P.S. to the NEWS

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PUBLIC OPINION POLL ON SALT II

Public opinion polls may be used for either of two different purposes: to record public opinion or to influence public opinion. When used to control public opinion, polls are like computers. If operated with professional integrity, they can digest bits of information and produce reliable results. But, as the saying goes, garbage in, garbage out.

When used to influence public opin°on, polls are simply an advertising technique to help sell the people on a candidate or a concept. Construct the questions to produce the desired results, and then release them to achieve the propaganda effect called the "bandwagon."

With these caveats in mind, let us examine a recent Louis Harris survey on detente and the impending SALT II agreement now under negotiation.

Harris first reports that "a 71-15 percent majority favors detente." Does that sound impressive? Well, consider the fact that, before those questioned gave their answers, the Harris pollsters told them what detente means: "the United States and Russia seeking out areas of agreement and cooperation."

With that pollyanna definition, it is surprising that only 71 percent favor detente! Those questioned should have been told that the Soviet definition of detente is quite different. Brezhnev told the 25th Congress of the Communist Parties of the world in 1976: "We make no secret of the fact that we see detente as the way to create more favorable conditions for peaceful Socialist and Communist construction."

Brezhnev boasted that one of the successes of detente was "having rendered considerable aid to Vietnam in its struggle against" the United States. He asserted that "detente does not in the slightest abolish, and cannot abolish or alter, the laws of the class struggle." In other words, detente is just a code word for

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Communist wars to overthrow non-Communist countries.

The second Harris survey conclusion is that "a 75-12 percent majority favors the United States and Russia coming to a new SALT arms control agreement." The defect in this conclusion is that those questioned based their answers on the Harris explanation of SALT: an "arms control agreement that would limit the number of nuclear warheads and missiles they can deploy."

The trouble with that definition is that it fails to mention that, because SALT II will not limit the size or power of warheads or missiles, Soviet missiles will have up to six times the throw weight of ours and up to 50 times the megatonnage of ours.

The third Harris conclusion is that "a 70-18 percent majority" approves increasing trade between the United States and Russia. What percentage do you think would have registered approval if those surveyed had been told the truth that "trade" with the Soviet Union depends on credits provided at the expense of the American taxpayers through the Export-Import Bank or the Commodity Credit Corporation? We'll never know because Harris failed to explain that "trade" with Russia is subsidized or guaranteed by taxpayers' money.

Harris then reported that an agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union to "end all nuclear weapons testing" meets with 74-17 percent approval by Americans.

The results would have been quite different if Harris had phrased the question in terms of reality instead of illus.ion and asked: "DO you favor an agreement which would stop all nuclear weapons testing by the United States but permit the Soviets to continue testing their nuclear weapons?" Yet that is exactly what happened under the first nuclear test ban, which we observed in good faith, but which the Soviets broke by their giant series of tests in 1961 after a year of secret preparations.

The Soviets cheated again under the 1972 SALT I Agreement. According to former Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird, "the evidence is incontrovertible that the Soviet Union has repeatedly, flagrantly and indeed contemptuously violated"
SALT I. (end)