

with cruise missiles and over it with missiles from high Earth orbit or from lunar orbit? (Admittedly, the last two violate the agreement to keep weapons of mass destruction out of space.)

► Will not SDI destabilize the present fragile balance of nuclear threat?

► Wouldn't it be better to spend a trillion dollars on cooperatively colonizing the Moon and Mars (and jointly defending Earth from a devastating impact from an asteroid or comet)?

THORNTON PAGE
Houston, Texas

8/85

Strategic misguidance

Herbert Lin's recent letter (June, page 9) is a good example of an intelligent man missing the point. Let us take the points in order:

► Lin speaks of "political accommodations" with the Soviet Union—an interesting choice of words. When, Mr. Lin, has any political agreement with Russia been of any value whatsoever to the party making the agreement? When it suits the Soviets to renounce agreements, they find or make a way to do so.

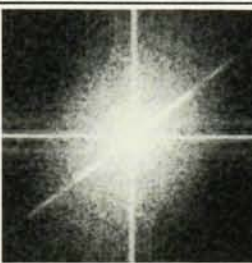
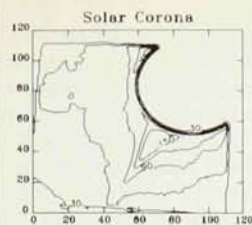
► I do not really agree with the equivalence claimed between the perfect ballistic-missile defense and the total lack of ballistic-missile situations. I understand what is being said, but the analogy is not germane. What does it mean to "feel safe"? "Safe" is, of course, a relative term. I strongly feel that we were "safer" in the mid-1950s than we are now. The technical capacity for destruction is greater now.

► The tidal waves caused by a nuclear explosion off our coasts only affect the coastal areas—a much safer situation for the majority of the citizens of the United States than the ballistic-missile threat.

► Suicide bombs brought into the country in pieces are a real possibility, but one hopes that we could impose enough security measures at the ports of entry to minimize that threat. The same goes for biological weapons not delivered by ballistic missiles.

I submit that, from our point of view, there is no such thing as a good political relationship with the Soviet Union. I maintain that the Soviet Union and its people (there is a difference, politically) have been at war either internally or externally for nearly 400 years. War is the norm, not the "abnorm," for them. Such people do not consider war unusual. They are convinced, intellectually, politically and theologically, that the only way for "Mother Russia" to be safe is for her to be totally in control of the world. All other peoples must be subservient to "Mother Russia."

Considering the above, is a real agreement, pact or political accommo-



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dation really possible? The answer, unfortunately, is no. The Soviet view comes from centuries in the past and goes centuries into the future. They are willing to keep pressure applied and wait. Eventually they expect the will of the United States to weaken and atrophy such that a Soviet takeover would be virtually bloodless. An immediate concession today might be possible from them. But, for the long haul, they are dedicated, and ultimate domination is the only goal they hold.

How can we hold off this juggernaut in our time and in the future? There is only one way that is remotely feasible at this time. Political means are not real and will do nothing but give false hope and vulnerability to the USSR's objectives. We must continue to be so armed and so prepared as to make it prohibitively expensive to the USSR to attempt to dominate the United States by force. We must be able, if needed, to extract such a price from the Soviets for a brute force attempt to overcome the United States that they will not be willing to pay that price, thereby using their willingness to wait as a tool to maintain peace. Anything else is a prelude to destruction.

Therefore, Mr. Lin, your thesis is not valid. It will not work. It would destroy you. We must do our best to be able to protect ourselves in such a fashion that it will not pay the Soviets to play their nuclear-war card.

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8/85

HERBERT LIN REPLIES: Robert Flum feels threatened by the Soviets; I do too. He apparently feels that political accommodation with the Soviets would mean weakening our security. I do not share that belief. Political accommodation need not imply surrender or suicide. Accommodation can also include healthy doubts about the wisdom of perpetual confrontation in a world of nuclear weapons or an acceptance of differences.

