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## The freeze—deep or shallow?

**The freeze proposals are misdirected and will not help do what needs to be done to prevent nuclear war**

Harold W. Lewis

The trouble with trite and banal sayings is that they are sometimes painfully to the point. In the case of the freeze, the observation that comes to mind is that to every complex problem there exists a solution that is simple, appealing, and wrong. Wrong may be too strong a term for the freeze proposal—it is wrong only in the sense that it is wrong to give laetrile to a cancer patient. In both cases there is little intrinsic harm done, *unless* the patient really believes the treatment will contribute to the cure of his disease, and thereby substitutes wishful thinking for therapy.

And the disease is all too real. Andrei Sakharov was right when he said that the prevention of nuclear war is the central problem for mankind. Yet it is equally true that no one wants it. That is the dilemma—how to forestall the occurrence of something no one wishes to occur, but that cannot be prevented by oversimplifying the issues. Some of the freeze advocates seem to think that there is a backburner constituency for nuclear war, that there is a military–industrial complex that lusts after destruction, and that all that is necessary is to "send them a message" that we feel differently. Would that it were so—that would be an easy problem. Any serious discussion of these matters has to begin with the recognition that nuclear war is dreaded by everyone—hawks and doves, Russians and Americans, French and British, Japanese and Germans, and so on—and is yet possible.

photograph is that of a counterforce attack in which two warheads from different missiles are directed against each hardened target. A Minuteman-III missile carries three warheads, each of which has a yield of either 170 kilotons or 335 kilotons.

### What causes war?

What on Earth has this to do with the freeze? Simply that the connection between a freeze on nuclear weapons (not a reduction to zero by all nations, which *would* help but would probably make conventional war more likely) and the prevention of nuclear war is tenuous indeed. It appears to rest on the assumption that it is somehow the availability of weapons that leads to war, rather than international conflict over national interests, perceived as important by at least one side to the dispute. To prevent wars, we need a peaceful means of resolving genuine and difficult international questions, including questions that are regarded as threatening the existence or integrity of a nation. We are inching our way toward such a capability through international organization, but it is whimsical to believe we are yet there. The inventory of nuclear weapons has nothing to do with that. In fact, distasteful

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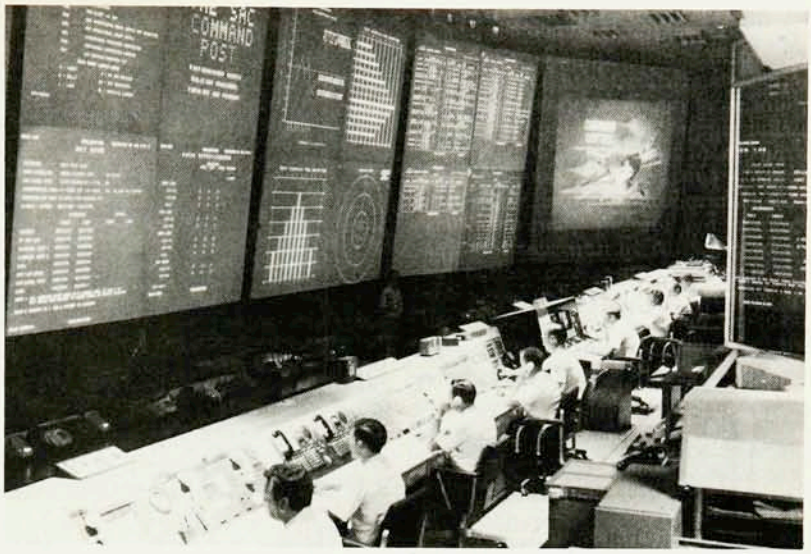
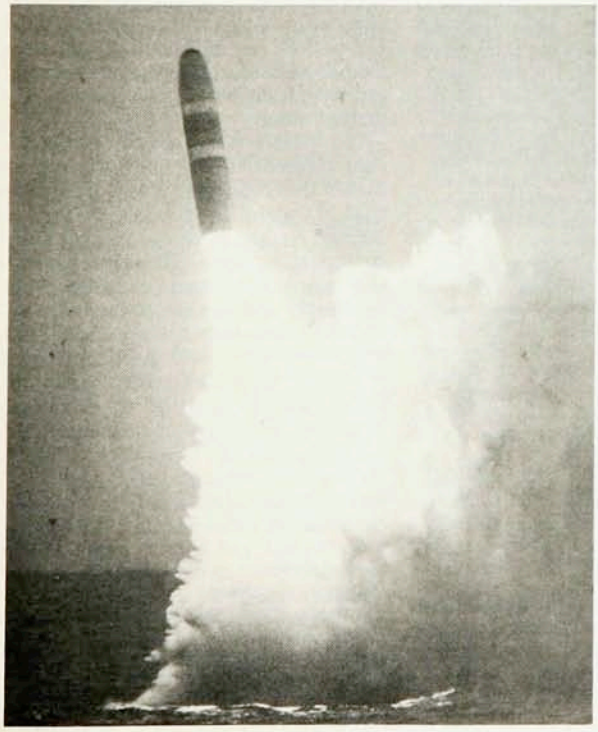
though the thought may be to some, these appalling weapons have probably contributed mightily to preserving the peace among the great powers for the last 35 years. The realistic course for the prevention of nuclear war lies first and foremost in the prevention of war among the nuclear powers, and, failing that, making the nuclear threshold high enough to deter a resort to nuclear weapons by a losing side. The freeze proposals are not directed to either of these.

