

## The defense crisis: Where is George going?

by William Jones

With the first debate between the presidential nominees now scheduled for Sept. 25, the country is facing the most profound economic crisis of its history, and a drastic erosion of defense capabilities, as a result of budget cuts and the Reagan-Gorbachov INF treaty. Where do the candidates stand, and how is the voter to sort out rhetoric from actual policy?

The last month has been somewhat disappointing for Democratic presidential hopeful Michael Dukakis. Ever since the Republican National Convention in New Orleans, Dukakis has seen his support slipping in the polls. Attacked continuously by the Bush-Quayle duo for his liberal stand on defense issues, the Massachusetts governor has not had an easy time of it.

Conservative Republicans (and a good number of "Reagan Democrats") have undoubtedly been encouraged by George Bush's new "tough on defense" image and by his pledge to stick with the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). Some people perhaps believe, or hope, that Bush is intent on preserving the "Reagan legacy," despite his blueblood credentials as a leading light of the Eastern Liberal Establishment. But Bush's interview to the *New York Times* at the end of August, where he said that a "full deployment" of the SDI would be "too expensive," enraged supporters of the program, and drew a salvo of criticism from conservative media commentators. Dr. Edward Teller's assurances that the *New York Times* had distorted what Bush said, did not completely eliminate doubts about Bush's commitment to the SDI program, which has become all the more crucial for the nation, in view of the U.S. nuclear disengagement from Europe under the INF treaty.

The Bush camp is, to be sure, a very heterogeneous crew. Conservative military and industrial layers, the backbone of the Reagan campaign victories in 1980 and 1984, have placed their hopes on Bush as the only candidate who would work

in any way to prevent the total destruction of U.S. military capabilities. In the choice between cholera and the plague, they have chosen cholera as the lesser of two evils.

There exists indeed a strong thrust from these layers to try to keep Bush on track. The interventions by former Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and Dr. Edward Teller into the defense debate, on behalf of the SDI, at the end of August, were moves in that direction. Teller emphasized that some form of initial deployment of the SDI "during the next four years" was likely if Bush were elected, but it is by no means clear at this point whether that is, in fact, a part of the Bush program. Rhetoric aside, the big question remains: What will be the Bush administration's actual policy on the pressing issues confronting the national defense?

### The future of NATO

Interesting motion around the defense issue has been surfacing from a number of unexpected directions. At the end of August, members of the Project on Monitoring Defense Reorganization issued a working memorandum on "The Future of NATO," which has received surprisingly little coverage in the mass media. The endorsers of the memorandum included David Abshire, U.S. ambassador to NATO; former defense secretaries Harold Brown, James Schlesinger, and Melvin Laird; former secretaries of state Dean Rusk, Alexander Haig, and Edmund Muskie; former chief of staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff David Jones; former NATO Supreme Commander Bernard Rogers; as well as Andrew Goodpaster, Brent Scowcroft, and Harry Train.

The memorandum expressed concern that the INF treaty, combined with the magnitude of the stock market collapse and the pressures exerted in the U.S. Congress on behalf of ever sharper trade protection, have created a grave crisis for the Western Alliance. The memorandum was strongly word-

ed and, coming from such a mixed group of people, had some notable elements in it.

First of all, the authors reject any denuclearization of Europe. "The American nuclear deterrent, both strategic and theater-based, must and will be available to sustain the security of Europe as long as it is required," says the memorandum. "No end to that necessity can be seen for the foreseeable future." The document then goes on to call for the modernization of battlefield nuclear weapons (with ranges of less than 300 miles) as "an effective way of demonstrating an appreciation of the indispensable role of nuclear weapons both for the United States and the European allies."

