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Check Page 58

Suppose that we had a satellite of the Peeping Tom variety whose prismatic powers were so formidable as to leave the meaning of a Soviet installation absolutely naked to their enemies. Suppose that for complicated diplomatic reasons you desired not to publicize what exactly it is that this Soviet facility is up to. But on the other hand, you do want to be suggestive about it. And suppose you are putting out that year's Defense Department's annual book, called "Soviet Military Power." How might you handle the problem?

One way would be to call in an artist, an employee of the CIA. And you say to him, "Sam, here's a picture of the research and development site the Soviets have going at Sary Shagan. If you study it closely—very closely—you can see that what it's all about is a facility for testing ballistic missile defense through ground-based lasers. But we don't want our shot of it to be that obvious. So you give us an artist's rendition, and here are three details I want you to obscure—over there, that thing; make it look just like a traditional launcher, right? And over there, take out this detail, and that detail. Got it? Good boy, Sam."

So the reading public, a month or two later, finds itself staring at what could be a cornfield in Iowa with a granary and something that looks a little like a church steeple. And the caption reads, "The directed energy R&D site at the Sary Shagan proving ground includes ground-based lasers that could be used in an anti-satellite role today and possibly a BMD role in the future."

And then, in the months ahead, we listen to speeches from Mikhail Gorbachev and Eduard Shevardnadze, and

they tell us over and over again that the Soviet Union isn't testing any Star Wars technology. Those of our people in the know just wink when they hear this. But the American people and allies of America themselves don't really know the full story of Sary Shagan.

The term "arms race" took on, over the past dozen years, very unpleasant sounds. Critics of "arms races" were so scornful of unnecessary monies spent, of fetishistic pursuit of military redundancy, of a Strangelove's love of highkill for the sake of highkill, that the entire other meaning of "arms race" tended to get lost.

Suppose that it is the intention of the Soviet Union to develop a comprehensive defense of its own territory such as to render it substantially immune to damage from hostile nuclear weapons. Suppose its motivation in pursuing that objective is to permit it to pursue its blackmail against the free world sufficient to achieve ultimatum status. Suppose then that the free world, reacting healthily, desired to prevent this from happening by achieving a complementary security of its own—by cultivating a Star Wars technology.

What you have there is the makings of a race. Not necessarily a race we began, but certainly a race we desire not to lose. What astonishes, then, is that whoever is in charge of security arrangements in Washington is attaching more importance to keeping from general circulation knowledge of what we know the Soviet Union is up to than to doing exactly the opposite. Nothing would help more to advance a general understanding of, and then an enthusiasm for, development of our own Strategic Defense Initiative than the disclosure that the Soviet Union is very far along in the development of its own.

Here is one for Congress. Get the boys from DOD over, and ask them certain questions. Begin by asking about page 58 in the publication "Soviet Military Power," 1985.