In fact, as I listen to arguments for the freeze, the common theme I find is revulsion against nuclear weapons *per se*, with a strong undercurrent of anti-technology sentiment. Rarely is there anything resembling a considered effort to assess the probable impact of a freeze on the prospects for world peace. It is not too unlike the arguments against nuclear power (indeed, many of the same people are among the leaders of the freeze movement), which are often derived from an emotional and Luddite base, not from any expert assessment of whether nuclear power is or is not the cleanest, safest and cheapest way we know to make electricity. In both cases we find ourselves dealing with issues of symbolism, where the substance has become subordinated to the "message." In both cases that makes it possible to concentrate on the horrors of failure, rather than on the tools of success. Is that a good way to run a country?

But let's get back to what the various freeze initiatives say, and what they would really do if they were to pass. They vary somewhat among themselves, but the common theme (for example, in the California initiative and in the Senate Joint Resolution introduced by Senators Edward Kennedy and Mark Hatfield) is to call on the US government to propose to the Soviets a mutually verifiable freeze on the testing, producton and further deployment of nuclear "warheads, missiles and other delivery systems." They do not call for any of these actions to be taken unilaterally (though there seems to be an underlying assumption that we are the impediments to progress), but view a freeze as a step toward halting "nuclear madness." (I have to express a particular resentment here about the tendency to brand anyone who may hold a different view as "mad." It makes a reasoned debate difficult. Of course two can play at that game. In an article in Business Week a year or so ago, a respected practicing psychiatrist assessed some public attitudes toward nuclear power as having the classic clinical features of a phobia. According to Webster, a phobia is an "irrational, persistent fear.") In any case, the apparent objective is solid—the two major nuclear powers do have in their arsenals enough firepower to destroy each other many times over, in part at least because each wants to have enough reserve to provide a credible deterrent in the event of an attack by the other.




**Command center** of the Strategic Air Command, Offutt Air Force Base, near Omaha, Nebraska. (Photograph courtesy of United States Air Force.)



**Trident missile** rises from the nuclear-powered submarine USS John C. Calhoun in a "shakedown operation" launch off the east coast of Florida, 28 October 1980 (US Navy photograph.)

**Soviet buildup.** We (the US) have actually not increased our firepower in many years, though the same can not be said of the Soviets. We are frozen at a little over a thousand land-based missiles, somewhat over five hundred sea-based missiles, and some aircraft of debatable penetration capability. We have, on the other hand, been converting to multiple independently targeted reentry vehicles. To the extent that one "MIRVs" a missile, the number of warheads goes up while the total firepower goes down; the destructive capability is a relatively complicated function of those two and of the missile's accuracy and reliability. It is, in particular, not true that we have been madly building missiles. The Soviets *have* been increasing their arsenal, for

