

A New Round in the Arms Race . . .

Are the Russians Coming ?

by JENNY QUINN

The recent wave of cold war fever has brought the question of "Are the Russians going to get us?" back out of the closet. The word "detente" hardly ever comes up any more, phrases like "playing the China Card" do. The old "military spending equals jobs" line has been pulled out again, and right-wingers like California's Jarvis are bandstanding for cutting all non-defense spending to the bone. Military spending, we are told, is more important than education and health services. Why? Because of course, the Russians are coming.

Finding out where the truth lies on US/Soviet military capabilities is no easy task. For example, Les Aspen, a Democrat from Wisconsin, complained that "Official intelligence estimates of Soviet ship production have been grossly inaccurate, misleading both the executive branch and Congress about the extent of the threat that our ship-building program must counter."

After doing a detailed study, he said that Pentagon projections on what the Soviets were doing with their navy "over-estimated their capacities a good 57% of the time. We are being asked to spend billions on real ships to counter Russian ghost ships-- a vast red fleet that sails only in the Pentagon's filing cabinets."

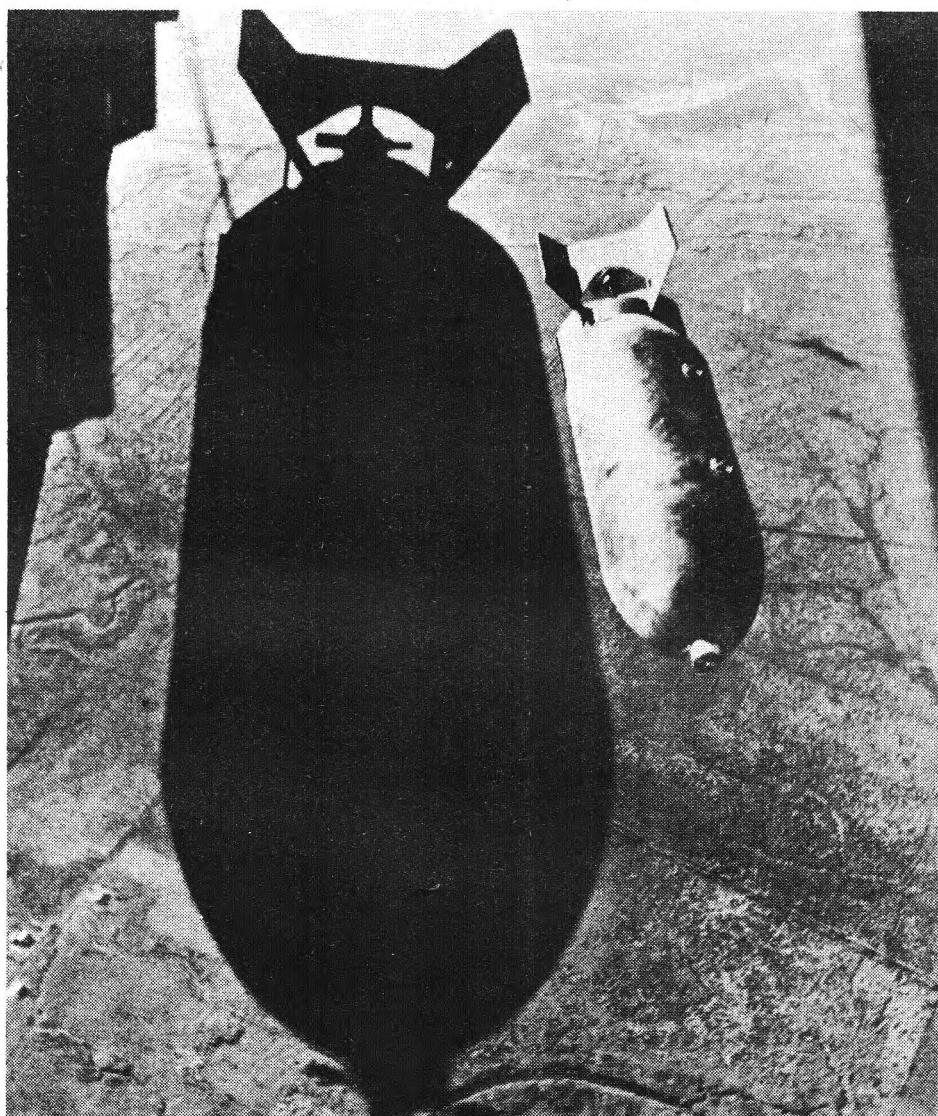
Aspen said that the only area in which Pentagon data was accurate was on the production of Soviet diesel submarines -- something that the US hasn't built

in years. The diesel example takes us to the heart-of the misinformation we are fed about the Soviets and the logic that lies behind it. If the only accurate information a congressman can get about Soviet military build-up is on an item that companies here are not planning to produce, then it logically follows that misinformation comes from folks with an economic interest in building military hardware.

