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## A U.S. INVASION OF NICARAGUA

By Edward L. King

There has been talk in official Washington circles about direct U.S. military action against the Sandinista Government of Nicaragua. Recently the *New York Times* reported that some Administration policymakers doubt that any available policy options, including military aid to the Contras, is likely to bring a political change in the direction of the Sandinista Government.

It is possible that a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua could eventually result from this growing frustration within the Administration on how to remove the Sandinistas from power. Some Pentagon experts believe a military attack on Nicaragua could be successful after only brief fighting. Many professional military men, however, are not confident that a victory could be quickly obtained. Sources within the Pentagon have said that high military officials have told the President a military action in Nicaragua would be a major military operation and they could not give assurances that it could be done quickly.

### The Sandinista View

What would be the likely outcome of a U.S. invasion? Sandinista officers have told me that they would expect to take large numbers of casualties in the initial stages of an invasion. But as the *Comandante* of the Chinandega Regional Military Command, which is charged with defending the western part of the border with Honduras, told me, "If you North Americans invade us you will be able to kill a lot of us with your bombs and gunships, but you will also have to send in troops to occupy the ground, and then we are going to kill a lot of your troops. Then we will see who can hold out the longest." He said the Sandinista Army plans to fight a guerrilla war against U.S. forces from redoubts in the rugged northeastern mountain ranges from which they fought Somoza in the 1960's and 70's and General Sandino fought the U.S. Marines in the 1920's and 30's.



Lieutenant-Colonel  
Edward L. King (USA-Ret.)

Certainly, a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua would not be on the small scale of the Grenada invasion. It could occur as the result of some Sandinista misstep furnishing a pretext for a U.S. response. Or it could be a carefully planned surprise U.S. invasion to overthrow the Sandinistas. Any invasion would require a large United States ground combat force from the outset. Pentagon strategists envision a rapid overwhelming strike by Army and Marine air and ground forces supported by Air Force and Navy fighter bombers, which could initially attack and seize the three major ports of Corinto, Puerto Cabezas and Bluefields, as well as the main communication centers of Managua, Leon, Matagalpa and possibly Granada and Chinandega. These forces could then fan out to seize control of the Pacific Coast road network from the Honduran to the Costa Rican border. They would in effect have control over the principal populated area of the country, as the Caribbean Coast is very sparsely inhabited and has little or no road system.

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## KING BECOMES FAS ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Lieutenant Colonel Edward L. King (USA-Ret.) is a private consultant specializing in foreign and military policy. He is a former combat soldier, military officer, and senior Senate aide. After nearly 15 years of informally advising the Federation, he joins its staff as Associate Director for Latin America.

Colonel King has served as the Joint Chiefs of Staff Military Liaison Officer to the U.S. Delegation to the Inter-American Defense Board and to the staff of the U.S. Ambassador to the Organization of American States. In the 1970s he was a consultant to Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, a special staff consultant to the Joint Economic Committee, Executive Director for the Coalition on National Priorities and Military Policy, and a defense policy advisor to Senator George McGovern's 1972 presidential campaign. From 1976 to 1979 he was the Executive Assistant to Senator William D. Hathaway (D-Maine).

King is the author of *The Death of the Army: A Pre-Mortem* and has written numerous newspaper and magazine articles on foreign and military policy. He has traveled extensively in Central and South America as a military officer, newspaper reporter, private consultant, and advisor to six Congressional fact-finding missions to the region.

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### U.S. Strategy

The current U.S. planning probably calls for holding enclave areas around these main centers while controlling the communication network, thus leaving the Sandinista force isolated in the thinly populated, mountainous north-eastern part of the country where they could slowly be starved out and forced to surrender. U.S. intelligence also believes a majority of the Nicaraguan population will at least passively support U.S. invasion forces as deliverers from the Sandinista regime.

Official and unofficial estimates of U.S. forces needed for an invasion range from two to four divisions with their supporting troops and equipment. Depending on the time frame being projected, this would amount to between 55,000 and 125,000 troops. It is doubtful if fully approved Nicaragua contingency plans have been prepared and filed with the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Certainly, operational requirements and force levels have been considered. At present only two Marine divisions and two Army Airborne/Air Assault divisions of the type best suited to fight in Central America are immediately available for combat. The Army has again formed, and is training, three light infantry divisions, which are not yet fully ready for combat but could be used later if the need arose. And if there were prolonged fighting, additional Army divisions slated for NATO service could also be sent to Nicaragua.