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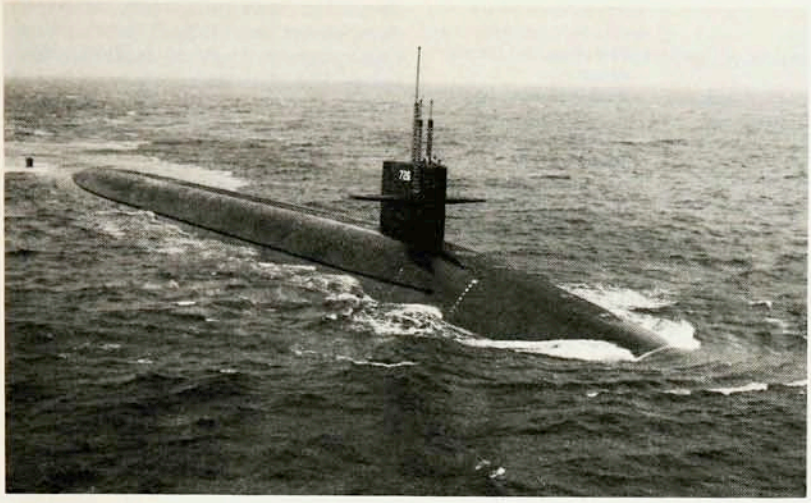

**Strategic-missile submarine** USS Ohio, underway off the coast of Connecticut. This US Navy photo, a starboard-bow view of the nuclear-powered submarine, was taken 4 September 1981.

reasons I have yet to understand—maybe their military–industrial complex is responsible, or whatever. It is true that, whatever the reason, they spend nearly twice as large a fraction of their substance on defense as we. Just as in our case, of course, the actual expenditures for strategic offensive weapons are only a small fraction of defense expenditures, the vast bulk of the budget going to maintain conventional forces. However, in their case, there is an expansion of the strategic forces, particularly those directed against our European friends. To negotiate a "mutual and verifiable" freeze, we have to deal with all that.

We also have to deal with the last point—verifiability—which has been a persistent roadblock for decades of negotiations about arms control and nuclear testing. The ABM and SALT negotiations finessed that question by agreeing that each nation was free to use its own intelligence resources, the so-called "national technical means," to verify compliance with the agreements, while each side undertook not to deliberately interfere with the process. This has come to mean satellite and other forms of remote surveillance, which are reasonably comprehensive with respect to deployment and testing, except for low-yield underground testing of nuclear weapons. Production is another matter.

### Pressure our own government?

Presumably the intent of a freeze—in this case a ban—on the testing of

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## US policy: strategic modernization and arms control

*Robert W. Dean*

The public discussion of the so-called war-fighting strategy of this Administration completely misconstrues the basic objectives of US and alliance policies. We do not seek strategic superiority over the Soviet Union and the nations of the Warsaw Pact. We do seek equality in the form of a strategic balance that provides greater security for all nations.

The unrestrained growth of Soviet military power is the basic factor that motivates this Administration's modernization programs. This growth has forced us to reevaluate our force requirements and to make the necessary adjustments with determination and resolve.

The Soviet military buildup over the past two decades has been sustained and impressive. In most significant measures used to judge strategic forces—total number of systems, total number of ballistic missiles, total destructive power—the Soviets now surpass the United States. Soon they could equal and surpass us in number of warheads, the one area in which the United States has traditionally had an advantage. In nonstrategic nuclear forces, the Soviet buildup has been equally impressive. The Soviets now have an overwhelming superiority in numbers and capability of nuclear forces deployed for theater use.

The Administration's response to the challenge of the Soviet force buildup has been twofold: The first step was a commitment by the members of the NATO alliance to modernize both strategic and intermediate nuclear forces, to ensure that our deterrent remains strong. The second step is a commitment to pursue vigorously arms-control measures designed to increase stability and reduce the number of these formidable weapons.

The comprehensive modernization program announced by the President in October 1981 is designed to rectify the vulnerabilities and weaknesses in our strategic forces. The purpose of this program is to restore the eroding nuclear balance and to sustain the credibility of the United States deterrent.

The programs authorized as part of this modernization—the MX and Trident II missiles, the B-1 and Stealth bombers, air- and sea-launched cruise missiles—combined with improved air defenses and enhanced command-and-control capabilities will serve to counter many, if not all, of the advantages that have accrued to the Soviets as a result of their own deployments. The reliability, survivability and effectiveness of these US forces will do much to strengthen the deterrent posture of the entire NATO alliance.

Modernization is also moving forward at the nonstrategic level. As the result of a 1979 decision by the NATO alliance, deployments of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise-missile systems will begin at the end of 1983 unless there is a concrete agreement with the Soviet Union on intermediate-range nuclear forces. The presence of Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles in Europe will force the Soviets to recognize that to strike NATO Europe would engage US forces that can strike Soviet territory.

Such a clear United States commitment to the nuclear defense of the alliance will convey to Soviet leaders that they cannot use their territory as a sanctuary from which to launch nuclear attacks against the NATO allies. The willingness of the United States to take such a clearcut risk, to identify its security with that of its European allies in this way, ensures that the Soviets will not see any advantage in striking Europe because they will know they are subject to sure retaliation by the central force of the United States.

**Arms-control agreements.** Modernization of US nuclear forces is only one of the two essential elements of our program to restore the stability of the nuclear balance and thus guarantee our nuclear deterrent. The search for sound arms-control agreements is the other key feature of our program. The President has outlined the general principles that guide our arms-control policies:

- Arms control must be an instrument of, and not a surrogate for, a coherent security policy. We will work for agreements that truly enhance security by reinforcing deterrence.
- We seek balanced agreements that involve meaningful reductions on both sides. Balanced agreements are necessary for a relationship based on reciprocity with the Soviet Union, and are essential to maintaining the security of both sides. Quantitative parity is important, but balance is more than a matter of numbers. Of greater significance is the capacity of either side to make decisive gains through military operations or the threat of military operations. Agreements that do not effectively reduce the incentive to use force,

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nuclear weapons is to prevent a technology "breakthrough" that might disturb the rough parity that now exists between the Soviets and us. It is, in fact, hard to imagine either country depending upon untested weapons, so that a testing freeze is indeed very likely a technology freeze, and stabilizing. However, a ban on nuclear testing already exists, with the exception of low-yield underground testing, and the exception is there precisely because the verification problem has turned out to be technically very difficult in that regime. I don't want to sound overly pessimistic on this point, but one can always conduct a test too small to be detected by *any* system. The real question is whether the threshold for detection can be made low enough to make the rewards for the violator unequal to the risk. Perhaps the freeze advocates know how. Failing that, the only solution is relatively unconstrained on-site inspection, something we have offered and the Soviets have consistently rejected for decades. The leader of the California freeze movement, a real-estate developer, was quoted recently as having said that he expects the Soviets to eventually change their minds on this point, but he didn't explain why "sending a message" to *our* Government, or "changing *our* political climate" (his words, my emphasis) will accomplish this. This low-yield underground testing is the only nuclear testing we or the Soviets have done in years, so this is all the proposed testing ban refers to.

From all the above, it would probably be possible to conclude that I am opposed to the freeze proposals, but that is not so. Nor am I in favor. Nor do I feel that I even care enough to take position on an issue that is so disjoint from the prospects for avoiding nuclear war, an objective I regard as paramount. (Of course there are far too many nuclear weapons in the world, but that is a symptom of the disease, not the disease itself. The use of one-tenth the number in a nuclear war

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**Minuteman III** intercontinental ballistic missile. This US Air Force photograph shows a test launch in Florida.

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especially in crisis situations, do nothing at all to enhance security.

- ▶ Arms control must include effective means of verification.
- ▶ Arms-control policies must take into account the totality of the national-security posture, not simply those elements that are the subject of a particular negotiation.
- ▶ Our efforts based on these principles are and will be guided by a seriousness of purpose reflected in our willingness to accept reductions to the lowest possible equal levels of nuclear forces.

The US proposals at the strategic-arms-reduction talks are the centerpiece of our arms-control efforts and are based on the five principles listed above. The START talks, which began 29 June 1982 in Geneva and resumed on 6 October, provide the opportunity to enhance world security and peace through a carefully constructed agreement to reduce strategic nuclear arsenals.