I do not know how to reach a political accommodation with the Soviets; it may or may not be possible. But I do know that technology will not eliminate the reasons each side has for buying weapons; if there is hope for survival, it lies not with technology but with politics. If political accommodation is not possible, then in the long run we will all be dead. I prefer not to take such a pessimistic point of view.

In fact, Flum's view of history reinforces my main point. He feels that we were safer in the 1950s. Once again, I share that belief. The last 30 years of

arms build-up have brought us from the relative safety of being threatened by nuclear bombers to the relative danger of being threatened by nuclear missiles. This is progress? Flum has thus illustrated the futility of a perpetual arms build-up: In each generation, we point to the current state of affairs, and wish for yesteryear, when the threats to our security were not so great. When will we learn that buying arms does not buy long-term security, but rather long-term insecurity?

Finally, Flum believes that we must be prepared to make a Soviet attack on the US prohibitively expensive. However, that is not the goal of the President's Strategic Defense Initiative, whose charter states that its ultimate goal is "to eliminate the threat of nuclear ballistic missiles." Today it is SDI itself that gives false hopes that threats to our security can be contained technologically.

As a resident of a coastal city, I do not want to face the choice of dying in a nuclear blast or dying by an explosion-induced tidal wave. Nor do I wish to live in a Soviet-style society in which security measures could largely eliminate the threat of biological weapons or suicide bombs (and incidentally, most of the civil liberties we take for granted).

John von Neumann once pointed out that the area of the Earth remains constant, while the number of weapons increases. Surely this does not describe a stable situation. For the short term, deterrence is unavoidable. But weaponry cannot increase without limit immune to catastrophe. Our only hope over the long run is to reverse the upward spiral of weapons. We should begin now.

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'Refusenik' physicists

I have recently received two open letters from Soviet "refusenik" physicists with the request that I share them with your readers. I present only excerpts. The first is from Nahum Meiman and addressed to Mikhail S. Gorbachev, Secretary of the Communist Party, and the second one is from Armen G. Khachatryan and addressed to A. Aleksandrov, president of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Both of these scientists believe that appeals from Western colleagues can help them greatly in their present situations. This is also the belief of other refusenik scientists and dissidents and I feel that in cases like these we have to take the wishes of the oppressed as our guide for action.

► Meiman writes:

A few words about myself: I am a professor of mathematics, 74 years old. Since 1975 I have been seeking permission to go to Israel. My only daughter left the Soviet Union in 1976. I am refused permission to go, on the pretext that I had done classified work. More than 30 years ago, at the dawn of the atomic age, before there were even any computers in the Soviet Union, I did certain classified calculations for long-dead Academician Landau in the Institute of Physical Problems of the Academy of Sciences. These calculations were of a very auxiliary nature, and have long ago lost all sensitivity and significance. I transferred to work in another institute in 1955, and as officially certified, never had any further contact with sensitive work. When I applied to go to Israel in 1975, I was compelled to retire on pension.

Two years ago, a tumor appeared on the back of my wife's neck, close to the spinal column. This could be treated only with extremely sophisticated modern equipment and skill in using it. The Soviet Union still has neither the equipment nor the skill to use it. The only thing Soviet medicine could offer was surgery. Now for two years, my wife has had four risky, painful operations, the last one in the Oncological Center three months ago. So much muscle tissue has by now been removed that no further operation is feasible. My wife holds her head up with difficulty, and is in constant pain.

Immediately after the disastrous first operation, in October 1983, my wife received generous invitations to the treatment in oncological clinics in Sweden, France, the United States and Israel.

This inspired my wife and me to go to the national emigration chief, Colonel Kuznetsov, on 4 September and apply to him personally to let my wife go with her mother, brother, son and two grandchildren, leaving me behind. A week later, Colonel Kuznetsov informed me by phone that this was refused. On 18 September he told my wife that she could not leave with other members of her family because she had been married to me too long and her departure would constitute a security risk for the Soviet Union.

This malicious, paranoid nonsense is more than a fatal threat to my wife; it is in fact a danger for the whole world, even for the Soviet Union itself. It is absurd and dishonest in the extreme to