Logistic supplies would probably come initially through expanded use of the base infrastructure the U.S. has constructed in Honduras. This could later be augmented by construction of additional support facilities inside the seized Nicaraguan port enclaves. Air support for the ground invasion could come from U.S. Navy carriers standing off the Caribbean and Pacific Coasts of Nicaragua, as well as the Air Force fighter bombers operating from the U.S.-constructed airbase at Palmerola in Honduras.

### The Pentagon View

Some Pentagon planners contend that U.S. air and ground forces can quickly crush the Sandinista Army and destroy its Soviet-supplied tanks and helicopters, while driving the remaining Sandinista Army and Militia units into pockets in the barren northeast where they can be eliminated at leisure. Department of Defense experts consider that major U.S. combat forces can be quickly withdrawn once the main Sandinista forces have been smashed, leaving only sufficient mobile ground and air force elements to support the Nicaraguan democratic "Freedom Fighters" army in containing and mopping-up remaining Sandinista units.

But how realistic is this U.S. concept? Can green, young U.S. volunteer Army and Marine troops quickly overcome nearly 60,000 well-armed Sandinista soldiers plus at least 100,000 militia, many of whom now have at least a year of combat experience fighting against the Contra "Freedom Fighters"? And how long would it take for the Contra force to obtain a sufficient level of professional military ability and equipment to fight the Sandinista Army suc-

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## AGENDAS FOR THE SUMMIT

All attention in the United States has been focused on the forthcoming summit between President Reagan and General Secretary Gorbachev. Fears have even been expressed that it might be cancelled because of the spy-dust incident and the ASAT test, or that it may be as acrimonious as the Kennedy-Khrushchev meeting in Vienna in 1961.

In all probability, it would be a mistake to worry too much about a spectacular failure of the summit. Both the United States and the Soviet Union are focusing on European opinion, and the Europeans want the superpowers to be reasonable to each other. As a result, both superpowers have every interest in giving the appearance of reasonableness, and this should ensure a fairly pleasant meeting.

The great danger of the summit is not that appearances will be disastrous, but that they will be deceptively satisfactory and that they will lead to unwarranted complacency. It is not enough to take the first tentative steps towards a more polite relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States. Really important questions are on the agenda, and it is important to begin solving them.

### The Soviet Agenda

For the Soviet Union, the central question on its domestic agenda is the degree of economic reform and transformation of the internal system to undertake. At the present time all sides are being permitted to make their case in print, but Gorbachev himself has been speaking with the utmost urgency about the need to bring technology to world levels, to make revolutionary changes in economic management, to take daring decisions, and the like. He has not been specific, but he is a total fool to have raised expectations so high if he does not plan to do something fairly drastic.

From the American point of view, the important question is whether Soviet economic reform has foreign policy implications. Gorbachev was quite explicit about this in ending his interview with *Time Magazine*: "Foreign policy is a continuation of domestic policy...I ask you to ponder one thing: If we in the Soviet Union are setting ourselves such truly grandiose plans in the domestic sphere, then what are the external conditions that we need to be able to fulfill those domestic plans?"

The next sentence in the interview—and the last sentence in it—was enigmatic: "I leave the answer to that question with you." In fact, there are three contradictory conditions for the grandiose plans that Gorbachev says he has. First, technological transformation requires large investments, and this will be very difficult if there is not a cap on military expenditures. Thus Gorbachev needs arms control.

Second, technological transformation requires an end to the protectionism enjoyed by Soviet manufacturers, and subjecting them to foreign competition in markets both at home and abroad. Thus he needs better relations abroad.

Third, Americans should not, however, assume that the conditions to which Gorbachev referred are necessarily all benign. Reform requires many painful sacrifices (for example, a sharp increase in meat prices of the kind that

caused riots in Poland). A foreign threat that permitted the reforms to be justified by the needs of national defense would also be useful.

