

LBJ Warns Of Perils in ABM Race

President Stresses Determination to Reduce Tensions

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By Murrey Marder

Washington Post Staff Writer

President Johnson put maximum emphasis yesterday on the need to head off a new arms race with the Soviet Union just when "our mutual antagonism is beginning to ease."

"I am determined," the President said, "to use all the resources at my command to encourage the reduction in tension that is in our mutual interest, and to avoid a further, mutually defeating (arms) buildup."

Mr. Johnson's newest and strongest warning over the danger of an antimissile missile race came in a letter to Congress. It accompanied the sixth annual report of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency which showed, the President

said, the "immensity" of that task.

Soviets Reassert Stand

By coincidence, news reports from Moscow yesterday newly asserted that the Soviet position is negative on discussing with the United States any ban on deploying antimissile missile systems. American officials, however, refused to accept those reports as authoritative at this stage, and maintained that in any event, they do not rule out discussions of both offensive and defensive weapons.

President Johnson said "recent developments in the Soviet Union" are a reminder that "our hard-won accomplishments can be swept away overnight by still another costly and futile escalation of the arms race."

Danger of New Spiral

He pointed to "the buildup" of Soviet strategic forces and the deployment of an antiballistic missile system around Moscow.

"It is my belief, said the President, "that the United States and the Soviet Union have reached a watershed in the dispiriting history of our arms competition.

Decisions may be made on both sides which will trigger another upward spiral. The

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Pravda erred in indicating Soviet willingness to discuss missile ban, Moscow source says. Page A10.

President Promises All-Out Effort To Head Off Any New Arms Race

paradox is that this should be happening at a time when there is abundant evidence that our mutual antagonism is beginning to ease."

The record shows, said the President, that the world armament problem "can be made to yield to imagination and determination."

The productive "score" so far, he said, shows "the hot line" between Moscow and Washington to reduce danger or accidental war; the limited nuclear test-ban treaty; measures to strengthen policing safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency; the Antarctic nuclear-free zone, and the recently-signed treaty barring nuclear weapons from outer space.

Right now, said the President, "our hopes are high" for achieving agreement, at Geneva, on a treaty to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons.

What the Johnson Administration is facing, however, is both internal opposition, as well as external obstacles, to new agreements with the Soviet Union when American emotions are running high over the war in Vietnam.

The allaying of domestic suspicions about new agreements with the Russians was the object of a speech last night by Foy D. Kohler, Deputy Under Secretary of State and until recently Ambassador to the Soviet Union.

Kohler vigorously defended the disputed U.S.-Soviet Consular Treaty that he signed in Moscow in 1964, and which is sidetracked in the Senate, awaiting ratification. He spoke to the Cincinnati Council on World Affairs.

In defending that treaty, Kohler put on the record some expressions of United States East-West policy that liberal critics of the Administration have charged that the United States has been too slow to acknowledge publicly — but which conservatives challenge.

While "Communist ideology" still provides "basic guidelines for Soviet leadership," said Kohler "it is no longer an effective instrument of political power and clearly has little to do with the daily life of the people" inside the Soviet Union.

"On the basis of my personal experience," said Kohler, "I believe the East Europeans and Russians are in some respects even less ideologically oriented than their West European brothers."

"Today we can no longer talk of a Sino-Soviet bloc," said Kohler; "Indeed, we cannot properly refer to a Soviet bloc. The Communist world has ceased to be a monolithic entity. Every day brings new evidence of increasingly independent actions by governments that were once subservient to Moscow."

By standing "unflinching when faced with the threat of force," said Kohler, American Presidents from Harry Truman onward helped induce what has come to be a "measure of restraint" in American-Soviet relations.

By simultaneously encouraging "the process of gradual change" among Communist nations, said Kohler, "fundamental evolutionary developments in the Communist world" have resulted.

Critics' charges that the U.S.-Soviet Consular Treaty is a

"license" for Soviet espionage, said Kohler, have "confused the issues" by ignoring benefits to the United States. Kohler said, "I would not want Americans in these sensitive positions in the Soviet Union without the protection of this immunity" from criminal prosecution that would be granted to Soviet consulate officials in this country.

Similarly, Kohler noted, Administration proposals for East-West trade are encountering charges that the Communists "are supplying the weapons being used to kill American soldiers in Vietnam." The same charge was raised against the Consular Treaty in Senate hearings yesterday.

"The kind of East-West trade we are talking about," said Kohler, "would have no material relationship with the Communist effort in Vietnam," because sales of strategic goods are, and would remain, prohibited.

Even "a complete ban on trade with the Communists," said Kohler, "would have no effect upon their continuing to supply arms to the Vietcong and North Vietnamese.

"If anything," he said, "it could encourage them to use less restraint in their relations with the Vietnamese Communists because they would have less to lose if they did pull out all the stops." Trade, Kohler said, is "a useful instrument to maintain leverage on the Communist world" to encourage greater flexibility in it; but it is "not a weapon which could be effectively employed in the conflict in Vietnam."