The billions spent on studies of new technology and on lobbying in Washington by the major military producers isn't for nothing. Boeing, Lockheed, Dow Chemical, Rockwell International, GE and others all have a stake in selling their goods to the various branches of the US military. Admiral Hyman J. Ricover of the US Navy once said that "the great difficulty in doing business is that most of the top officials come from industry. And they naturally have an industrial viewpoint."

AN "INDUSTRIAL VIEWPOINT"

An "industrial viewpoint" means profits first. As the cases of Chile, Iran and the Phillipines show, moral principles have little to do with whom the US weapons dealers do business. Patriotism and the "national interest" take a back seat when there is money to be made. General Electric was not above peddling goods to Adolph Hitler's war machine. The profit drive even transcends the logic of the cold war. Boeing and Lockheed have both applied to the US government for export licenses to sell their hardware to the Soviet Union. The Bank of America has pres-



In 1977 the US government spent \$1,424 per household on military expenditures and \$31 per household on health research.

sured for extended rights to loan money to the USSR because of their "excellent credit record in recent years."

When we look at the matter from the vantage point of the capitalist class as

a whole, as opposed to that of a particular firm, political as well as economic considerations come to the fore.

Other forms of economic agreements with foreign countries are closely tied to military support. Zaire's dictator Mobutu for example, stays in power on the strength of his military support from the US and other western powers, but he also relies on the steady supply of technology and consumer goods exported from these same countries. So it stands to reason that US companies which export non-military items, along with companies with investments in foreign factories, mines and businesses, would also stand to benefit from US military "insurance."

On the political front, there is the basic question of containing communism and halting national liberation movements. The USSR has supported liberation struggles, Vietnam and Angola being the most famous examples. In both cases, right-wing politicians in the US have been more outspoken against the USSR as a supporter of these movements in Asia and Africa than they have condemned it as a nuclear threat. Goldwater's willingness to spark a nuclear war over Vietnam a few years ago showed where his priorities lay.

A third factor in the renewed cold war is what Brezinski calls "the China card." The Carter administration seemed to be split a few months ago between advisors who favored a more open relationship with the Soviet Union while others thought that the time was really ripe to exploit the differences between China and the Soviet Union. Ever since China began openly declaring that the Soviet Union was the main enemy of the world's people, it seemed logical that the time would come for more open relations between China and the US on military affairs as well as on cultural and trade agreements.

Nixon's visit to China in 1972 began a process which has led us to the current position of the US government being "soft on China" in order to take a harder line against the Soviet Union in order to weaken it. Hostilities between socialist China and the USSR give the US greater maneuverability in big power politics--and what better way to make a test of US strength than on its right to maintain the number one position in the nuclear arms race?

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Military Spending in Philadelphia

One of the most commonly held myths around is that military spending equals jobs and that war is good for the economy. Philadelphians have particular reasons to shake off this myth. Military spending-- from direct government expenditures to military contracts at GE and other companies has increased steadily over the years. At the same time, a combination of big layoffs when projects were over, and a greater swing to the types of military spending which mean big profits for GE but very few jobs, add up to a situation in which increased military spending has gone hand in hand with

a lower proportion of jobs per dollar each year.

There are two factors that make jobs which are based on military spending unlikely to be secure. One is that a better deal for the government in another city has meant rapid layoffs, and another is that directs US projects, like the Frankfort Arsenal, have caved in after each war the US has been involved in.

Recently, some progressive anti-military groups and unions have pushed for conversion--turning defunct military in-

stallations to civilian use. As this paper goes to press, a conversion plan for the Frankfort Arsenal has been announced, but this is yet to be seen what this will really look like.

A recent booklet by Robert K. Musil called *The Pentagon in Philadelphia* has a lot of interesting information on just what companies are up to what in Philly. It is available from-- SANE, 1411 Walnut St., Phila., PA 19102, at \$1.50.

The following chart is reprinted from that booklet:

Major Military Contracts, Philadelphia, 1977

General Electric Co.	— \$77,345,070.	— Research and Development for Mark 12A Re-entry Vehicle.
	— \$12,822,000.	— for Missile Part for LGM-30 Minuteman.
	— \$2,679,279.	— Design Analysis and Fabrication of Acoustic Sensors for use in Advanced Ballistic Re-entry System Program.
	— \$ 141,818.	— for USA Ballistic Missile Defense System Command.

(This is a partial listing of GE contracts.)

University of Pennsylvania	— \$860,230.	— for 15 separate contracts.
University City Science Center	— \$55,000	— Human Behavior Research
Action Manufacturing Co.	— \$10,704,500.	— For Ballistic Drives for M48/M60 Tanks to be shipped to a "classified country."
Franklin Institute	— \$21,000.	— For "Full Scale Development" of unspecified article.
Boeing Co.	— \$3,504,178.	— For "qualification of Fiberglass Rotor Blades for CH-47D Helicopter."
	— \$1,123,039.	— For "Retrofit Logistic Support Requirements."

