

Russia's offer of SDI cooperation is a chance not to be lost

by Michael Liebig

While the domestic political situation in Russia continues to deteriorate, Moscow is making an extraordinary strategic initiative. In the context of the Clinton-Yeltsin summit meeting in Vancouver, the Russian government proposed technology cooperation to the American government in the development of missile defense systems based on "new physical principles." Moscow's *Izvestia* reported in detail on the Russian offer in its April 2 issue, for joint development of beam weapon anti-missile defense based on microwave, laser, and plasma technologies. Allegedly "exotic" beam weapons are a technology of the Russian arms industry "confirmed by tests beyond the laboratory phase." Almost exactly ten years after President Reagan's famous television speech introducing SDI, the issue is now at the top of the strategic agenda (see *EIR* for April 16 and April 23 for more details).

The deafening silence with which the Russian proposal has been greeted by western government institutions and media is astonishing. Two weeks after publication of the proposal, most western strategic experts were still either completely uninformed, or shocked and speechless. The Russian initiative comes at a point in time when the tendency of expert evaluations and public opinion is to believe that SDI is ultimately "finished off."

SDI seemed dead

An article in the March issue of the leading scientific journal *New Scientist*, entitled "The Rise and Fall of Star Wars," is typical of this point of view. Triumphant, the article describes the SDI which Reagan propagated as "technologically unfeasible," "unfinanceable," and "strategically untimely" wishful thinking. "In the initial phases of SDI, enormous sums were spent for 'directed energy weapons' such as laser and particle accelerators. These beam weapons created the special aura of Star Wars in public opinion. The program promised to make science fiction real, first in the realm of weapons, and then in the technology of daily life." But this "music of the future" played itself out, since there would be nothing more than improved "Patriot" missiles against "Scuds."

The extraordinary feature of the Russian offer for cooper-

ation on SDI consists in the fact that it does not focus on kinetic-energy systems ("anti-missile missiles"), but assigns the crucial role to beam weapons. Russia had put out feelers at both of the Yeltsin-Bush summit meetings in 1992, to see if the United States would be willing to cooperate with Russia in the field of beam weapons. This offer, kept in a general form, was blocked by the Bush administration. The new proposal from Moscow for cooperation on systems based on "new physical principles" is all the more significant, since only beam weapons have an inherent superiority over nuclear-armed assault missiles. And only these systems have the potential to become a technology driver for the economy as a whole.

The 'LaRouche factor'

In one sense the Russian offer came as a surprise, but it is not a proposal which fell unpredictably out of the "clear blue sky" of strategic thinking. On Feb. 26, 1993, Lyndon LaRouche published a memorandum from prison, in which he described his role in the emergence of the SDI in 1982-83, as well as his discussions at that time with the Soviet side. At that time, the issue was a historic shift of direction. The Soviet rejection of SDI at that time and the Soviet demand for his—LaRouche's—political elimination have blocked a fruitful, development-oriented East-West cooperation down to this day. LaRouche identified the key points of his absolutely up-to-date SDI program as follows:

- ending the danger of war entailed in nuclear assault missiles by means of anti-missile defense based on "new physical principles";
- cooperative development and deployment of this SDI together with Russia;
- a revolution of the entire economy on the basis of "new physical principles."

On March 23, 1993, the anniversary of Reagan's SDI speech, LaRouche published a declaration in which he said: "The time has come for a similarly bold initiative. This time President Clinton has the ball in his hands. We can only hope that the President will listen to the advice of those who earlier supported President Reagan's announcement."

Shortly before the Vancouver summit, both President Clinton and his secretary of state, Warren Christopher, declared that the political and economic life and death crisis of Russia is "the greatest strategic challenge of our time." The state of the world in 1993 is the inevitable consequence of the ten years of blockage against LaRouche's "strategic political package." Together with the three cited basic principles, the SDI has a crucial role in this package. For ten years the attempt has been made to do things in a way directly contrary to what LaRouche proposed. But the present world economic and world political situation emphatically demonstrates that no other way will work. The Russian April 2 offer for SDI cooperation reopens once again, probably only for a short time, the window of a historic opportunity.

The SDI offer as a litmus test

How does it happen that, after almost ten years of hysterical diatribes against the SDI strategy, the Russian government has decided to become an active proponent of this strategy now?—And, in fact, an SDI, which largely corresponds to the definition which LaRouche gave the policy over ten years ago? To the extent that it is possible to identify the various forces behind the Russian SDI initiative, these forces come from a diversity of political currents. Support for the SDI offer, or rejection, as the case may be, runs straight through the "Yeltsin camp," the "National Security Council" of Yuri Skokov, the "Citizens Union" of Arkadi Volsky, the "military-industrial complex," and the scientific elite of the "Academy of Sciences." There is obvious opposition to the offer from the military, and from the foreign policy establishment. But in Russia there seems to be a fundamental consensus, that the SDI offer is a "strategic litmus test" for the West. Does the West want a long-term, geopolitically based weakening of Russia? Does the West want to hold Russia in a condition of economic and political paralysis, to such an extent that Russia would maintain control only over its nuclear arsenal? Or, does the West want development-oriented cooperation with Russia as an equal partner?

First of all, we reemphasize the military urgency of an effective anti-missile defense, which can be efficiently achieved only with beam weapons. The form of threat represented by weapons of mass destruction and ballistic missiles has indeed changed since the early 1980s, but not the fact of the threat itself. Worldwide economic and political instability has led to an increase of this military threat on all sides. The situation in the Balkans and in the territory of the former Soviet Union makes that clear. Indications are already accumulating, that Serbia is in the process of procuring medium-range ballistic missiles. In view of the international instabilities, the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which is supposed to be extended in 1995, proves to be quite fragile indeed.