The memorandum warns against any troop reductions in Western Europe. "Such reductions would increase NATO's perceived reliance on nuclear weapons at a time when the credibility of U.S. nuclear guarantees is being questioned by the allies and their reduction negotiated with our main adversary." The memorandum also urges the U.S. government to "regain the initiative from Mr. Gorbachov and reassert leadership in the midst of an unfolding Soviet diplomatic offensive," by encouraging new NATO proposals for asymmetrical conventional reductions to diminish the danger of a Soviet invasion. It furthermore calls for an upgrading of NATO conventional forces through more equipment and appropriate training, particularly for reserve forces; improved deployments; aircraft shelters; unobtrusive but effective barriers to armored forces; and adequate stockpiles of munitions and other supplies.

The memorandum suggests relaxing some inhibitions that NATO has placed on its own deployments, such as: no early use of nuclear weapons, no fixed defenses along the inner-German border, a doctrine of forward defense not matched by forward deployments, and reluctance to plan for ground counterattacks across the border even after a Warsaw Pact attack. These inhibitions, says the report, "combine to add greatly to the difficulties of successful defense."

The memorandum reemphasizes the need for the traditional NATO deterrent triad: conventional and theater nuclear forces, and a modernized and "appropriately configured" U.S. arsenal of strategic weapons.

A number of key issues were, however, strikingly left out of the group's discussion. No mention whatsoever was made of the Strategic Defense Initiative, which is one of the most critical military and political issues for the future of NATO. For all its useful elements, this memorandum could as well have been written before President Reagan launched the SDI in 1983, or before anyone knew what a laser weapon was. Many of the former department heads who endorsed the report were themselves integral in working out the doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction—the doctrine that the SDI abrogates—and in whose name some of the endorsers actually helped to significantly undermine U.S. military potential.

Nor does the memorandum mention the role of pre-war deployments of Soviet *spetsnaz* operatives in the West, armed

with new and sophisticated technologies like radio frequency weapons. Any defense "reorganization" which does not include an anti-*spetsnaz* capability would represent a defense of already lost positions. At a time when NATO aircraft are falling out of the air at an ever greater frequency due to suspicious "accidents," combatting the "*spetsnaz* factor" ought to be at a premium in such a defense reorganization.

Despite its useful elements, caution is required for what may turn out to be recommendations by "sheep in wolves' clothing." The authors of the memorandum are not armchair professors, but people who are being called upon to work out U.S. defense policy for a Bush administration.

## Enter Henry Kissinger

It is not, therefore, too surprising to learn, from the New York *Daily News* on Sept. 9, that Bush had asked Henry Kissinger to serve as co-chairman of a "national security task force" for his presidential campaign. Sources close to the Bush campaign say that Kissinger has accepted, in principle. The other co-chairman is expected to be former Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, one of the endorsers of the cited memorandum.

This move may say more about Bush defense policy than all of his stump speeches taken together. Kissinger, the bane of conservative Republicans and pro-defense patriots in this country and abroad, was involved in setting up every rotten agreement that the United States has made with the Soviet Union during the last 18 years. He negotiated the ABM treaty, which has been used by every opponent of the SDI to prevent SDI deployment. He negotiated the SALT-1 treaty, which allowed the Soviet Union to deploy heavier missiles than those fielded by the United States, as well as the SALT-2 treaty which President Reagan has denounced as "fatally flawed." With Kissinger in any type of powerful advisory position, you can be sure that the SDI will be doomed.

In the same *Daily News* article, reference is made to Bush's backing away from Reagan's "total shield" concept of SDI, to some form of point defense system. Bush believes that such a shield would be so costly that it would strip the nation's existing armed forces of their procurement budgets. Bush came to that position, says the *Daily News*, after consulting with Brent Scowcroft, national security adviser to Gerald Ford, and also a signer of the "working memorandum."

The Kissinger appointment ought to make it clear to the pro-defense elements who support Bush as the "lesser of two evils," that the SDI is going to go down the tubes with Bush, unless the gang of appeasers that he's threatening to bring in is brought under control, and quickly. Another difficult, but more fundamental, problem will be to create the economic potential for making the SDI a feasible option, by reintroducing dirigist Hamiltonian policies as the booster for rebuilding the industries that can make the SDI work. Only one presidential candidate has a plan for doing that: independent Democrat Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr.