

THE INSIDE STORY



Boris Rabbot

Wide World

War or Peace?

Last week, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance met with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in Washington to discuss the stalemate in the SALT disarmament talks. Unless the U.S. backs down from its "comprehensive proposal" of last March, no agreement is likely. Even the *New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal* now acknowledge that the first Carter proposal asked the Soviets to reduce their areas of strength while not offering similar concessions.

If no agreement is reached, then the 1972 SALT accords freezing the deployment of new missiles will expire on October 3. The only limitation upon new arms construction and deployment will be the 1972 agreement to limit anti-ballistic missile construction and a statement of intent from the U.S.

This sad state of affairs will be hailed by Henry Jackson and the members of the Committee against the Present Danger who have argued that the Soviet Union is seeking world domination through military superiority and that the U.S. cannot sign any agreement that limits its ability to compete with the Soviets.

The failure to reach an agreement will not, however, please Soviet dissidents Boris Rabbot and Alexander Yanov.

Rabbot and Yanov are Soviet Jews who recently emigrated to the U.S. because they feared persecution for their political views. Rabbot claims to have been an advisor to a member of the Soviet Central Committee and to have been privy to the deliberations of the Central Committee and the Politbureau. Yanov, who holds a doctorate in history, was a freelance journalist who travelled through the Soviet Union for 20 years writing on Soviet life and the economy.

Neither could be described as a friend of the Soviet state, but both have recently published analyses of Soviet policy toward detente that contradict Jackson's view and buttress the views of American arms control moderates who have argued that the U.S. should press ahead with detente.

Split among Soviet leaders.

Rabbot portrays the Soviet leadership in the '60s and '70s as divided on their estimate of what the U.S. wanted from detente:

•The Soviet military and the heads of the defense

industry and the Stalin-era *apparatchiki* on the central committee and in the KGB believe that the U.S. introduced detente to exacerbate the Sino-Soviet split and to destroy the Soviet system through "introducing profoundly liberalizing social change."

•The "creative intelligentsia," symbolized for Rabbot by Andrei C. Sakharov, and Brezhnev and his allies on the Politburo, believes that the U.S. was genuinely seeking to reduce the threat of nuclear war.

The first group has opposed arms control and, according to Rabbot, even contemplated a pre-emptive strike against China in 1968; the second group has backed arms control and detente.

Yanov makes a similar distinction. On one side he puts the "military-industrial complex" and the "little Stalins," the ministers who wield political control over the Soviet economy and life. On the other side, he puts the managers, the intelligentsia, and the "central administration" of the country.

But Rabbot and Yanov stress that while each group sought arms reduction, each sought different by-products from detente. The intelligentsia expected that detente would eventually lead to the greater infusion of Western ideas and the liberalization of society. The managers thought that the import of Western technology would encourage decentralization and local autonomy in industry.

Soviet leadership was concerned with raising Soviet productivity and encouraging economic growth (in the early '60s, Soviet economists had become convinced that the flagging Soviet growth and productivity was due to the stifling centralization and low worker morale) without paying the price of encouraging local autonomy, according to Rabbot and Yanov. Particularly after Czechoslovakia, the Soviet leaders feared the political forces that a decentralization of the economy might create. They therefore sought the solution to the Soviet economic problems in Western technology, which was to be purchased through trade agreements.

The leadership also expected that with arms control, they could devote more of production to consumer goods. That way they could raise workers' standards of living and cut short dissatisfaction with the Soviet political system.

In this respect, according to Rabbot and Yanov, Brezhnev always sought detente as an alternative to liberalization. But both argue that in the long run detente would have the effect that the managers and intelligentsia rather than Brezhnev seek from it.

Brezhnev taken ill.

According to Rabbot, Brezhnev prevailed until 1974. The first SALT agreement was signed in 1972, along with a Soviet-American trade pact that would grant the Soviet Union the same "most favored nation status" (exemption from tariffs, the granting of export credits) that other nations enjoyed. In Brezhnev's report to the 24th Congress in 1971, Yanov even notes a proposal that would favor consumer goods over military production.

But the passage of the Jackson-Vanik amendment to the trade agreement set back Brezhnev and his allies. The amendment stipulated that most-favored-nation status would only be granted to "non-market societies" if they allowed unrestricted emigration, a provision aimed at the Soviet refusal to allow unrestricted Jewish emigration.

