

SENATOR SAM ERVIN SAYS



My concerns about the interim agreement on the limitation of strategic offensive weapons and my support of a policy to place the United States at least on a parity with the Soviet Union in respect to our deterrent have been stated in a previous column.

Since there are many misconceptions about our military posture and the need to modernize our weapons systems, I think this matter bears further discussion. It is evident that we have come to a cross-roads in our defense policy. Either we will take the necessary steps to insure the survivability of our country or we shall have to endure blackmail at the convenience of other powers or even worse.

Many today voice sentiments which seem to evidence more faith in Russia than in our own government. With respect to

defense they cite old arguments which one would have thought were entirely discredited on December 7, 1941. They tell us anew that we have some mythical superiority arising out of geography and our bases and that these will protect us from nuclear attack. They say that we need fear no nation because we have an abundance of weapons. They advise that we have more important concerns than defense and besides there is the prospect that money will be wasted for any new weapons system.

They place less emphasis on the solemn obligation resting on the Congress to act, in a sense, as watchmen on the ramparts. To a degree they bury their heads in the sands like the ostrich hoping our security will never be challenged. The sad fact is that we still live in a perilous world and anyone who

ignores that turth will ultimately pay the price.

I feel very deeply about this matter. Our lives, our fortunes, our freedoms are involved in the decisions we make on this issue. The fact is that the only purpose which this country has in maintaining a strong defense posture is to insure that the free world can survive.

It is strange but there is a school of thought that evidences faith that Russia always has good intentions. Once it was argued when we had a vast nuclear superiority that we could promote peace by giving that country nuclear parity. It is significant that Russia only agreed to an arms limitation when the agreement allowed it a superiority in numbers of submarines and intercontinental ballistic missiles. Now it is urged by some Senators that we ought not be concerned about that and we ought not declare it to be the policy of the nation to insure that any permanent arms limitation will give the United States equality in these categories.

All this leads me to say that we had better not ignore the lessons of history. At the height of the Cuban missile crisis when

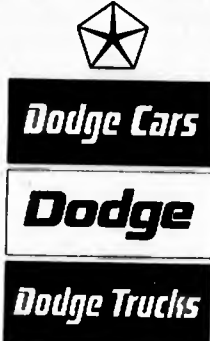
the Soviet Union had managed to place missiles in Cuba, we had a wide advantage of about 7 to 1 in terms of missiles and bombers. Despite that advantage, the Russians took the risk. It was only due to the courageous action of President Kennedy backed by the American people that we were able to win in that showdown. With the advantage reduced, it does not require much

imagination to understand that the risk of future confrontations with the Russians is now greater.

The stakes are immense; they are no less than the destiny of this country. I for one am unwilling to jeopardize the future of every American by laboring under false delusions.

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