

PART II -- MAIN EDITION -- 17 JUNE 1985

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Overwhelming the 'overwhelm theory'

Col. Gen. Nikolai Chervov, a member of the Soviet general staff whose statements are often taken to reflect Soviet policy, has voiced a predictable Soviet line on strategic defense, now that the concept's inevitability is obvious. That line: if you put up a strategic shield, we will be able to overwhelm it with a vastly increased missile stock. It's convincing, given what we have come to realize about the Soviet buildup. But it's probably not true.

For one thing, the laser guns on the most advanced drawing boards are fast enough to incinerate as thick a swarm of missiles as any attacker is likely to be able to amass.

Then, even in the here-and-now, the economics of the thing favor defense over offense. The marginal cost of each unit of our strategic defense would be far less than the

marginal cost of new missiles to overwhelm SDI.

In fact, enough missiles to overwhelm SDI cannot be built: the closest an attacker can come is to make it more likely that some missiles will get through. Right now, the Soviets know that 100 percent of any missiles they launch will penetrate. Even a half-effective SDI would make it twice as costly for the Soviets to get the same payload through — as much as to say, a 50 percent effective SDI would cut the effectiveness of a first strike in half. This fact alone is a significant extra deterrent to a first strike.

When you add to this the fact that SDI may well be more than 50 percent effective, you have a worthwhile system, and the "overwhelm theory" is exposed as so much bluster.

BALTIMORE SUN 16 June 1985 (17)

A Mission for India

India's Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi should logically follow up his current trip to the United States and his recent visit to the Soviet Union with a new effort to stop the conflict in Afghanistan. Just as the United States is the one country that can deal with both sides in the Israeli-Arab conflict, so India is the one nation that can act as an intermediary between the superpowers on Afghanistan.

It is true enough that India's enmity with Pakistan is a complicating factor. But not necessarily an inhibiting factor. If the Russians were to pull out of Afghanistan, the United States would be in a position to curtail its heavy supply of sophisticated arms to the Pakistani government. India's self-interest would thus be served.

Mr. Gandhi was obviously not about to unveil an Afghan initiative during his get-acquainted visit to Washington. To have done so would have jettisoned all the good will he and his mother, the late Indira Gandhi, have built in Moscow by refusing (at great moral cost) to condemn the Soviet rape of another Asian country. It is an enterprise to be undertaken on home soil once he has sorted out all the ideas and proposals that came his way during his visits to the superpower capitals.

An Indian bid to end the Afghan conflict could come a cropper, to be sure, as many abortive United Nations efforts well illustrate. But Mr. Gandhi's

willingness to set forth his goals during his address to a joint session of Congress was a departure from the Indian habit of trying to wish away the whole nasty business. "We stand," he said, "for a political settlement in Afghanistan that ensures sovereignty, integrity, independence and non-aligned status, and enables the refugees to return to their homes in safety and honor."

Mr. Gandhi's readiness to "do something concrete" was welcomed by American officials. Ironically, many things that have long irritated the United States — India's assertion that Soviet troops were "invited" into Afghanistan, its thesis that Pakistani aid to rebels "provokes" Soviet cross-border raids, its ludicrous Afghanistan-Grenada equation — may turn into assets if Mr. Gandhi approaches the Russians.

The Kremlin could easily enough say *nyet*. But it values India as its most important Third World ally and it may view Mr. Gandhi as a man who could fashion a face-saving deal.

The Reagan administration is reconciled to an Indian tilt to Moscow for the immediate future. Its aim is to increase U.S. trade, investment and technological transfer to India so as to build a web of interests that eventually could improve the political relationship. An end to the war in Afghanistan would fit in well with this policy.

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The Russian Easter Overture

By John T. Correll, EDITOR IN CHIEF

EVEN before Mikhail Gorbachev ascended to top Soviet leadership in March, he had taken the fancy of many in the West. That favorable assessment, along with the incredibly tolerant standards the world uses to judge Soviet behavior, practically guaranteed Gorbachev an early advantage in the propaganda wars. He was quick in attempting to exploit it.

His opening round was his Easter speech, which fooled hardly anyone. In it, Gorbachev announced his willingness to freeze medium-range nuclear missiles in Europe at present levels, which would leave the Soviet Union ahead by a ten-to-one ratio. As the *Washington Post* said, "Some moratorium."

It took colossal gall for the Soviets to make such an offer, having previously availed themselves of a unilateral six-year head start on deployment of these missiles and now having more than 400 of them operational. That Gorbachev expected—and got—any serious attention by this ploy is difficult to understand.

The United States soon came under criticism for its prompt rejection of Gorbachev's moratorium. Some had seen a praiseworthy concession in his offer: It would allow NATO to keep in place the limited number of missiles it already has. Previously, the Soviet Union had insisted on an absolute monopoly for itself.

The content of what Gorbachev said, we are told by the editorial writer for the *Hartford Courant*, was less important than his conciliatory tone. "More gestures like Mr. Gorbachev's by both sides and—who knows—they might even start to get somewhere on nuclear arms control," the *Courant* said. The US rejection was "overwrought," in the opinion of the *New York Times*, which admonished us to remember "the context in which Mr. Gorbachev must operate." Since he had not yet had time to maneuver his own followers onto the Politburo, the *Times* proclaimed, it was "small wonder that in this first pitch to the West he sounded like his predecessors."

The Old Guard who put Gorbachev where he is have known him better and for longer than have we in the West. It seems unlikely that they would have elected him to power had they perceived his ultimate purpose to be dissolution of their system. Gorbachev, at fifty-four, is likely to continue as General Secretary for many years. We should not hurry to make too much of his style until we see some substance to go with it.

The Soviet Union that Gorbachev heads is the nation that still occupies Afghanistan and that is consolidating its resubjugation of Poland. It is the nation that shot down an unarmed airliner less than two years ago and the one that showed no remorse when a Soviet sentry killed an American officer two weeks before Gorbachev's Easter speech. It is the nation that persisted, throughout the era of détente, in a one-sided arms race. It is also the same Soviet Union that has engaged in wholesale violations of arms-control agreements.

This outrageous record in itself may be a major reason why the rest of the world is so reluctant to hold the Soviet Union to strict account. Gestures of appeasement indicate a fear of Soviet volatility and irresponsibility. This is something akin to giving a mad dog the wide part of the road—except that the Soviets do what they do with cold deliberation, not madness. When we make excuses for them or show ourselves eager to make unreciprocated concessions, we give them no motivation to act any differently.

The United States has made substantial reductions in its strategic forces without the compensation of matching reductions by the Soviet Union. While the Soviets have added relentlessly to their nuclear arsenal, we have tended to regard our strategic modernization programs as bargaining chips. Last year, the House of Representatives made its stand on further MX production contingent on perceived progress in arms-control negotiations. The MX vote carried this year only because a great many congressmen concluded that it would have barter value in Geneva.

"The Soviets can take pleasure in the expectation that if they stand pat, we will meanwhile negotiate with ourselves and probably change our position," observes Kenneth L. Adelman, Director of the US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency.

If there was any conciliatory note in Gorbachev's Easter overture, it is most likely attributable to NATO's steadfast stand on missile counterdeployments and to Moscow's perception that the US is serious about strategic modernization. If there is any hope for meaningful arms control, we will not achieve it by glossing over questions of reciprocity, verification, and compliance.

We must have more from Mr. Gorbachev than his winning smile. ■