called over his wife. 'Barbara, I want you to meet Stan Ezrol, he's with The Press.' 'Mrs. Sprinkel,' I said, 'They say Beryl did all the work on the U.S. policy,' He grinned with pleasure. She giggled. 'And it's got people very, very angry.'

"Well, actually, Don Regan approved everything,' Sprinkel blurted out, and waddled away, leaving Barbara behind.

Curran: AIDS carriers voluntarily abstain

Dr. James Curran, director of the AIDS program at the Centers for Disease Control, told me in an interview that he thinks persons who know or suspect that they are "AIDS positive" will go out of their way to avoid infecting others on their own, and therefore no constraints on their behavior are necessary. Curran had the audacity to justify CDC inaction on AIDS on these grounds at a U.S. Conference of Mayors seminar on the deadly virus.

Yet, numerous studies show that terminally ill patients commonly adopt a "denial syndrome" where they refuse to accept their diagnosis or change their behavior, and that persons who are sexually promiscuous—at highest risk for transmitting AIDS—commonly exhibit compulsive behavior patterns that are very difficult to alter.