Now to the economic-political dimension. Only if the West reacts positively to the Russia offer to cooperate on SDI, will it be possible to solve a fundamental problem of

the development of Russia's real economy. This is the problem of the "military-industrial complex." The Russian military-industrial complex binds the best personnel and material-technological resources of the Russian economy. At the same time, and for that reason, the military-industrial complex possesses the great potential for development in the real economy in Russia. Without the economic power center of the military-industrial complex, there can be no economic progress in Russia. The issue must therefore be to tap the enormous economic-technological potential of the military-industrial complex as a productivity-driver.

A 'breakout' for the economy

In precisely that sense, the cooperative development of beam weapons for anti-missile defense would make a forward breakout possible. That goes for both the domestic economic situation as well as the political situation.

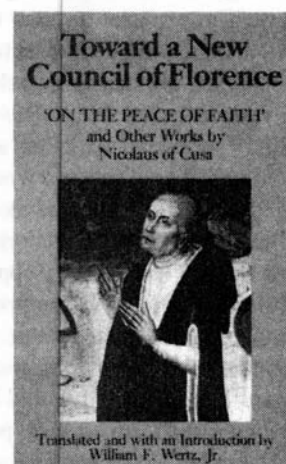
The moves in the direction of "converting" the Russian military-industrial complex made in the past three years have proven to be an utter failure. To the extent that a shift to civilian production occurred at all, this happened in a way such that technologically high-quality goods were replaced by technologically inferior consumer goods. That led to a reduction of the productivity potential of the military-industrial complex, and the total productivity performance level of the Russian economy continued to fall as well.

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“Conversion” might seem to be a laudable effort, if it means making tractors instead of missiles, or televisions instead of fighter aircraft. But in the real economy the precise opposite of such noble intentions is the result, because the average level of productivity is lowered technologically.

The cooperative development of SDI technologies based on “new physical principles,” strengthens the scientifically and technologically high quality of the military-industrial complex, but not the mass production of “conventional” standard weapons. The aim is to achieve a lasting increase of the total economic productivity level. Still more important, with the development and production of beam weapons for anti-missile defense, these technologies become available, practically automatically, to revolutionize the structure of production of the civilian economy. The proposed concrete project for joint development of plasma weapons demonstrates, that Russia’s military-industrial complex does in fact have a leading position, worldwide, in fundamental and crucial areas of science and technology. The cooperative SDI effort would thus not only constitute a crucial contribution to the economic reconstruction of Russia, it would also allow the development of new pioneer technologies in the world economic context, technologies for which there is often no real scientific-technological base as yet. The potential contribution which the Russian military-industrial complex could make in the areas of laser applications, plasma technologies, nuclear fusion, new materials, space travel, etc., is enormous.

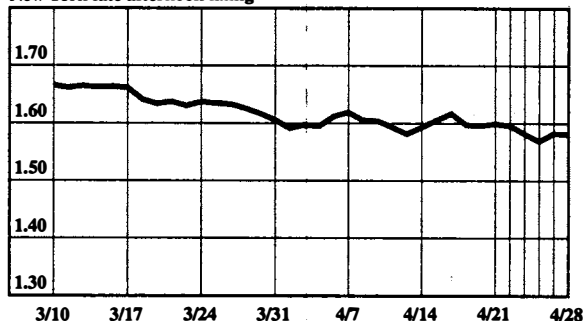
What is at stake?

Should the West either reject the Russian offer for cooperation on SDI categorically, or seek to stall it out, then those forces in Russia will inevitably gain the upper hand, which are in general hostile to a policy of cooperation with the West. The expectation then would be that particularly the Civic Union, which represents the Russian military-industrial complex politically, would be driven into the arms of the restorationist, Great Russian anti-western forces. The military-industrial complex would then probably fall back into its traditional role and would once again, cut off from the general economy, become the logistical base for the Russian military apparatus. A dictatorial Great Russian regime would view the Russian military apparatus, including the military-industrial complex, as the primary instrument of power domestically and to the outside. Under conditions of dictatorship and civil wars domestically, and military aggression toward the outside, it would be highly improbable that the personnel and technological potentials of the military-industrial complex would be employed for reconstructing the Russian economy at a higher technological level. That in turn would mean that the chance had been missed to exploit the potential of the military-industrial complex productively, to contribute to the economic and thus political stabilization of Russia.

Currency Rates

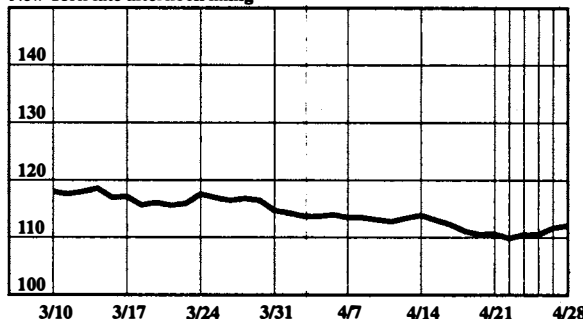
The dollar in deutschemarks

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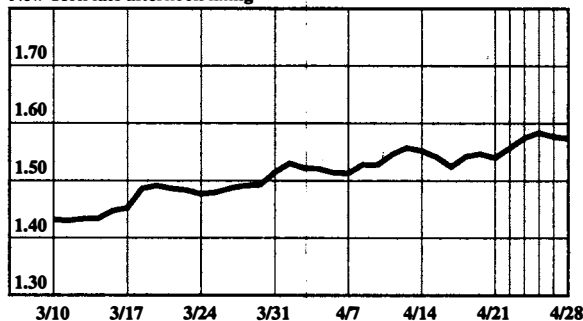
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

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