Gorbachev's foreign policy problem is how to achieve a foreign threat without creating pressure for military expenditures and without preventing an opening of the Soviet Union to the world economy. The first natural answer is to focus on long-term threats, such as Star Wars and Chinese modernization, that do not require counterproductive readiness expenditures. The second natural answer is to use the United States as the threat and use Europe and Japan as the way to guarantee an opening to the foreign economy.

### The U.S. Agenda

For the United States, two questions should be on the agenda. First, Soviet foreign policy has focused on the American relationship for decades, and, as noted Soviet theorist Fedor Burlatsky has observed in a recent book (*The Modern Leviathan*), bipolar relations have been associated with stability. Many—certainly including Andrei Gromyko—would like to keep the U.S. as, at a minimum, the central focus in a multipolar policy. It cannot be in the American interest to be so obdurate both at home and abroad as to make it easy to attack the U.S. alliance system. Failure to push for a trade-off of SDI testing and offensive missiles plays right into the hands of those who are most anti-American.

Second, the United States should be deeply worried about the American deficits. Over the long run, the high interest rates and pressure for protectionism they produce do far more to undercut the U.S. foreign policy position than anything the Soviet Union is doing. If the Soviet economic difficulties are creating pressure for a cut in military expenditures, we should welcome it as an opportunity to cut our own expenditures and attack the deficit. The Reagan Administration is in a position to say that its program forced a change in the Soviet system; it is foolish if it does not take advantage of its victory.

The United States has a 30-year political cycle. Pressures for change came around 1870 in Reconstruction, around 1900 in the Progressive Era, around 1930 in the New Deal, and around 1960 in the civil rights movement. By the same token, President Coolidge in 1925, President Eisenhower in 1955, and President Reagan in 1985, and the complacent public opinion of those times, had much in common. If the United States does not take advantage of the present opportunity and just assumes that the current postponement of problems can continue forever, it will find the 1990s as rough as the 1930s and the 1960s.

—Jerry Hough

*Jerry F. Hough is a Staff Member of the Brookings Institution and Professor of Political Science at Duke University. A specialist in Soviet Studies, Dr. Hough is the author of The Soviet Prefects, The Soviet Union and Social Science Theory, Soviet Leadership in Transition, and numerous other books and articles on Soviet domestic and foreign policy.*

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cessfully on even terms and permit the withdrawal of U.S. combat forces?

The seizure of enclaves around ports and principal cities by surprise Marine landings and airborne envelopment might be initially successful. But holding such enclaves and keeping the road and communication network open against Sandinista counterattack and guerrilla ambushes would take time and cost a considerable number of G.I. lives with little apparent result.

The Sandinista objective would of necessity be to try and bog the U.S. forces down in prolonged guerrilla warfare—that after all is what they are best at, rather than fighting the standard professional linear warfare they have been taught by the Soviets and Cubans. The Sandinista *Comandantes* plan to make a temporary delay against the initial U.S. invasion forces to cause as many U.S. casualties as possible while husbanding their own forces for movement up into the high mountains of the Cordillera Dariense and Isabelia where supplies have been stockpiled for guerrilla warfare. Here in this rugged terrain they will have some protection against the overwhelming U.S. air power and can fight a war of attrition against U.S. infantry units trying to hold enclaves, keep communication lines open or move up into the mountains to dislodge them. It is their belief that a continuing flow of U.S. dead and wounded from daily guerrilla raids and ambushes will create a political crisis among the American public, which does not like to see its sons killed in inconclusive, prolonged guerrilla warfare. At the same time there would be mounting international criticism and pressure against the United States because of the number of Nicaraguan civilians that would inevitably be killed by the U.S. forces trying to fight back against the guerrillas. The Sandinistas are convinced that such fighting would produce an uproar in the United States and that U.S. troops would eventually have to be withdrawn in a humiliating defeat for the United States and a monumental victory for the Sandinistas.

### Guerrilla War

The problem for the U.S. forces would be that if they enjoyed the initial support of many of the Nicaraguan people, they could not remain passively inside their enclave areas indifferent to the activities of Sandinista guerrillas without risking the loss of civilian support. Yet to move out of the enclaves and strike at the guerrillas would involve extensive ground and air operations which by their very nature would produce both G.I. and Nicaraguan civilian casualties, thus exacerbating the reaction in the United States and other countries of the world while also antagonizing much of the Nicaraguan populace.

