

Allegations of Cheating Endanger Arms Talks

Initiated by conservatives, U.S. charges of Soviet cheating on arms agreements have lately begun to attract wider support

When U.S. and Soviet negotiators gather in Geneva on 12 March for a new round of arms talks, they will do so against a backdrop of unusual distrust. Recent accusations that each side has cheated on past agreements with the other have settled like a cloud over U.S.-Soviet relations, with the consequence that prospects for a new treaty limiting nuclear weapons have been seriously diminished.

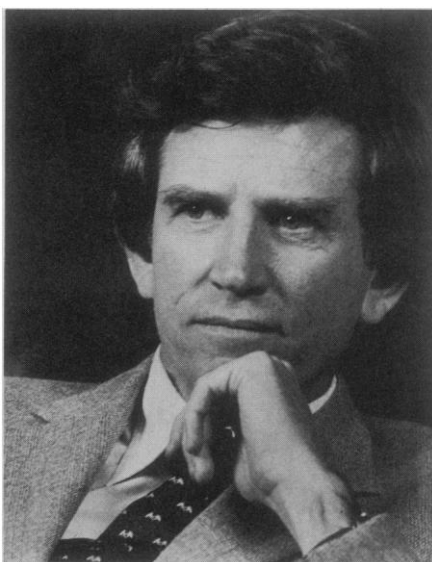
In Washington, for example, a senior State Department official announced on 20 February that "it will be difficult to move ahead" at the bargaining table unless the Soviets cease what the Reagan Administration terms a particularly blatant violation of the SALT I treaty, the construction of a huge ballistic missile early warning radar at Krasnoyarsk in central Siberia. In Moscow, various officials have declared that a new agreement will be impossible unless the United States itself abandons what Moscow calls a determination to violate the same treaty, through deployment of the advanced ballistic missile shield popularly referred to as "Stars Wars." Neither is a likely event.

To make matters worse, the SALT I agreement is but one of six major arms treaties that the United States and the Soviet Union have recently accused each other of infringing. According to a report issued by President Reagan on 1 February, the Soviets have also violated various provisions of the SALT II agreement, two agreements banning chemical or biological weapons, a treaty limiting tests of nuclear weapons, and a treaty regulating military maneuvers in Europe. In a rejoinder issued 1 week later, the Soviet Union renewed its claim that the United States has undermined or violated all but one of the same agreements.

One effect of the allegations has been to reinforce existing skepticism within the Reagan Administration about the wisdom of signing a treaty with the Soviet Union. Reagan, who came into office asserting that the Soviets "reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat," told Congress in a letter accompanying his recent report that the new evidence of Soviet cheating "calls into question important security benefits from arms control and could

create new security risks. It undermines the confidence essential to an effective arms control process in the future." This view is echoed by many Administration officials, including Lieutenant General John Chain, director of the State Department's politico-military affairs bureau. Soviet cheating "corrodes the U.S.-Soviet relationship, calling into question our ability to deal with the Soviet government from a common standard of reliability and integrity," Chain recently told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

A year ago, these views were shared



Senator Gary Hart

Recently warned that several allegations of Soviet cheating are now widely believed.

only by a handful of conservative senators, such as John East (R-N.C.), Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), James McClure (R-Idaho), and Steven Symms (R-Idaho). Lately, however, the concern has spread across ideological boundaries. In January, for example, Colorado Senator Gary Hart, a candidate for the 1984 Democratic presidential nomination, met in Moscow with Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, partly to convey a message that some of the cheating allegations are now widely believed in the Senate, and that obstinate Soviet behavior has weakened the hands of those in the United States who favor a new weapons treaty. Like Administration officials, Hart says that the Soviets respond reflexively, not

substantively, when these issues are raised.

Ostensibly, the Administration's hand in publicizing Soviet transgressions has been forced by Congress, which on three occasions since 1983 has sponsored legislation requiring that the allegations be published in brief unclassified reports. At a recent press conference, Kenneth Adelman, director of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, emphasized this point as he handed reporters a list of seven Soviet treaty violations, one "likely" violation, two "probable" violations, and two "potential" violations. "We were not hunting for violations," one of his aides explained. "The Congress just wishes to be informed."

But this view is challenged by an aide to Senator McClure, who drafted some of the key disclosure legislation. "Our effort has been welcomed by the Administration," the aide says. "If Reagan had come to Congress with this information on his own, it wouldn't have been credible to a lot of folks up here because of his reputation in this area. With our legislation, we made it easier for him—maybe even made it possible for him—to make this information public." He adds that many Administration officials hope Congress will insist on the declassification of additional evidence of Soviet cheating. "This tugging process, this long-term public minuet, is primarily designed to preserve the credibility of the allegations," he says.

Richard Perle, an assistant secretary of defense who is unabashedly the Administration's chief critic of Soviet treaty violations, agrees that Congress has played a useful role. "When the first report was issued, we said over and over again that we had no choice but to issue the report, that it was required," he told *Science* in a recent interview. "We said this in response to charges that we were somehow trying to undermine arms control by revealing what we knew. Personally, I find that a preposterous argument and a corrupt argument. It's at least shallow. I think that the interest expressed by the Senate has been instrumental in forcing the Administration to approach this subject seriously."

