

## Notes on Politics and Power

### New fashions in missile technology

Godfrey Hodgson writes: Washington and Moscow are finding it hard enough to negotiate the quantitative aspects of a Strategic Arms Limitation treaty: that is, how many existing types of nuclear delivery systems each super-power shall be allowed to have. But experts in Washington now believe that the qualitative aspects of strategic arms limitation may be even more important: the limitation, that is, of the technological race that could make the



precarious balance of mutual deterrence tip one way or the other.

The new Strategic Survey published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London gives a terrifying glimpse of the beasts lurking around the next few corners. Developments in a whole range of new technologies – in engines, warheads and guidance systems – could all affect the strategic balance. For instance:

- New guidance systems using optical, infrared, radio-wave or acoustic 'signatures' to distinguish a target from its surroundings, or using new, highly accurate navigational techniques such as 'terrain contour matching' (TERCOM), will make missiles far more accurate. The circular error probable (CEP) of the US Air Force's new MX missile, for example, will be 200-300 feet, against 600-800 feet for the Minuteman II currently deployed. Soviet missiles are less accurate, but their CEPs are falling rapidly too, and are expected to fall below 1,000 feet by the early 1980s.

- The new US Cruise missiles have been made possible by new super-efficient engines weighing no more than 100-150 lb.

- The neutron bomb is only one of a whole generation of new warheads. In the United States these include the B-61 variable yield or 'dial-a-yield' bomb; a triple-choice bomb which can be detonated in the air, on impact, or by delayed action; and new low-yield nuclear artillery shells.

These technological developments, and particularly the improved accuracy of missiles, have great strategic implications. They call into question the continued viability of fixed site, land-based missiles. And they could increase pressures to launch a preemptive first strike against the enemy's missile and other strategic installations: a 'counterforce' strike. This is

chiefly because of the greatly increased 'single shot kill probabilities' (SSKP) of the new missiles. The SSKP of the new US missiles with new warheads is expected to be 90 per cent, as against the estimated 45-60 per cent SSKP of present weapons systems.

'An American decision to deploy a force of 300 MX missiles', the Strategic Survey says, 'would give the United States a first-strike potential of destroying well over 90 per cent of the fixed land-based Soviet missiles.' Until then, however, improvements in the accuracy of Soviet missiles will give the Soviet Union the ability to destroy a substantial proportion of the American ICBM force.' The Strategic Survey goes on to point out, however, that because a greater proportion of Soviet missiles are land-based, the Soviet Union's forces are more vulnerable to the new missiles.

### Fatal secrecy of low-flying RAF bombers

Duncan Campbell writes: The Under-Secretary of State for the RAF, Jim Wellbeloved, now has an opportunity to make an important contribution to public safety. He could do so by publishing a series of documents which have hitherto been classified and locked away by the Ministry of Defence – maps used by the RAF and the United States Air Force for training in Britain.

Just over a month ago, he told the House of Commons that a review of all low flying was underway and would be completed as soon as possible: 'My view is that it would be better for the low flying system to be published, but these are matters that are still under consideration.'

As part of their training (for attack rather than defence), both the RAF and the USAF must regularly practise low flying, virtually at tree-top level. This enables them to cover long distances without being noticed by normal radar detectors on the ground. A fixed pattern of routes and training areas around Britain is used for this practice, and includes bombing runs on target ranges. Although the map of routes is 'classified' it is hardly kept secret from those whose misery it is to live or holiday beneath such routes.

Official figures for the annual number of low flights, last released in 1975, enumerate 176,528 flights – about 500 every day. Almost half of these occur in southern England, with 43 per cent concentrated around Salisbury and 'parts of Kent, Sussex and Dorset'.

The vital point about publication of the routes is air safety. Many small aeroplanes –

crop sprayers, air taxis, instruction and pleasure craft – operate at the heights used for military low flying. There has been one fatal accident, over Norfolk three years ago, when an RAF Phantom collided with a crop sprayer. It should have resulted in immediate disclosure of low flying routes to avoid repetition. Instead, civil pilots were told to notify the RAF of any of their low flying movements – although the hazard clearly came from military activities and not *vice versa*. That accident only marks the tip of a vast pile of hair-raising tales that almost every pilot has to tell.

In the past the Ministry of Defence has avoided handling vital confirmatory intelligence to such potential enemies as the Little Snoring Environmental Action Group, or whomever. It does not claim to withhold the details on grounds of national security, but explains the 'classified' tag as a 'practical consideration': – 'It is safer not to publish at all than to let civil pilots use out of date information'.

That argument finds little sympathy with anti-secrecy campaigners, or with the aviation magazine *Flight* which has for some years demanded publication of a range of air safety information and details of RAF flying accident investigations. *Flight* points out that the RAF's counterparts in the USA, Australia and elsewhere find no difficulty in making such information available.

### The case of the well-fed civil servant

Christopher Hird writes: Mr Stephen Maltz used to work for the Department of Industry in the regional finance section. His wife was a substantial shareholder in a Welsh radiator manufacturer, Penrad, which received substantial government aid. But last week a Department of Industry mandarin, Sir Peter Carey, said there was nothing suspicious about the affair.

Mr Maltz joined the department in February 1975 and left on special leave – but never to return – in November. Mrs Maltz, already a small shareholder in Penrad, bought most of her 19 per cent stake in the early months of 1975. Her husband worked in a section of the Department which dealt with investment from overseas in the UK. He had no way of knowing about the government's aid to Penrad, who had made their first application for money in the previous year.

Why did Mrs Maltz chose Penrad, – an ailing company – to back her hunch that the stock market was about to rise (it did, and she made a lot of money)? A major reason seems to be that her husband was a friend of some of the directors of Penrad, who were associated with the fringe finance company Eldridge Stableford – now bust.

The most curious part of the story is why the Civil Service Commissioners employed Mr Maltz in the first place. Whilst in his teens he was a property dealer, before qualifying as an accountant. Before he was 25 he had set up the Beatles' company Apple, which on his own admission got out of control.

From there Mr Maltz moved on to be a personal assistant of financier Jim Slater and then to one of Slater's acolytes, Malcolm Horsman. Horsman gave Mr Maltz his break in 1971, by providing him with a stock market vehicle in the shape of a timber company called Tower Assets. In the spirit of the time, Maltz sold this to another Slater protégé for £11 million in 1974.

However, by the end of the year the buyers did not like what they had bought and Mr

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