Such military operations would raise serious political and social problems in the United States. How long would the American people accept the steady flow of dead U.S. servicemen being shipped home from a guerrilla war in Nicaragua? And how long would a volunteer Army, whose members joined chiefly for education or career objectives, keep fighting effectively against hit-and-run Sandinista guerrilla attacks designed to kill Americans in a war of attrition? There is also the question of how long the U.S.

would be able and willing to sustain the financial costs of such a war. By its guerrilla nature such a war would not produce much of an upsurge in defense-related civilian employment, so it would not create a self-sustaining base of support by citizens who gained employment or increased income from the war. Nor would young American males have much incentive to join armed forces engaged in a protracted war in which they could be killed in a place such as Nicaragua for a cause which at best would be difficult for the average teenage volunteer to understand and relate to patriotically. If volunteer enlistments declined, a call-up of the reserves and reintroduction of a draft might well be required to furnish sufficient replacements for men killed and wounded in Nicaragua. This was the experience in 1950 when the Korean War started and the nation was dependent on a volunteer army.

### Local Reaction

Furthermore, what if the official U.S. intelligence assessment that a majority of the Nicaraguan people would welcome a U.S. invasion turns out to be incorrect, as was the case in the 1960 Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba? The possibility exists that U.S. intelligence officers who go to Masaya and spend the day talking to people in the market may be misreading the Nicaraguan temperament. Some Nicaraguans may well see a U.S. invasion accompanied by a return of Contra forces as a welcome way for them to be rid of the Sandinistas without having to do it themselves. But many others may see a U.S. invasion bringing back the Contra forces as a U.S. attempt to again occupy Nicaragua and install a pro-U.S. government. Nicaraguans of this persuasion will more than likely resist a U.S. invasion. In such circumstances American forces would not be safe from violence and terrorism even in their occupied enclaves. Attacks by Nicaraguans on U.S. soldiers and marines would trigger reprisals and an action-reaction syndrome of escalating violence could well result. Certainly this would not engender long-term popular support for the U.S. forces.

Additionally, U.S. invasion forces would have to be concerned in the early stages of the fighting about the presence of Soviet, Cuban, East and West European military and civilian personnel in Nicaragua. The thirty-five or more Soviet military advisors are furnishing technical assistance on Soviet weaponry and are generally



*At an artillery position in northeastern Nicaragua, with the III Zone Commander and his chief of operations. Terrain is typical of the mountainous area where most of the fighting takes place in the guerrilla war with the Contras, and where Sandinistas would fight against a U.S. invasion.*

working in major military installations, while the 800 or more Cuban military advisors are scattered throughout the Sandinista Army units as trainers and operational advisors. East German and Bulgarian advisors are with the Sandinista security forces. All of these people would be vulnerable to death, wounding or capture in the event of a sudden surprise American invasion. The same would be true for the thousands of foreign civilians living in Nicaragua.

What would be the reaction of the Soviet Union to the possible death or wounding of members of its military mission or those of Cuba or other Soviet-bloc countries? How would Fidel Castro react to yet another defeat and death for more Cubans at the hands of U.S. forces? These are questions which U.S. military and political planners would have to worry about in planning an attack.

### Reaction in Latin America

There also is the fact that a direct, unilateral American military intervention in Central America would cause strong negative reactions throughout Latin America. Latin American nations have long opposed military intervention in any form in the hemisphere. A unilateral U.S. military attack on Nicaragua would probably be condemned privately and receive little if any public support from most of the countries of Latin America. An invasion could also serve as the catalyst for hundreds of young Latin American volunteers to flock to Nicaragua to join the Sandinistas in fighting against what these young people would see as North American aggression rather than an attempt to stop the spread of Marxist-Leninism.

