

## Editorial

# *Trust, Livermore Lab, the SDI, and you*

On April 2, 1993, representatives of the Russian military-scientific establishment proposed a joint collaboration between their country and the United States for development of the Reagan-LaRouche Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI). They named their proposal "Trust," with obvious implications. Resurrecting the original concept of an anti-missile defense based upon new physical principles, they revealed ongoing Russian work on this, using plasma configurations to down nuclear warheads.

This proposal was brought to the Clinton-Yeltsin summit discussions but, unfortunately, whatever quiet collaborative work may have been set in motion, the enormous political potential was lost. Indeed, certain foolish western commentators attempted to portray this extraordinary Russian turnabout on the SDI program as mere April Fool's Day tomfoolery. To the contrary, it was an acknowledgement by the Russian military elite that they had made a devastating error in 1983, when they not only turned down the Reagan offer, but turned against its intellectual author Lyndon LaRouche.

Today, we see the consequences of western failure to immediately take up the 1993 Trust offer, in the new posture of the Russian military, which is demanding that there be a halt to further demobilization of its capabilities. Thus, for example, in a recent speech, Russian Defense Minister Pavel Grachov said that the present budget line for the military was not acceptable but must be immediately doubled.

The implications of such a turn in affairs should be obvious. If LaRouche's policy initiatives are not acted upon both in the East and the West, then we are in for a dangerous reemergence of the Cold War. This is reality.

Under such circumstances, it is intolerable that the director of Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, John H. Nuckolls, has come under attack for supposedly "not leading the laboratory strongly enough away from its decades of Cold War weapons research," as the March 17 *San Francisco Chronicle* put it. According to that newspaper, Nuckolls, a veteran nuclear physicist

who has headed the laboratory for the past six years, is being pressured to resign from his post.

Livermore Lab was a leader in SDI research, particularly in the development of the X-ray laser and various beam weapons defense capabilities. Nuckolls is quoted in the article, saying that he is willing to give up his position when there is responsible leadership to take over the work. However, he emphasizes the importance of the laboratory's mandate. Thus, he told *Chronicle* writer David Perlman, "My personal opinion as I read world events is that events are trending in a direction that makes it imperative to maintain our weapons research—particularly in the field of nonproliferation." We would vigorously second him on this, especially as it relates to the original Reagan-LaRouche SDI proposal and the subsequent, if very much belated, Russian response as made in the Trust proposal.

Furthermore, the moves against the direction in which Nuckolls has taken Livermore must be seen in the context of a broader attack upon the U.S. national laboratories. Present policy is to put them on a pay-as-you-go basis, so that they must get outside industrial funding for projects, and turn in the direction of applied rather than fundamental research.

At Los Alamos National Laboratory in 1993, some 800 employees were asked to take early retirement, and another 800 workers were "retired" at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory. These 1,600 individuals are only the latest in a long procession of scientists and associated workers who have been urged or forced to leave government employment over the past several years.

Since World War II, a sizable portion of the fundamental research in the United States has been accomplished under the defense budget. It would be wrong, however, to suppose that this research has been related only to weapons development. Much of it was applied science—for example, in the field of nuclear energy and in plasma physics—and there were discretionary funds available for basic science. The U.S. national laboratories must be defended from irresponsible attack.