The Soviet Union abrogated the agreement on the grounds that it would accept no interference in its internal affairs. According to Rabbot, the "conservatives" saw the amendment as confirming their distrust of American motives.

Rabbot ascribes Brezhnev's illness and retreat to his

dacha from December 1974 to April 1975 to the "political virus" he contracted from the Jackson-Vanik amendment. During that period, Alexander Shelepin, whom Rabbot calls Brezhnev's "most serious opponent," used the new political climate to advocate Soviet "volunteers" being sent to Portugal. Upon his return, according to Rabbot, Brezhnev was forced to compromise by agreeing to have the Cubans send soldiers to Angola.

Carter creates new crisis.

Yanov's analysis appeared before Carter's policies became clear. Rabbot's inside analysis ends in early 1976, when he lost his post and chose to emigrate. But Rabbot hypothesizes that Carter's human rights campaign must have caused a new crisis among the Soviet leadership.

Rabbot warns that the continuation of the human rights campaign and the "comprehensive" SALT proposal will be construed in the Soviet Union as another attempt to use detente to attack the Soviet Union politically. "Brezhnev and his apparatus," Rabbot says, "may see Carter as somehow comparable to Lenin in the early '20s, when he addressed the opposition movements in other countries over the heads of their leaders, hoping to set off a worldwide revolution . . . but in [Carter's] case, the goal is not revolution, but the imposition of the American standard of freedom over the globe, including in Russia."

Both Yanov and Rabbot urge the U.S. to come to terms with Brezhnev, the alternative being the abandonment of detente and even greater conservatism within the Soviet Union. Yanov goes so far as to warn of a Soviet "Nazism" that would attempt to purify and seal off the Soviet Union.

Both reject the American view that the Soviet Union is bent on "world domination." Rabbot testifies that he has read secret military documents that proved to him that the Soviet Union's military strategy is defensive and that the Soviet Union has no plans for a military attack on the U.S. Yanov argues that this is not even a goal of the Russian right wing.

No black and white.

Both Rabbot and Yanov belong to the school of Soviet dissidents who have abandoned Marxism and socialism because they identify them with the Soviet variety, but who have not clearly opted for the alternative of capitalism. They illustrate in themselves Yanov's warning to see the differences in the Soviet Union as "multicolored" and not "black and white."

While they speak of a "left," "center," and a "right" within the Soviet leadership, they equate democratization with the left, but Soviet support for the MPLA in Angola with the right.

They also have a deep cynicism when assessing the motives of Soviet leaders and allow them little idealism. Yanov, for instance, stresses that the leaders and managers are particularly interested in the importation of Western luxuries.

But from the standpoint of American coldwarriors, that makes their testimony about Brezhnev's motives all the more credible and challenging. It is no wonder that after Rabbot's analysis appeared, questions were raised about whether he was a Soviet "plant" delivered to the U.S. in order to win friends.

Both the *Washington Post's* Robert Kaiser and the *Manchester Guardian's* Victor Zorza wrote articles vouching for his authenticity.

Boris Rabbot's report appeared in the Washington Post, July 24. Alexander Yanov's analysis was published as a pamphlet, Detente after Brezhnev, by the University of California.

