IP!S@ to the NEWS

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The ancient Roman emperors used circuses and games to divert the people from addressing themselves to the possibility of self-govern ment. The last four American Presidents have given us manned space spectaculars to divert Congress and the voters from asking pertinent questions about Soviet space weapons.

The national commitment of money and scientific skill to put a man on the moon was made by President Kennedy in 1961 on the argument that we were in a moon race with the Soviets. This false assumption was fed by such otherwise knowledgeable persons as Dr. Werner von Braun who, when asked what we would find when we reached the moon, replied, "Russians."

It was clear to anyone who made an objective study of Soviet goals that the Russians were never racing to the moon, but were merely

encouraging the United States to make the non-military moon expedition, while the Russians spent their money on space weapons to achieve military superiority. There was no military value in the trip, and nearly all the scientific value could be gained by unmanned space vehicles at a tiny fraction of the cost. · Eight y ars and $30 billion later, we had Neil Armstrong on the moon, and the Soviets had the lead over us in nuclear missiles.

This summer's Apollo-Soyuz space venture is the razzle-dazzle of detente. The Soviets supply the cosmonauts, and we supply the sophisticated equipment and technology. The Soviets wouldn't even let our reporters watch their launch.

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There has to be something phony about detente when we are told it is a great step toward peace for Russian and American astronauts to shake hands in space, but may be a threat to world peace for President Ford to shake hands with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. There has to be something rotten in Geneva when Henry Kissinger pleads there with Gromyko to sign a SALT II arms agreement, while the evidence is mounting that the Soviets are violating both the letter and the spirit of SALT I.

It is a case of misplaced priorities when we spend billions on space travel whose principal value is television entertainment, with a little scientific spillover, at the same time that we are told we cannot afford the missiles, bombers, and submarines we need to match Soviet weapons.

Meanwhile, the Russian Bolshoi Ballet has been touring our coun try, and it, too, sees detente as a one-way street. On the same night that President Ford declined to attend George Meany's big dinner for Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn because Kissinger said this might offend the Soviets, the Bolshoi troupe successfully demanded that our National Anthem be omitted from their performance at the St. Louis Municipal Opera. For half a century, every performance at this famous open-air opera in Forest Park on city property has started with the Star Spangled Banner -- except, that is, when the Russians objected.

Fortunately, there was such a flap among local citizens that this piece of impudence was overruled the next day and the National Anthem was played for all remaining performances, even though the Russians complained that their anti-Anthem policy had been adhered to in all other cities they have visited this year.

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