Arbatov defends Soviet Union

By Kent Pilzer

Director of the Acaademy of Sciences of the USSR, Monday at MIT on the dangers and opportunities confronting the US and the Soviet Union during the next 20 years.

"Though the achievements of our technological civilization are tremendous, they have also affected many of the fundamental problems confronting humanity in a very small degree," Arbatov told MIT. "These achievements have hardly benefited the majority of mankind. In many respects, they have only accentuated the basic contrasts between the individual societies and within many of them."

"It is a fact," he continued, "that we live in a world where space laboratories and liners fly over vast regions of the planet which are inhabited by hundreds of millions of people doomed to suffer hunger and desperate need almost like many centuries ago."

The theses of nuclear war in the near future are key topics on Arbatov's lecture.

"The next 20 years will be fought over worldwide space stations, and at the same time will offer great opportunities. As I see it, the most important of those opportunities is the most vital task concerning mankind."

He expressed optimism about the success of the US and the USSR in recognizing many of the fundamental problems of the world, but warned that tragic results might ensue if the two nations [limit] their endeavors only to the realization and discussion of problems and fail to launch a process of really radical and practical solutions.

Arbatov seemed concerned about the role which US-Soviet nuclear arms race is playing. "The continued arms race undoubtedly increases the danger of nuclear war," he said.

"Rossiade is an example of such nuclear armament will be bad and dangerous. Far from promoting the security of any country's national security, such a situation will harm it." The World Powers must move toward a final goal of "complete and general disarmament," he asserted.

Arbatov said that the Russians had not presented arms control proposal in Moscow last month, but that this was "not due to the fact that the Russion government could not comprehend it fast enough and properly appreciate it, but precisely because the package was understood too well — understood as violating the initial premise of equality and providing for US one-sided advantage.

Following the lecture, Arbatov participated in a question-answer session for members of the audience.

The first questioner raised a vocal disturbance when he became dissatisfied with some of Arbatov's statements.

The questioner asked, "Why is it that 98 percent of the synagogues in the Soviet Union are closed?" and "I see objects to my relatives in the Soviet Union. Why are people taken out in the middle of the night to concentration camps in the Soviet Union? These things interest me."

Arbatov waited until the angry questioner showed disrespectfully his feelings toward the Soviet Union until the Campus Police finally intervened, then responded.

"I don't think you'll. find any [religious] discrimination here [in the Soviet Union]," he insisted, adding that there are many different practicing religions in the USSR.

Regarding concentration camps, he merely said, "We have some people arrested for violation of the law—this happens in the USSR."

Other topics Arbatov touched upon during the question-answer session were foreign aid, Soviet relations with Israel, and civil defense programs in the US and Russia.

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