Perle, who believes that no arms treaty signed since the 1950's has been in the

interests of the West, has long had close ties to David Sullivan, the chief Capitol Hill critic of Soviet cheating. Sullivan resigned in 1978 from his job as a Soviet analyst at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in the wake of a flap over the disclosure of highly classified information to Perle, who was then an aide to the late Senator Henry Jackson. In Sullivan's judgment (and Perle's), the secret information provided conclusive evidence of a U.S. cover-up of Soviet SALT I violations, as well as additional violations of other treaties. "What I did vis-à-vis Perle was unusual, but nobody ever said it was illegal," Sullivan explains now, adding that he retains access to materials classified "Top Secret" by the Pentagon and the Department of Energy. Since 1981, his congressional salary has been paid by four Senators who favor U.S. abrogation of selected provisions of both SALT I and SALT II, as well as a threefold increase in the number of U.S. nuclear warheads.

Sullivan's involvement in the Soviet cheating debate is well known on Capitol Hill, where he toils under a photo of an Afghani child whose hands were severed by a Soviet bomb, with the caption, "Disarmament Soviet Style." A typical speech drafted by Sullivan and delivered by Symms on the Senate floor last year includes the following passage: "The historical evidence indicates that arms control has been used as an instrument in the Soviet game plan for strategic supremacy. . . . Arms control has been an enormous Soviet strategic deception, and a very successful deception indeed."

Sullivan is widely thought to be the author of a controversial report on Soviet cheating completed in 1983 by the Administration's General Advisory Committee on Arms Control and Disarmament. He denies it, although he acknowledges that his published work obviously influenced the panel. The report, which was partly declassified and released by the Administration in response to congressional legislation that Sullivan helped draft, lists 17 "material breaches" of nine treaties and four international commitments. The allegations vary widely in seriousness, from a violation of a 1936 treaty governing the passage of aircraft carriers through the Turkish straits to a violation of the 1925 treaty banning the use of chemical weapons. Throughout the report, a "material breach" was defined to include what the committee considered circumventions of a treaty's scope and purpose, in contrast to its precise language.

The makeup of the advisory panel was

criticized in a 1982 study by the Congressional Research Service, which noted that it represented "a focused ideological viewpoint, not a spectrum of views," and was dominated by "defense-type ex-officials, analysts, or technicians, not high-level statesmen or citizens with broad and varied backgrounds who possess a good grasp of foreign policy and other relevant public issues." A majority of its members were affiliated with the Committee on the Present Danger, which is devoted to publicizing the Soviet threat, and many had apparently contributed to Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign.

Although Reagan declined formally to endorse the advisory committee study, several of its allegations have turned up in the latest official Administration report on Soviet cheating and in the statements of senior Administration officials.

The Soviets "may have concluded that arms control is doomed," says Paul Warnke.

According to the study, for example, the Soviet Union in 1961 "breached its unilateral commitment" to a moratorium on nuclear testing. This allegation is challenged by former arms negotiator Gerard C. Smith, in his 1980 book, *Doubletalk: The Story of SALT I*. "The fact is before the U.S.S.R. resumed testing in 1961, President Eisenhower had declared the U.S. no longer bound by the arrangement, saying in a press release on 29 December 1959, 'we consider ourselves free to resume nuclear weapons testing,'" Smith says. Nevertheless, the allegation has been taken up by Robert McFarlane, the President's national security adviser, who cites it as the reason why the United States will not now join in a moratorium with the Soviet Union on the testing of antisatellite weapons.

Until recently, congressional liberals or moderates and intelligence community analysts looked askance at most of these charges, arguing that the evidence behind them had been stretched to fit the Administration's preconceived notions about Soviet behavior. Claims about Soviet use of mycotoxins, or yellow rain, in southeast Asia seemed particularly weak, for example. They also noted that the reports had been heavily padded with allegations of "likely" or "probable" violations where hard facts were scarce,

such as in the area of the 1974 Threshold Test Ban Treaty. And they claimed that some of the proved violations were trivial or that they were matched by similar indiscretions by the United States. The latest White House report, for example, castigates the Soviet Union for violation of the 1963 Limited Test Ban Treaty by repeatedly allowing radioactive matter from underground nuclear tests to be vented outside its national territory. According to a 1978 report by the Congressional Research Service, however, the United States has also inadvertently caused radioactive matter from underground tests to be vented across the Canadian and Mexican borders.

A year ago, Paul Warnke, the chief U.S. negotiator for the SALT II talks, noted some of these problems at a press conference where he sharply criticized the Administration's initial report on Soviet cheating. Like others in the arms control community, he argued not only that the complaints were being publicized prematurely but also that they may have been raised in bad faith to smooth the path for a series of treaty violations by the United States. "We have to ask whether the Administration is more interested in charging violations than in preserving treaties," he said. "Any public pronouncement by the President that the Soviets are violating arms control agreements is irrevocable. It will certainly not induce them to change their position or to come to the negotiating table with a more positive attitude," he added in a joint statement with Gerard Smith.

Since then, however, both Warnke and Smith have concluded that the evidence behind several of the Administration's allegations is now so strong that it cannot be overlooked, and have themselves made public statements about it. Warnke, in fact, believes that the evidence is sufficient to support a judgment that the Soviet Union may be positioning itself for a breakdown of the "SALT I/SALT II regime." "They may have concluded that arms control is doomed," he told *Science* recently.

If Warnke's suspicion is accurate, the conviction of some Administration officials that a new arms control agreement is unwise is certain to be reinforced. And the allegations of cheating could easily be a more fractious topic of discussion in Geneva than weapons reductions.

—R. JEFFREY SMITH

This is the first of several articles on U.S.-Soviet treaty compliance. The next will examine the evidence behind the Reagan Administration's charges.