The United States proposal would limit to 850 the number of ballistic missiles that each side may have. Beyond this, both sides would be limited to a maximum of 5000 deployed ballistic-missile warheads, of which no more than 2500 could be on ICBMs.

This proposal breaks important new ground in strategic-arms control in several ways. It directly addresses, for the first time, the most pressing strategic problems that threaten world security. It suggests direct limits on ballistic-missile warheads rather than on missile launchers, a unit of account that was used in the past. The total number of warheads is a much more relevant measure of strategic capability than launchers alone, because a limit on the latter would treat equally weapons systems that are not equivalent. For example, the single-warhead US Minuteman II is treated in SALT II no differently from the multiple-warhead Soviet SS-18.

The US proposal calls for major reductions in strategic armaments on both sides. About a year ago, a prominent American scholar urged a 50 percent reduction in the strategic arsenals of both sides. Many praised this goal, but this type of reduction was viewed as unlikely to win any support in this Administration.

But we have in fact challenged the Soviet Union to demonstrate its professed desire for strategic-arms reduction, calling on both sides to reduce levels of deployed ballistic missiles by almost 50 percent. The US proposal fully embraces the principle of equality. It is not motivated by a desire for strategic superiority, because it calls for equal levels of ballistic missiles and their warheads for both sides.

Because of the asymmetry in Soviet and US forces, particulary Soviet reliance on a larger number of land-based ICBMs, it will be necessary for the USSR to undertake greater reductions within ICBM forces to reach equal warhead levels. The US, on the other hand, would have to dismantle a larger number of submarine-launched missile warheads.

The quantitative increase in Soviet strategic nuclear forces, their enormous delivery vehicles, multiple warheads and deliverable throw weight, combined with qualitative improvements in accuracy, make it possible, in theory, for the Soviets to destroy the large majority of US land-based ICBMs. This is a highly destabilizing situation.

The point here is not that the Soviets would undertake an unprovoked preemptive first strike against US strategic forces. Nevertheless, the danger exists that during a period of extreme international tension, when the advantage of striking first could be persuasive, the Kremlin leadership might be tempted to undertake such a strike. This is a recipe for potential catastrophe.

Therefore, to strengthen deterrence, we must modernize our forces to make a preemptive first strike an unthinkable option for the Soviets. We must remember that Soviet actions will be determined not only by their perception of American determination, but by their dispassionate assessment of objective American capabilities.

The US proposal recognizes what defense planners and arms-control specialists have known for years, that some types of strategic nuclear weapons pose greater threats to strategic stability and thus pose a greater risk of igniting a nuclear war than do others. Multiple-warhead ICBMs are among the most destabilizing strategic offensive arms. The Soviet SS-18, for example, with its ten large, independently targetable warheads, has done the most to render vulnerable our land-based ICBMs and thus undermine strategic stability. The United States proposal to establish a sublimit of 2500 warheads on land-based ICBMs is intended to address this threat to stability.

Submarine-launched ballistic missiles are included in the overall 5000-warhead limit and in the 850-missile limit, but they are not subject to a special sublimit because they are less accurate than land-based ICBMs and thus are less of a threat to stability.

Bombers, because they are not effective first-strike weapons, are generally recog-

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would mean the end of western civilization, as we know it.) To be sure, the freeze movement is likely to provide somewhat more incentive for the negotiators in our Government, and that is good. It cannot provide any guidance in a formal sense, because a "mutual, verifiable freeze" is just one of many possible objectives for arms-control negotiations, and, while the desire for arms control and reduction is a proper subject for political influence, the form of any putative agreement is not a matter for bumper-sticker or rock-concert politics. Finally, one can ask whether political pressure on our Government by dissenting people on our side is likely to increase the Soviet incentive to strike a mutually satisfactory bargain.