Even among Nicaragua's neighbors it is difficult to see strong popular support for a U.S. military invasion. While there has been much public rhetoric by some officials in Honduras and Costa Rica advocating military action against the Sandinistas, this does not necessarily represent actual support for American intervention. To any Latin American nation U.S. military intervention anywhere in the hemisphere represents a potential threat that the same intervention could also be used against them at some time. Generally, no Latin American nation is truly going to favor and support U.S. military intervention. And in the case of Honduras, El Salvador is seen as more of a military threat to its territorial security than is Nicaragua. The United States cannot count on much beyond token support from Central American nations toward any U.S. military invasion of Nicaragua, regardless of the pretext for attacking.

In strictly military terms a U.S. invasion of Nicaragua would be a decided mismatch. The Sandinista Army has around 60,000 soldiers, 150 obsolete Soviet light and medium tanks, some 200 armored personnel carriers and self-propelled artillery supported with 200 or more different-caliber Soviet field and antiaircraft artillery as well as rocket launchers. Their air force has five Mi-24 assault helicopters and eight Mi-8 troop-carrying helicopters as the principal armament. It has no high performance jet fighters, although the Sandinistas have repeatedly said they want 15 Korean-War vintage Mig-21 fighter/interceptors for air defense purposes. Even if they

obtained these obsolete jets, their entire air force would stand practically no chance against a few sorties by the attack aircraft on board one U.S. Navy carrier.

The Sandinista Army's aged, gas-guzzling Soviet tanks and other armored vehicles would be extremely vulnerable to air attack due to the lack of air cover and the inadequate number of surface-to-air missiles they have for air defense. Also, there is not enough fuel available to keep the Soviet-supplied tanks, trucks and jeeps running, so many of these vehicles would become stationary targets for both ground and air attack with modern U.S. anti-tank weapons.

### Sandinista Infantry

Yet destruction of the Sandinista Army's armor, helicopters and heavy artillery would not necessarily mean defeat for the Sandinistas. The heart of their army is its infantry battalions. Even badly mauled, these combat-experienced units could retreat on foot into the rugged northeastern mountain ranges to regroup with militia units already in the area and resupply themselves from stockpiles hidden there months ago in preparation for guerrilla warfare in the event of a U.S. invasion.

Thousands of such trained and armed troops hiding throughout the mountains, assisted by Cuban military advisors and reinforced by volunteers from other Latin American countries who would slip in to join them, could present a serious threat to U.S. forces in the occupied enclaves. They would also represent a continued Sandinista Government existence which would complicate the chances for international recognition of any Nicaraguan democratic government established with U.S. support and military backing.

While Pentagon planners confidently envision leaving such scattered remaining Sandinista forces to starve or surrender in the mountains, I believe it would be next to impossible for U.S. field commanders to ignore them or resist the temptation to attempt to destroy or dislodge them. In my estimation, such efforts could produce around eight to fifteen daily U.S. battle deaths in mountain ambushes, by mines and booby-traps and from night attacks. These deaths would be in line with the Sandinista strategy of wearing down American public resolve to continue the fighting, and building international criticism of U.S. policy, ultimately forcing an American defeat.

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*Field encampment of the Miguel Angel Ortiz Battalion of the Sandinista Army, near the Honduran border, after a 3-day battle with a Contra column that was driven back into Honduras.*

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A U.S. invasion could evolve into an Afghanistan-type guerrilla war, with endless bombing and fighting in the mountains, and without a conclusive military victory. The difference would be that unlike the well-censored Soviet military actions, ours would be open for all the world to see. Thus the expected early U.S. military success against the organized Sandinista armed forces might well be a misleading prelude to the true duration and intensity of a grinding guerrilla war. Of course key to the outcome of such a war of attrition would be the attitude of the Nicaraguan people. It is difficult to predict whether worsening economic crisis and doctrinaire Sandinista Marxism would be sufficient to cause them to forget Nicaraguan nationalism in favor of supporting or tolerating a U.S. invasion. It is equally unclear whether large numbers would take up arms once again to drive the hated "Yankees" from their homeland.

### Heavy Fighting

However, unless U.S. combat troops could be quickly withdrawn, the possibilities for conflict with the Nicaraguan civilian population would be very high. There would be great resentment among a large segment of the Nicaraguan people over the substantial number of their sons and daughters, serving in the Sandinista Army, who would be killed in the initial heavy fighting with invading U.S. troops. Inevitably there would also be many civilian casualties as a result of the initial bombing, strafing and artillery fire in and around populated areas. This could lead to later attempts at revenge against occupying U.S. troops. In a guerrilla war, it would not take many instances of U.S. troops and planes defensively firing on Nicaraguan civilians to cause many Nicaraguans to rally to the side of the Sandinistas, no matter how much their Marxist-Leninist ideology was disliked.

