

# Joint Chiefs Challenge Stand on Anti-Missiles

## U.S. Still Sees Hope For an Agreement. Averting Arms Race

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The United States emphasized yesterday that there is still hope for Soviet-American agreement to limit an antiballistic missile race.

A new comment on the possibility for an accord was issued, in part, to counter reports from Moscow that tended to doom in advance the prospects for any agreement.

The Johnson Administration is engaged in what it regards as a critical two-way struggle to hold open the chance for what President Johnson last week called "a watershed" decision in East-West arms competition.

In effect, the Administration has one wary eye on Moscow, and the other on Capitol Hill. In Congress there are signs of rising pressure on the Administration to insist on deploying a multi-billion-dollar missile defense system whether the Russians expand their system or not — and double

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### ABM—From AI

insistence if the Russians say no to an accord.

Officially, the Administration is not committed to deploy its own ABM system even if the Russian answer is negative. Nevertheless, many political analysts believe that President Johnson and other officials have left the Administration's position in such a public posture that if the Soviet response is no, the political pressure on Capitol Hill to proceed with an American system will be irresistible.

State Department Press Officer Robert J. McCloskey said yesterday that President Johnson's proposal for averting an ABM race was discussed in Moscow Saturday.

That was one of the topics raised in a lengthy talk between U.S. Ambassador Llewellyn E. Thompson and Premier Alexei N. Kosygin, McCloskey told newsmen.

"It is assumed there will be further contacts with the Soviets on this matter," said McCloskey.

"These continuing contacts reflect interest on both sides in exploring the possibilities of arriving at an understanding on strategic missile problems."

### Guarded Position

According to other sources, the Soviet position in the Kosygin-Thompson talks was an exceedingly guarded one that avoided any commitment. Administration analysts say that it is an unsurprising posture for the Russians to take in this stage of preliminary talks. The Thompson talk was the first substantive one in Moscow on this topic. Previously, the subject was discussed here with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly F. Dobrynin and Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Deputy Under Secretary of State Foy D. Kohler.

There has been a clouded, zigzag pattern to Soviet public statements. In London, on Feb. 10, Premier Kosygin gave what was interpreted as a cool response to the question of whether he believed the United States and the Soviet Union could agree on a "moratorium" on deploying ABM systems.

Kosygin justified a "defensive" weapons system, which is what an ABM system is, and said that it is offensive" weapons that cause world tension.

### Pravda More Positive

Five days later, however, Pravda, the official Communist Party newspaper, made a more positive statement saying that Kosygin in London "declared that the Soviet government was ready to discuss the problem of averting a new arms race, both in offensive and defensive weapons."

But then some newsmen in Moscow reported that they were informed that the Pravda statement was incorrect and was, in effect, withdrawn.

There has been no official comment on the withdrawal, however. But according to informed sources, Kosygin, in his talk with Thompson took a position that was closer to his originally quoted comments than it was to the subsequent and more optimistic and disputed Pravda line.

In view of the historic Russian emphasis on defense, and the fact that the United States has boasted of its 3 to 1, or 4 to 1, strategic missile superiority over the Soviet Union, analysts here note, it is axiomatic to find super-caution from the Russians on this topic, whatever their intentions. Even if these probing talks make any progress, American sources believe, it may be months before that is discernible.

The political difficulty for the Johnson Administration, meantime, is to acquire time on Capitol Hill for prolonged diplomatic probing. One sign of storm clouds was the publication this week of a Republican National Committee report on missiles. The legend on the cover summed up the problem that faces the Administration: "IS LBJ RIGHT? Russia Deplores Anti-Missile Network; U.S. Refuses to Keep Pace."