

'Taking stock in the dialogue of the superpowers' from the Süddeutsche Zeitung (20 July 1970)

Caption: On 20 July 1970, German daily newspaper Süddeutsche Zeitung analyses the reasons for the deadlock in negotiations between the United States and the USSR on disarmament, and expresses concern over the risk of a renewed world arms race.

Source: Süddeutsche Zeitung. Münchner Neueste Nachrichten aus Politik, Kultur, Wirtschaft und Sport. Hrsg. Dürrmeier, Hans ; RHerausgeber Proebst, Hermann. 20.07.1970, Nr. 172; 26. Jg. München: Süddeutscher Verlag. "Zwischenbilanz im Dialog der Supermächte", auteur:Potyka, Christian , p. 4.

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Taking stock in the dialogue of the superpowers

Is there any prospect of success for the small-scale solution in the SALT talks?

From our editorial staff member, Christian Potyka.

SALT is taking a break. Last Tuesday, the delegations from Washington and Moscow began a week's 'pause for thought' from the strategic arms limitation talks in Vienna. They want to take stock before the talks go into the final rounds in Vienna, prior to the summer recess and the adjournment to Helsinki. The initial public optimism about the outcome of the SALT talks has faded somewhat. Doubts are now increasingly creeping in about the success of the talks, especially since the word from 'conference circles' is that, to date, neither of the delegations has put forward any detailed proposals. These would be negotiable offers on the following points: limitation of the number of missiles without qualitative improvements, limitation of the number and the capability of the missiles, or reduction of the offensive systems without any qualitative restrictions.

Instead of this, the negotiating parties have not yet been able to agree even on which nuclear weapons should be regarded as strategic weapons. (For example, the Soviet Union would like to exclude from a bilateral agreement its medium-range missiles pointed at Western Europe.) We have to assume that, in this situation, the two delegations have been playing for time, that is, they want to hold off from adjournment of the talks this summer while there is still a prospect of some kind of document (however unproductive it might be) being signed. No one wants to allow the SALT talks to break down, but, at the same time, neither side wants to be the first to make fundamental concessions.

In recent times, the American Administration has been obliged to listen to repeated criticisms that it was not seriously interested in an agreement in Vienna at all, because it was calmly continuing to push forward the plans for its *Safeguard* missile defence system and to install the first multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicles, MIRV, on *Minuteman* intercontinental missiles. In response to this accusation, the Nixon Administration called upon its secret service and let it be known that Moscow had also continued its missile programme in spite of SALT — with particular regard to the SS 9, an intercontinental missile regarded as the 'Minuteman killer'. Washington did not disclose, however, that the further development of the Soviet missile arsenal is Moscow's logical response to the American missile policy. At all events, according to statements made by the Democratic Congressman J. Bingham, the Soviet Union had not put any new SS 9 missiles into service from August 1969 up to June of this year. It was not until three weeks after the arming of the first Minuteman missiles with MIRVs, claims Bingham, that the Soviets had brought the first additional SS 9 missiles into position.

Men like Bingham are uncomfortable with the actions of the Secret Service, since the situation is reminiscent of the missile gap affair: between 1957 and 1962, the conviction prevailed in the United States, fuelled by official statements, that an era was approaching in which the Soviets would have an advantage of 4:1 in intercontinental missiles. Of course, this gap existed only in the documents of the Secret Service. In actual fact, although the Soviets did have intercontinental missiles, they possessed too few of them to enable them to risk a surprise attack on the USA. (On the other hand, the Americans had medium-range missiles stationed in Asia and Europe that were almost equivalent to intercontinental missiles in their effect, because of their proximity to the Soviet border.) With the imaginary missile gap breathing down its neck, Washington increased its expenditure on armaments quite drastically, and the nuclear weapons race was accelerated further.

Since the shock of the missile gap, the Americans have tended to overestimate the strength of the Soviets. As Washington is aiming at a position of strength, that is, numerical superiority in nuclear weapons systems, it positively needs shocks of that kind from the opponents to enable it to justify the development of such weapons systems. The final welcome excuse of this kind is called SS 9. The rough outlines of this solid-fuel rocket with intercontinental range have been known since about the early summer of 1969. At that time, the first SS 9 was fired from Soviet territory and aimed at the Pacific. The Americans observed the test and were able to establish that the Soviets, too, now possessed intercontinental missiles with independently targeted

atomic warheads. At the end of last year, the estimated number of these was at least 200. And there was every indication that the Soviet Union was continuing to produce the SS 9 missiles. When the American Secret Service now makes 'sensational' revelations of approximately 280 launch sites for SS 9, this would simply be the result of a continuous development.

Fortunately, there also seem to be forces in the United States who are prepared to learn from the missile gap affair. Soviet armament with SS 9 missiles is, for them, a positive development for SALT. In the first place, they argue, Moscow can now negotiate from a position of strength. According to the information from the London *Institute of Strategic Studies*, between 1962 and 1965 the Americans were still ahead in their number of intercontinental missiles in the ratio of 4:1. By 1966, this lead was reduced to 3:1 and by 1967 to 2:1. However, since that year — and this is the positive side of the SS 9 build-up — the two superpowers have been on equal footing, which could provide the basis for freezing the potential on both sides.

It is also against this background that we may interpret the instructions of President Nixon to his chief negotiator in Vienna, Gerard Smith, to work towards a treaty with the following terms of agreement: numerical restriction on intercontinental missiles in silos, the missiles carried by atomic submarines and long-range bombers; installation of a missile defence system of approximately the same size as that at present possessed by the Soviet Union (this would serve to protect the major cities of both countries). This 'small-scale solution' may well succeed. Of course, it requires a certain amount of advance trust on both sides, and a great deal of time. (The talks on the end of nuclear testing, as we know, lasted for four years.) However, any reversion to the practices of the era of the missile-gap affair would be fatal, even for the 'small-scale solution'.