The U.S. Administration should not mistakenly believe that a military invasion of Nicaragua would be a quick 60-day so-called surgical strike that would topple the Sandinista Government and place democratic forces in control, permitting rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces and leaving Nicaragua firmly in the democratic camp. Things just don't work that way in Nicaragua, and it is time we begin to understand that fact. The Administration needs to accept the bottom-line policy options open at this time. On the one hand, we can seek containment of the Sandinista regime within Nicaragua, while making efforts to cause gradual change in the direction of their government through a combination of negotiations (Contadora and bilateral), trade incentives (not embargo), interpersonal cultural exchanges and support of a unified political opposition party operating however possible inside Nicaragua. Alternatively, the Administration must consider taking direct U.S. military action if they are determined not to co-exist with a Sandinista government, but to seek its overthrow.

In my estimation, current Contra military efforts and potential military capability give little indication that they can oust the Sandinistas through force. The Contras, rather, constitute a way for the Administration to avoid

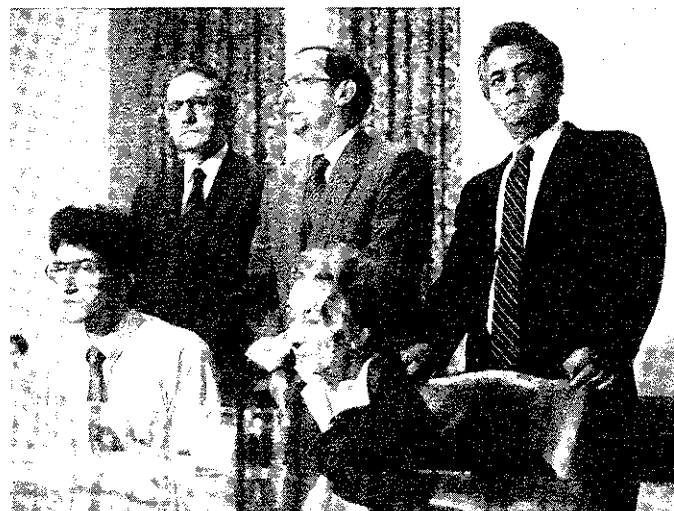
having to make a policy decision on what to do in Nicaragua, while like Mr. Micawbar they wait for something to come along. Meanwhile they can keep the Congress occupied in an endless inconsequential debate over levels of funding for the inconclusive Contra operation. Thus neither the Administration nor the Congress has to really bite the bullet on what national policy to follow in regard to Sandinista Nicaragua. And while they play this waiting game, the Contras continue to be outnumbered, outgunned and outfought by an improving Sandinista Army.

### An Invasion Would Be A Mistake

If the Administration were to decide on a military invasion, then it should explain to Congress the extent of the threat that Nicaragua is perceived to pose to U.S. national security and the amount of military force and money deemed necessary to counter the threat. The House of Representatives has voted overwhelmingly in favor of a ban on sending U.S. combat troops to Nicaragua without prior Congressional approval. Even though there are legal loopholes to this ban, Congressional agreement and support would be crucial to any planned military action against Nicaragua. If the Administration is dead-set on toppling the Sandinista government, it better take a long hard look first and then think about breaking diplomatic relations and asking Congress for a declaration of war before attempting any unilateral or multilateral military action against Nicaragua.

It would be a tragic mistake for the Administration to use a pretext and order a Presidentially-decreed invasion such as in Grenada, trusting that U.S. Armed Forces could successfully defeat the Sandinistas and drive them from power within the brief time allowed the President under the War Powers Act.

Such an ill-advised military adventure in Nicaragua could well be doomed to frustrating tactical delays and failures, which would spell political disaster and social upheaval in the United States, while destroying the last vestiges of any form of hemispheric cooperation for a decade or more.