It may not be fair, but it is common, to ask the question "What would you do?" First and foremost, I would like to prevent nuclear war, which I believe is far more likely to occur through the inexorable proliferation of nuclear weapons to parties less responsible than either we or the Soviets. I applaud the Israeli bombing of the Iraqi reactor, and believe we could and should put a great deal more effort and attention into controlling the proliferation of nuclear weapons. I believe we should do this by encouraging, and participating in, the international development of nuclear power, not by rejecting one of the few weapons we have against the oil sheiks. I am not averse to the use of strong measures, preferably diplomatic, against those who lie about their efforts to acquire nuclear weapons. If that be elitism, so be it.

**Test** of the MX cold-launch system at a site north of Las Vegas, Nevada, 26 January 1982. In this system a gas generator ejects the missile from a launch canister. The rocket motor would ignite when the missile is 100 feet from the canister. The dummy missile used in this test has the same dimensions, weight and center of gravity as the MX. (US Air Force photograph.)

Given that, I would recognize that a much lower level of nuclear weaponry is possible, while maintaining a rough parity between us and the Soviets, provided the security of the deterrent against preemptive attack is assured. I believe this can be accomplished (on our side) by non-nuclear defense of a subset of the Minuteman silos, or even new silos if necessary, which is technicaly feasible. (Ballistic-missile defense got a bad name some years ago, when people were discussing the defense of cities, which is both technically infeasible and destabilizing. Non-nuclear hard-point defense is not easy, but it is feasible, and it is stabilizing. This is, incidentally, an alternate track for resolving the MX siting problem.) With reasonable security of the deterrent, the road would be open to reduction in nuclear weaponry, not because it would save money or provide symbolism, but because the excess numbers would no longer make a substantial contribution to either nation's security. The cart would then be behind the horse.

Many good songs end by repeating the refrain. I can't think of a better final paragraph for this article than the first. Please reread it. □

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nized as the least destabilizing systems and thus are not restrained as severely as ballistic missiles, though they are included in the US position at Geneva.

This emphasis on enhancing strategic stability is fundamental to the United States proposal. It ensures that the reductions that are achieved in START serve the essential objective of these negotiations: the enhancement of international security by reducing the risk of nuclear war.

The US START proposal points the way to a more stable strategic environment at equal and reduced levels of strategic forces. It is fair and equitable. It is internally consistent, and its limits are in the mutual interests of both East and West.

Through our START proposal and in conjunction with our strategic modernization programs, the United States will continue to be able to deter the Soviet Union while reducing the risk of war. We will thereby continue to support both our commitments to NATO and our obligations to the world as a whole to maintain the peace and security that we all seek.

**The no-first-use and freeze** proposals, which are currently receiving wide attention, are, in the Administration's view, misteps on the road to effective arms control. The no-first-use policy, enunciated in the West and brought up again by Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko at the UN special session on disarmament last June, is a superficially attractive suggestion, but it has numerous defects that would result in an erosion of deterrence.

In the first place, it is not credible. Simple declaratory statements have no meaning when the capability to violate the declaration is retained. Such a commitment would place NATO at the mercy of superior Soviet conventional forces. It would remove any further recourse NATO would have in the face of imminent conventional defeat. In essence, it would make Europe safe for conventional aggression.

Another arms-control proposal that has attracted considerable attention is a mutual freeze on the testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons and their delivery systems. The drawbacks of this proposal are considerable.

A freeze at existing levels would codify US military disadvantages, especially in the strategic area, and it would lock us into a situation of dangerous instability. I have already mentioned the areas in which these vulnerabilities exist.

The nuclear-freeze proposal ignores the fact that some modernization will be required, along with arms controls, to ensure lasting stability and effective deterrence. A freeze is simply not good enough. Arms control, properly pursued, can and should result in lower numbers of nuclear weapons on both sides. The US START proposal and the US proposal for the reduction of intermediate-range forces in Europe are based on this premise.

A freeze on all testing, production and deployment of nuclear weapons would include important elements that cannot be verified. The practical result would be that we would live up to a freeze in all its aspects, while there would be considerable doubt that the Soviets were equally faithful to it. This would result in a highly unstable situation.

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*Robert W. Dean is deputy director of the Bureau of Politico-Military Affairs, United States Department of State. The above is based on Dean's testimony at a September 1982 Federation of American Scientists' hearing on the nuclear freeze. A complete transcript of the two-day hearing is being published by Brickhouse Press, Andover, Massachusetts.* □