

The UNSPEAKABLE in Pursuit of the UNTHINKABLE

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Offensive Missiles Stockholm paper 5. By Professor Kosta Tsipsis for SIPRI. (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute) Sveavagen 166. 8113 - 46 Stockholm Sweden. pp. 33.

We Shall Not Be Mirved By Maurice Herson and Dan Smith of CND, 14 Grays Inn Road, London WC1. 15 separate Fact-sheets. 25 + postage.

THE SIPRI pamphlet, Offensive Missiles (i. e. Inter-Continental Nuclear Missiles) aims at exposing the deception of recent US proposals. Written in August 1974, it reveals the real intentions behind US Defence Secretary Schlesinger's war-call in February. Schlesinger wanted greater accuracy for the existing US missiles and revealed the new US strategy, which involves re-targeting away from Soviet cities and to missile silos - implying the possibility of the US making a 'first strike' as it is termed in jargon.

If the US planners really believe in this possibility, it may be the most dangerous arms race development yet.

Missile accuracy is the crucial point in such a strategy, as the pamphlet precisely explain A central section on missile physics shows bow the probability of destruction of an enemy silo goes up as (accuracy)² but only as (warhead size)^{2/3} and the Americans are utterly in the lead in accuracy. This crucial measure may soon revolutionise the world nuclear 'balance' - yet the SALT agreement never mentioned it.

The best thing about nuclear weapons, in one way, is the chance that they'll never work. One reason is the disruptive effects of a previous nuclear explosion - on the same target, which prevent a second attack for some time after - while the attacker may himself be attacked, or the enemy missile launched. A high probability of success in one shot is absolutely vital, and, as yet, neither side's missiles have this property. SIPRI claims the deterrence concept to be valid while this situation lasts. But Schlesinger's new plans could provide the US with sufficient 'lethality' to be over 96% certain of destroying the Soviet land-based missile force, by about 1976-78.

But SIPRI points out, 'such staggering lethality does not offer any practical superiority.' It is foolish, delusory. Enough submarine launched ICBMs would remain to 'reduce either country to rubble' -the basic deterrence concept of 'Mutually Assured Destruction' (MAD!) would still hold.

The recent SALT talks have been a fallacious deception, providing scope for as much increase in numerical strength as both sides wish - while making no restriction

on accuracy. Ultimately, the Soviets will reach equality with the US in numbers of MIRV (independently targeted warheads), and maybe in the 1990s will reach the final limits of accuracy together with the US. What the SIPRI analysis shows is how the new programmes will in fact avoid the conclusion on any substantive arms limitation agreements for the next twenty years.'

I dispute, however, SIPRI's assumption of 'invulnerability' for Soviet submarines. Long range acoustic detectors span the oceans listening for the nuclear subs passing over. These, and the many 'hunter-killer' submarines, could enable destruction of many missile subs.

Were it not for the 'rogue' submarines which escape detection, the US might well feel able to destroy the Soviet Forces completely. The aggressive political posture adopted by the US in the wake of such thinking could generate a stream of 'Cuba' incidents - and an end to deterrence - forever.

A permanent end to nuclear weapons has of course been CND's cause for 16 years. The title of this pamphlet misleads a little for the sake of the pun, since the leaflet provides a factual background to and history of nuclear weapons, and of the CND's own campaigns. It is designed to satisfy 'a constant stream of requests for information on the campaign and on nuclear weapons. 'Various different sheets describe the construction and physics of Atomic and Hydrogen Bombs, and their effects on houses and people. Sections on Polaris, NATO, and British Defence expenditure lead to a consideration of the concepts of deterrence, and the string of worthless treaties. A hideous quotation from Britain's 1961 Foreign Secretary, Douglas Home; "The British people are prepared if necessary to be blown to Atomic dust" introduces a very brief criticism of popular arguments on British Nuclear Policy.

A serious and successful attempt is made to avoid the use of the mystifying jargon of the nuclear strategists, although the odd phrase does creep through. Unfortunately, a couple of contradictions have crept in; blast waves crash through successive pages at 100 mph and 2000 mph, for instance. On the whole, however, it does a good job of setting out in a clear and concise way the important points of information needed for a successful nuclear disarmament campaign. A list of films, with distributors, as well as lists of books and pamphlets, provides useful information for meeting organisers.

A flexible format has been used, perhaps to allow easy continuous revision and updating. A larger version, with details of SA L T and Schlesinger proposals, and the implications of the Indian * and Israeli stockpiles, could be a useful first revision.

It might also be informative to include some analysis of the social structures, the US military-industrial system, for example, which have brought this situation about. But then, CND has faced dilemma over the extent of appropriate radicalism, from its inception.

* CND do publish a separate pamphlet 'After the Indian Bomb', also by Dan Smith. IOp.