*Alexei Semyonov, left, and his grandmother, Mrs. Ruth Bonner at September 12 press conference. Standing, left to right: Senator George Mitchell (ME), Senator Alfonse D'Amato (NY) and Representative Barney Frank (MA).*



## A Sakharov Family Hunger Strike

Andrei Sakharov went on hunger strikes: in 1975 for the right of his wife Elena Bonner to go to Italy for an eye operation; in 1981, over the right of the fiancée of his stepson Alexei Semyonov to emigrate to America to marry Semyonov; on May 2, 1984 over the exiling of Elena Bonner to Gorky; and, according to rumors, still others.

Now, in August, Alexei Semyonov, a beneficiary of the third hunger strike, decided to call attention to Andrei Sakharov's plight by starting his own hunger strike.

Combining the Soviet-style hunger strike with American practices, Mr. Semyonov held his hunger strike in the open—as close to the Soviet Embassy as the law allows, which was the corner of 16th and K Streets across from the Hilton Hotel. There, in intense Washington summer heat, under a sign protesting the imprisonment of his mother and stepfather, Mr. Semyonov sat on a lawn-chair from 8:00 A.M. to 6:00 P.M. each day.

His telegram to the Soviet Government on September 12 requested normal communications be established between Sakharov and his family in America. (In response to the bad publicity that resulted each time such communication occurred, the Soviet Government had moved Sakharov and Bonner from their home in Gorky to parts unknown.) And he requested the right to go to the Soviet Union to see them.

Soviet Embassy employees refused to see Semyonov (they had no instructions and the Sakharov matter is so sensitive that all undoubtedly feared marring their careers by touching this hot potato which was duly referred to Moscow).

As the hunger strike wore on, a certain amount of publicity resulted. The Federation sent representatives to exchange ideas with Semyonov, and to help him, two and even three times a day. We were, however, dubious that the original goals could be achieved. Normal communications is a standard that the Soviet Union is unlikely to hew to over time, especially since these communications are often released to the press by the Sakharov family.

And whether the larger goal, which the Federation continues to pursue behind the scenes, of securing Sakharov's release would be helped or hurt by the hunger strike was unclear. On the one hand, such events at least force higher political circles to focus on the matter which would, otherwise, be left in the hands of the KGB authorities charged to hold Sakharov incommunicado. On the other hand, especially before the Summit, it seemed unlikely that Moscow would be willing to "capitulate" to Reagan by giving him up—and it seemed the more unlikely, the more that Reagan was involved.

On the 11th day of the hunger strike, Semyonov and his grandmother (Elena Bonner's mother, Mrs. Ruth Bonner) were received privately by Pat Buchanan in the White House but Semyonov's desire to see the President was evidently resisted.

On the 13th day of the hunger strike, the State Department made a private communication to Semyonov and he called a press conference for the next day. That evening, FAS Director Stone met with Mrs. Bonner, who is 85 and very alert. Mrs. Bonner, who had stayed at Stone's home one evening a few years ago, and who remembered the circumstances more

clearly than did the Stones, is a survivor of Stalin-era labor camps and exhibits the toughness that characterizes the entire Bonner family. Staying current, she expressed apprehension that Ovchinnikov, whom she called a "careerist" Vice President for Biology in the Soviet Academy of Sciences, might become the new President, replacing Alexandrov. (Vice President Ovchinnikov has recently jumped on the temperance bandwagon by becoming the head of a national Soviet committee against alcohol consumption.)

The next morning, at a very well attended press conference, Alexei Semyonov announced that he would end the hunger strike. He said:

"Yesterday, I was contacted by the State Department. I was informed that they are making it a high priority issue for the U.S. Embassy in Moscow to find the whereabouts of my parents and to reestablish communication with them. I was assured that the State Department will use every opportunity to resolve the case of my parents before the November summit.

At this time, I think the continuation of my fast will not serve the purpose of helping my parents. Indeed, it could perhaps hamper the efforts of the State Department."

Semyonov said he would continue to press for a meeting with President Reagan.