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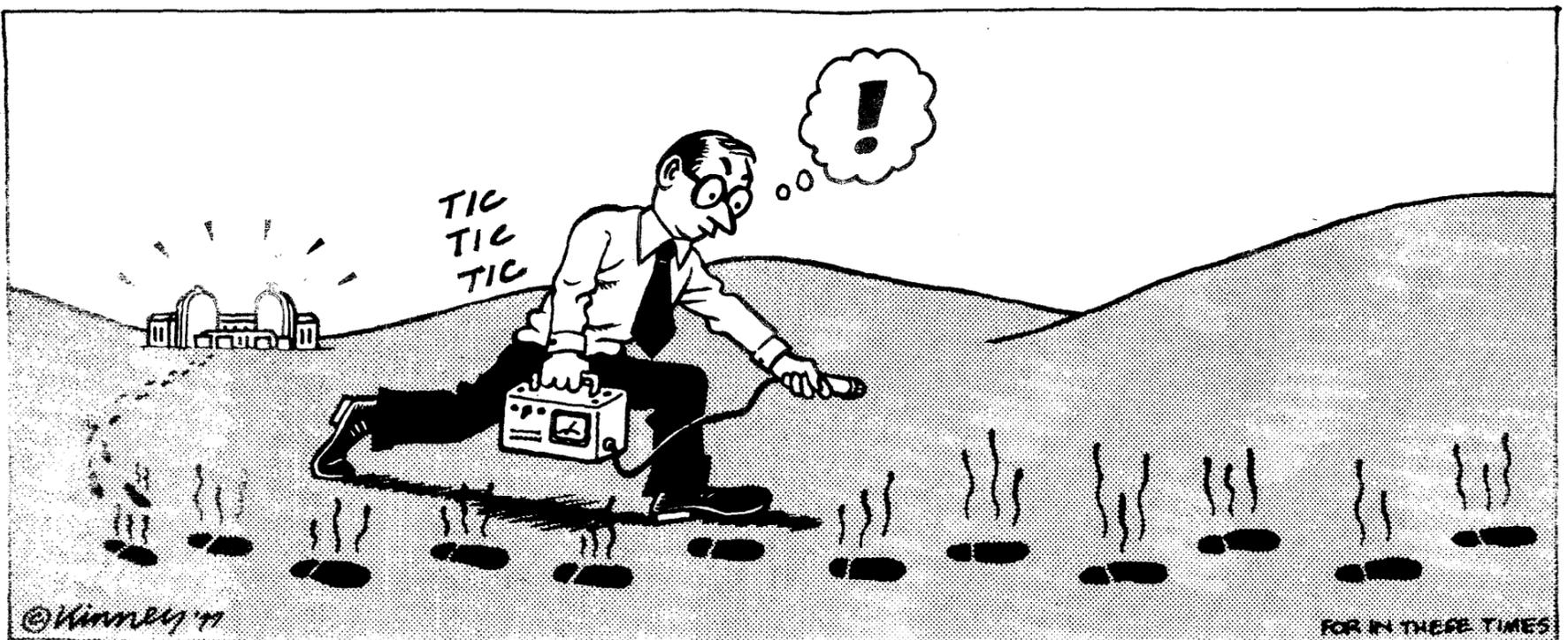
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Nuclear materials missing

“This is the kind of subject that sends chills up my spine,” muttered Rep. John Dingell (D-Mich.) as he prepared to convene a special August session of the House Subcommittee on Energy and Power.

Dingell's chilling subject was the effectiveness of the nuclear safeguards program for weapon-grade uranium and plutonium. A report in his possession disclosed that tons of nuclear material were missing, and Dingell's investigatory staff had “strong suspicions” that at least part of the valuable uranium and plutonium had been stolen and clandestinely shipped to Israel in the mid '60s.

More disturbing still, at least some of the evidence implicated the Central Intelligence Agency in the theft.

Although officials are still tight-lipped about the case, this information is now the foundation for at least two congressional investigations, a Justice department probe and quiet inquiries by American intelligence officials.

These allegations, however, are only the latest of a long series of troubling disclosures about the government's accounting system for weapon-grade nuclear material. Just last year the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which licenses nuclear corporations, reported that security measures at all 15 domestic manufacturers and processors of uranium and plutonium failed to meet minimum federal safeguards standards.

Enough missing for 1000 bombs.

Another round in the matter came on August 9 when federal officials from the Energy Research and Development Administration and the NRC conceded that they cannot locate upwards of 17 tons of U-235, U-233 and Pu-239, referred to as Special Nuclear Material or SNM.

It's enough fissionable material to arm more than 1,000 atomic bombs packing the explosive power of the device dropped over Hiroshima in 1945.

Only 5 kilograms (11 pounds) of en-

riched Uranium-235 or 2 kilograms (4.4 pounds) of Plutonium-239 are needed to build a crude nuclear device.

The revelations taint both the American military program and the civilian nuclear program, almost all of which is controlled by private companies.

On the military side ERDA officials disclosed that they cannot account for 16 tons of SNM at atomic bomb factories at Oak Ridge, Tenn. and Portsmouth, Ohio.

