

## Eye on Washington by Nicholas F. Benton

### State Dept. peddles Soviet disinformation

The State Department released a declassified, 89-page report on Soviet disinformation Sept. 29, entitled, "Soviet Influence Activities: A Report on Active Measures and Propaganda, 1986-87."

The report is designed to provide a sampling of the array and nature of Soviet methods to influence public opinion outside the East bloc through use of devious and/or lying methods. The samples include the campaign to accuse the U.S. defense establishment of concocting the AIDS virus as a bio-warfare weapon. This report also includes samples of Soviet forgeries of letters from U.S. officials and of Soviet "front groups" in the United States and abroad.

However, while the report contains some useful examples of Soviet dirty tricks, it turns out to be, in fact, more of a cover-up than a disclosure.

This became clear during a press conference held at the State Department to announce the release of the report. Assistant Secretary Dr. Kathleen Bailey, head of the department's Intelligence and Research Section, replied to a question by a reporter who wanted to know why the United States was willing to negotiate an arms control treaty with the Soviets if they were continuing to engage in such egregious, ongoing dirty tricks.

"There is no relation between arms control and these matters," she said.

I interjected, "What do you mean?" pointing out that all the "front groups" named in the report, such as the World Peace Council, the Christian Peace Council, and the World Council of

Churches, are actively engaged in convincing Congress to tie the administration's hands on defense matters, bearing directly on arms control negotiations. "By your own admission, these are efforts to accomplish Soviet objectives in arms control by means other than direct negotiations." So how can you say there is no connection?"

Dr. Bailey only conceded that, yes, these "front groups" were indeed active in lobbying Congress.

I asked why there was no mention in the report of the single most important example of Soviet disinformation—their lying about the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), that the U.S. system is "offensive," and that they don't have a comparable program of their own, whereas in fact they are spending 15 times more than the United States, including over \$1 billion annually on laser research alone.

While Bailey dismissed the question during the public portion of the press conference by saying the report contained only a few samples, and "its purpose is not to be comprehensive," she tipped me off to the truth during a one-on-one exchange after the close of the press conference.

She admitted that, in fact, the original intent was to include an entire chapter in the report on Soviet lying about the SDI—but that the people in the inter-agency group responsible for the report who were to write that chapter didn't manage to finish by the deadline.

"Therefore," she said, "I had to make the decision to get the report out, so I went ahead with it without that chapter."

Needless to say, there had to be more to it than that, given the critical nature of the debate over the SDI both in Congress and in arms control negotiations with the Soviets right now. Someone decided to kill the chapter because of how it would have influ-

enced that debate.

Bailey's assertion of the lack of connection between Soviet dirty tricks and arms control negotiations was not only artificial, but deadly.

It is clear that all Soviet disinformation campaigns should be understood as "irregular warfare" operations, the same as terrorism, drug trafficking, and other means of influencing events on behalf of Soviet interests. To say that these operations are unrelated to larger Soviet objectives contained in, for example, arms control negotiations is, frankly, unbelievable.

Bailey was guilty of one more bit of disinformation during her press conference. She was asked by this reporter to comment on the case of the Soviet attempt to pin the blame for the assassination of Olof Palme on figures in the United States. She answered that a protest was made by the United States to the Soviets for the airing of a Soviet TV "docu-drama" earlier this year that pinned the blame for the Palme assassination on the CIA. The Soviet telecast was aired in both the Soviet Union and Sweden.

I asked her if the broadcast mentioned U.S. presidential candidate Lyndon LaRouche. She lied, claiming that it did not. In fact, the Soviet broadcast identified LaRouche by name, implying, in fact, that he was the mastermind of the assassination plot. However, for Bailey to admit this would mean conceding that the Soviets consider LaRouche an important target of their disinformation efforts. This, apparently, she did not want to do, even at the expense of the truth.

Afterward she told me she'd seen the Soviet TV show, and had it translated for her, and that she never heard LaRouche's name mentioned. So, who knows? Maybe the blame really belongs to the person who did the translation.