*J.J.S*

### FAS COUNCIL ELECTION RESULTS

The recent elections for FAS Council produced the following new Council members: Thomas B. Cochran, Senior Staff Scientist at the National Resources Defense Council, Inc.; Hugh E. DeWitt, Staff Physicist at the Lawrence Livermore Laboratory; William A. Higinbotham, Senior Physicist at Brookhaven National Laboratory; Barbara G. Levi, Research Physicist at Princeton University's Center for Energy and Environmental Studies; Francis E. Low, Provost at MIT; and Andrew M. Sessler, Director of the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory.

Council members retiring after completing their four-year terms are: Dorothy Zinberg, Lecturer in Public Policy at the J.F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University; Robert Socolow, Director of the Center for Energy and Environmental Studies at Princeton University; Eugene Skolnikoff, Director of MIT's Center for International Studies; Victor Rabinowitch, Director of the Board on Science and Technology for International Development at the National Academy of Sciences; Morton Halperin, Director of the Center for National Security Studies; and Rosemary Chaik, Staff Director of the AAAS Committee on Scientific Freedom and Responsibility.

## Washington: The Naivete of the Sophisticates

When it comes to analyzing the news, the knowledgeable Washingtonian always assumes there is more than meets the eye. Focusing their vision behind the scenes, they miss what is going on right before their eyes.

Nothing illustrates this better than the Star Wars affair. In a Washington Post editorial "Bargaining", the editors divine President Reagan's announcement that he would not negotiate on Star Wars as "a display of his capacity to sustain the bargaining position of his choice". What makes them think that he is bargaining?

Star Wars is the President's pet idea and his enthusiasm for it has been widely reported to be unreserved and highly personal. It is no exaggeration to say that this is one of the very few ideas of his Administration about which he feels so deeply. When he says, in his press conference of September 18, "...this is too important to the world, to have us be willing to trade that off for a different number of nuclear missiles when there are already more than enough to blow both countries out of the world," it certainly has the ring of something deeply felt. In that statement, he does more than sustain his bargaining position, he advises candidly—against the repeated assertions of his Administration—that he is uninterested in deep reductions of strategic missiles and considers them irrelevant.

### Bargaining on Star Wars

The President does believe that he is interested in bargaining but the bargaining is after the system is ready and not before.

This is the meaning of his statement, "I stop short of deployment because, as I said then, I'm willing to talk to our allies, talk to them and talk to the Soviets, to anyone, about the meaning of it if it could be used in such a way as to rid the world of the nuclear threat." In other words, we should get the astrodome shield first and then see if we can get the Soviets to throw away all their nuclear weapons which would certainly make the shield unnecessary. In short, the President is willing to bargain once he gets the defense but not about it.

He has said this consistently. On February 7, he said: "If we come up with such a weapon...what we would then be able to say to them is, 'Look, we're willing to join you. We'll do away with ours. You do away with yours. We've got this thing here now, this defensive weapon and we're very willing to use this, not to enable us to fight you, but to simply do what we both want, and that is get rid of the weapons.'"

The same kind of myopic overanalysis clouds Washington's vision of Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev's statements. In a determined search for the "propaganda" content and in a fixation on who will win in seeking public opinion at the Summit, they miss the obvious and the credible.

### Soviet Proposals

The Soviet Government badly wants and needs a respite in the arms race. It is making one arms control proposal after another to that end. And the very hawks in Washington who assert, on other occasions, that the Soviets are suffering from overstrain and cannot afford the arms race somehow seem to deride the seriousness of Soviet efforts to avoid just that contest.

When Gorbachev asks Time Magazine editors,

"If we in the Soviet Union are setting ourselves such truly grandiose plans in the domestic sphere, then what are the external conditions that we need to be able to fulfill those domestic plans?", he is obviously alluding to the Soviet need for avoiding the costs of the arms race. He is coming as close as one can come, when one is being reprinted in the Soviet press, to saying that we need peace (as well as want it).

Washington commentators are blinded by their ideological preconceptions and one has to sympathize with them. After all, America—which is known for its sincerity—is enunciating a deeply cynical notion; that a nuclear shield in an age of nuclear deterrence would be a defensive tool only and not a form of strategic advantage. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union—which is world-renowned for its cynicism—is sincerely espousing an interest in arms control and a halt to the arms race. It is no surprise that few can see the cynical amongst the sincere or the sincere amidst the cynical. But it is there.

—Jeremy J. Stone

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