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by PHYLLIS SCHLAFLY
Box 618, Alton, Illinois 62002
Phone: 618-462-5415

SALT SECRECY AND ADVISERS

Will the American people find out the truth of what is really going on in the SALT II negotiations taking place in Moscow? Will reporters have the courage to tell us what they discover?

When William Beecher, then a senior military reporter for the NEW YORK TIMES, accurately reported what was going on during the SALT I negotiations on the front page of his paper of July 23, 1971, the W iteHouse retaliated by wiretapping his telephone. "National security" was the grand rationale for this and the other illegalities connected with Watergate.

But Mr. Beecher didn't give away any designs or blueprints of how our nuclear weapons were made. He merely published a truthful account of what kind of deal our SALT diplomats were offering the Russians.

It wasn't what he revealed to the enemy that made Henry Kissinger press the panic button, but what Mr. Beecher revealed to the American people.

I can personally testify to the paranoiac secrecy of those SALT I negotiations. In Vienna, when I tried to interview anyone connected with SALT, I found that the entrance was sternly guarded by an American soldier armed with a gun and a host of evasive answers that gave no information whatsoever.

When he noticed that my eyes lingered on a floor plan of the building posted in the vestibule, he asked me to wait outside in the cold for my taxicab, instead of in the building paid for by the American taxpayers.

The first good look the American people had at the SALT I Agreement was when the television cameras photographed the trays of champagne carried in to celebrate the signing on May 26, 1972.

Keeping the American people in the dark about U.S.-U.S.S.R. agreements has long been standard operating procedure for our State Department. Senator Margaret

(more)

Chase Smith, then the senior Republican on the Senate Armed Services Committee, gave this warning in 1972 about the Moscow Nuclear Test Ban Treaty of 1963:

"The American people still have not been told the whole story about how the Treaty worked to the Russians' tremendous advantage and to our own vast detriment. In reality, it was a disaster for the American people and a great victory for the Russians who, with their superior nuclear technology, were soon embarked on a military buildup that has no parallel."

If you were negotiating an agreement on medicine, it would seem only logical to have doctors present. If you were negotiating an agreement on construction, it would be essential to have some engineers advising you. If you were negotiating an agreement on legal practice, you surely would need some lawyers at your side.

But somehow, in our military and weapons negotiations with the Soviet Union since 1969, U.S. officials have never had a military adviser present. Henry Kissinger would not permit it. The Joint Chiefs and their representatives were "included out," to borrow a favorite Sam Goldwynism.

For the drama of the strategic arms negotiation in Moscow now taking place, the cast of characters on the Soviet side is substantially the same as in previous conferences. On the American side, however, something new has been added -- a military adviser representing the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This appears to be one concession that the Carter Administration made in order to win confirmation of Paul Warnke as our chief SALT negotiator. The double confirmation of Warnke for two jobs (U.S. disarmament chief and arms control negotiator) may represent two steps backwards for national security, but the presence of a military adviser is at least one step forward.

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