Source: DMS Contract Quarterly, Greenwich, CT.

Arms Race

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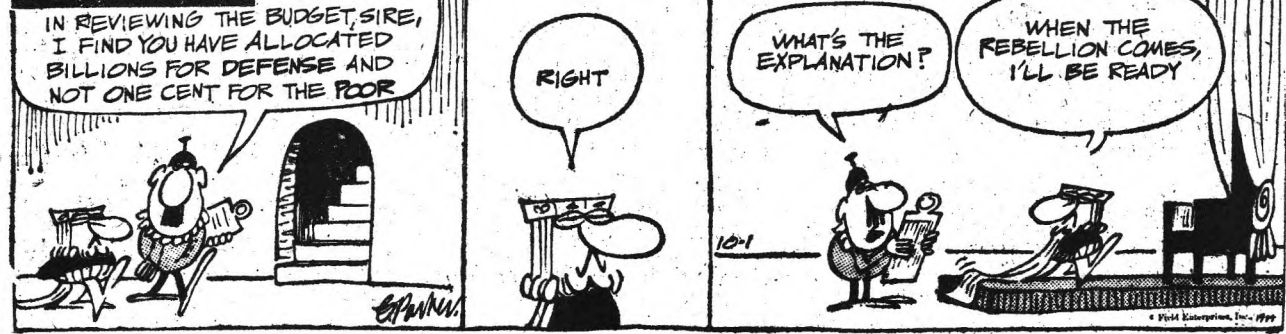
But what about the other side of the coin? Is the Soviet Union really building up its military at the rate of Nazi Germany in the thirties as many Pentagon officials claim? Congressman Aspen spoke to this question too. He seems to be a man for detailed studies, and his comparison of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union today was one of the most detailed. He showed that while the Nazis had skyrocket proportions in the growth of their military, the Soviet Union has been very steady in the proportion of its budget used for military development over the past several years. They have a large budget, but it hasn't increased dramatically at all.

Just as in the US, the daily lives of average working people are hurt by a high military budget. When it comes right down to it, social services and military budgets compete in both societies. But



Man does not live by bread alone

THE WIZARD OF ID



both the mechanics of the relationships and the historical reasons behind military build-up in the two societies are very different.

MILITARY SPENDING HERE AND THERE

In the capitalist economy of the US military spending is a means of promoting economic stability. Ever since the depression years of the 1930's the US economy has been like a junkie, more and more dependent on the "fix" of military production. Since war production fuels inflation and causes economic dislocations of all kinds, this "stability" has carried a steep price tag for the working class.

Furthermore, to survive, US capital must constantly expand its markets and must dominate the economic life of other, less powerful countries. The economic logic of imperialism leads to the necessity of a big military machine. In short, while military spending and the threat of war are burdens for the US people, the US rulers cannot afford peace and disarmament.

By way of contrast the Soviet Union has a planned economy that does not

depend on military production to maintain full employment and economic growth. While the Soviet equivalent of the Pentagon undoubtedly fights for its share of the budget, there is no built-in logic to the Soviet economy that requires ever expanding military spending. The civilian leadership of the USSR is hampered in its ability to satisfy the demand of the Soviet people for a higher standard of living by a big military budget, and needs an arms agreement to shore up its political position.

Secondly, Soviet entry into the nuclear arms race was a response to the US government's launching of the Cold War and its use of nuclear blackmail. After World War II the US maintained its monopoly on the A-Bomb and proclaimed its intention to roll back communism in Eastern Europe and Asia.

It was not for purposes of aggression, but to defend Soviet interests that the USSR turned feverishly to the development of its own nuclear arsenal. Later US planners pushed for a "first strike capability", that is the capacity to wipe the Soviets out in one fell swoop, destroying their ability to retaliate. This move prompted another spiral in the arms race.

SOVIET BIG POWER PLAYS

In recent years the Soviet Union has undergone a significant change. Once the defender of progressive forces all over the world, the Soviet Union has become a Big Power that manipulates and bullies smaller countries, that assert their independence. The 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia exposed this side of the USSR to the whole world.

Still, these instances of Soviet aggression and manipulation remain in an overall context of countering the aggression of the US and its attempts to strengthen counter-revolution, reaction and neo-colonialism throughout the world.

What has come to be called Soviet "hegemonism" is a violation of working class internationalism and a real danger to the independence of the peoples in the orbit of Soviet influence. But it is not a danger on the par of US imperialism. By raising the bogey of "Russian military superiority" and Soviet aggression, the Pentagon crowd is trying to hoodwink the US people into supporting further arms expenditures and US aggression abroad. We can't afford to be taken in.

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