Under intense questioning, moreover, ERDA Acting Administrator Robert Fri conceded before Dingell's subcommittee that the 16 ton figure “was only an estimate” and that the loss could be higher.

Dingell himself was not satisfied. He charged that both ERDA and the NRC were still withholding data on the real magnitude of the problem. “There are now two accountability issues,” he complained. “First, there is the problem of material which is unaccounted for and then there is the new problem of material which is unaccounted for but which is not reported as being unaccounted for.”

The phrase “Material Unaccounted For” or MUF is only one of the terms used by the government for nuclear material they cannot locate. Recently ERDA euphemistically recategorized the missing Special Nuclear Materials as merely an “Inventory Discrepancy” or ID.

“Diversion” to Israel.

By far the most serious allegation involves a privately-owned nuclear processing plant in Pennsylvania. Congressional investigators and internal federal documents released under the Freedom of Information Act indicate that in the mid '60s 178 kilograms, or about 400 pounds, of highly enriched Uranium-235 was stolen from the Nuclear Material and Equipment Corporation (NUMEC) in Apollo, Pa.

At the time of the diversion the now

defunct Atomic Energy Commission had approved a NUMEC research and development contract with the Israeli Ministry of Defense. Ostensibly the material that NUMEC was to send to Israel was Cobalt-60 portable irradiators.

But as others tell it, NUMEC supplied the crucial atomic bomb material, valued at \$1.1 million, to Israel for its secret Dimona nuclear facility. According to *New York Times* correspondent David Burnham, “A former top level intelligence official said he had once seen a report that Israel had stolen nuclear material.”

Michael Ward, an aide to Rep. Dingell, told reporters on August 9 that he had “strong suspicions that a diversion occurred” at the NUMEC plant.

Rep. Morris Udall (D-Ariz.), who is also investigating missing nuclear material as head of the House Energy and Environment Subcommittee, said in an interview for *In These Times*, “We may never know whether there was a diversion, but it's darn hard to prove that there wasn't.”

Graver still, there is a widespread belief among investigators that the CIA may have had some involvement in the clandestine shipment to Israel. Government sources who subscribe to that theory say the material may have been covertly taken from the NUMEC plant on the basis of directives from high-level officials from the Johnson Administration.

Kenneth Chapman, who until late last year was director of NRC's Nuclear Material Safety and Safeguards division also suggests that there must have been “some very high level involvement in the diversion.”

Information withheld.

Last July a nuclear safeguards expert who was probing the Apollo case for the NRC was summarily transferred from his job after he charged in internal memos that his division was not getting access to classified information “held by other agencies” that could prove whether the Apollo security system had

been penetrated.

The official, James H. Conran, a senior analyst in Chapman's division, discovered that the documents dealing with the Apollo incident were still considered “highly sensitive” over ten years after the loss was detected by the AEC.

According to a summary of enforcement problems at the NUMEC facility, the case was referred by the AEC to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in 1966. But for reasons that have not been explained, the FBI declined to investigate.

This year, as the Apollo scandal began to surface, the Justice department reopened the case for review, and, according to knowledgeable government sources, the matter now rests with Attorney General Griffin Bell. Bell's office has declined to comment on the present disposition of the case.

The NUMEC incident raises basic questions about the ability of the government and private contractors to safeguard nuclear facilities from theft, nuclear critics say.

“I'm deeply troubled with the prospect of a great expansion of nuclear power plant production,” says Udall. “If with just a few nuclear plants we can't even keep track of nuclear material, I really fear for where we'll be if the world gets a couple of thousand nuclear plants and a large number of breeder reactors.”

NRC's director of the Division on Safeguards, Carl H. Builder, warned last year in an internal memo that existing security at all commercial Special Nuclear Material plants was inadequate. “Safeguards are not adequate against the lowest levels of design threat that have been suggested,” he concluded.

The problem may become even more serious if commercial reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel is licensed for the controversial breeder reactor. Enough nuclear material would then be produced each year to arm over 1,000 nuclear bombs.

Richard Pollock is director of the Critical Mass Energy Project in Washington, D.C.

A flurry of recent government studies has revealed that tons of nuclear material cannot be located, enough to manufacture thousands of nuclear bombs. There are indications that some of it was sent to Israel in the '60s.