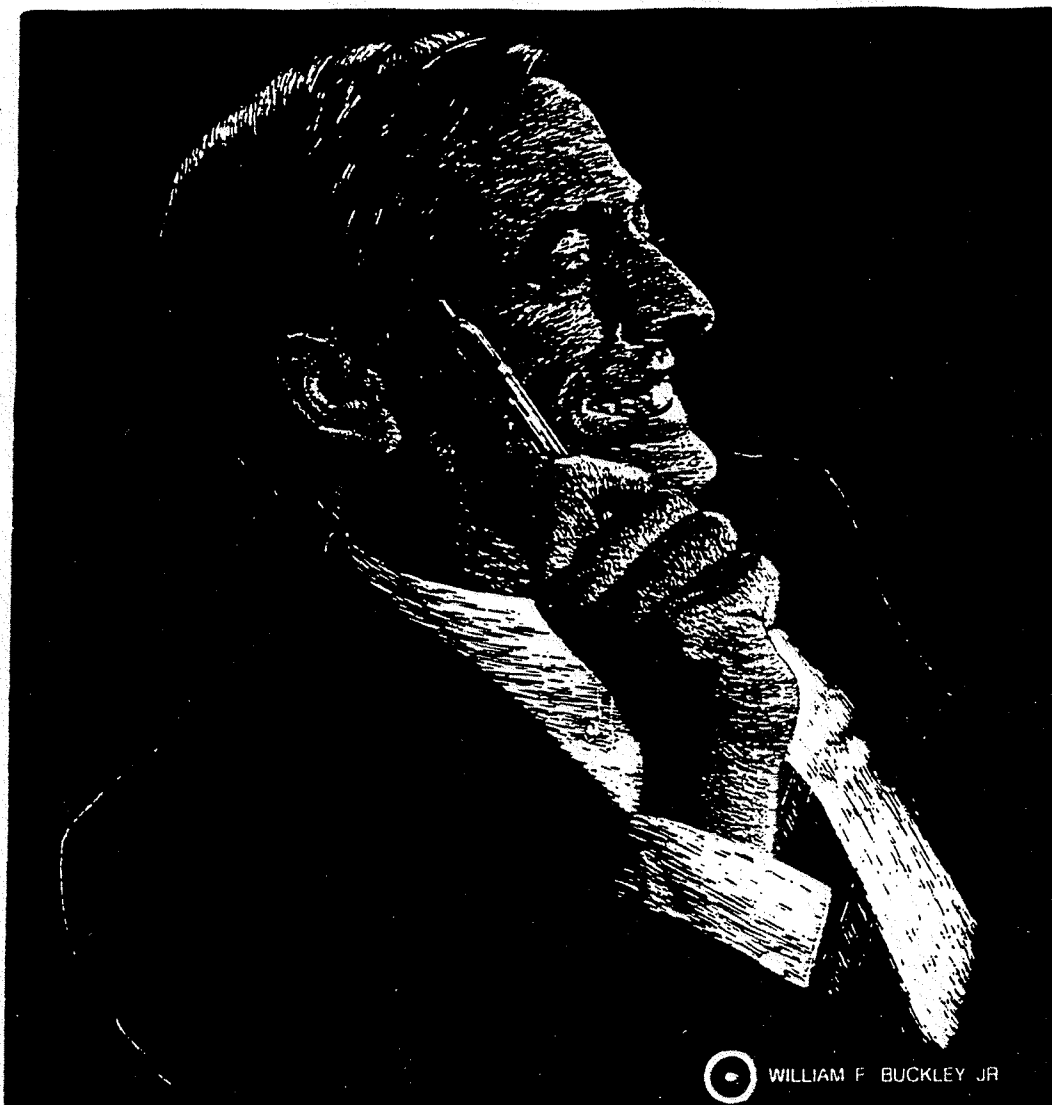


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FIRING LINE

HOST: WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

GUESTS: HENRY KISSINGER, DOUGLAS FEITH, HENRY SOKOLSKI,
RUSSELL SEITZ

SUBJECT: "THE THREAT OF NUCLEAR DESTRUCTION IN THE
NEW WORLD 'ORDER': NEW VOICES, PART III"

50981

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MR. BUCKLEY: This is the third and final episode of **Firing Line's** examination of the nuclear proliferation problem. We began by investigating the scientific ease, relative ease, by which nations acquire nuclear weapons. Then we examined diplomatic alternatives in handling it. And now, in addition to touching on certain subjects that were omitted in the last two hours, we will discuss general questions having to do with the problem.

By we, I mean Mr. Russell Seitz of Harvard; Mr. Henry Sokolski of Boston University; and Mr. Douglas Feith, who is a practicing lawyer in Washington; and of course our primary guest, Henry Kissinger.

Now the question I want to begin with exploring, even though we touched it glancingly, is the continued animus against SDI. It seems to me that we have a situation in which it becomes impossible to say that it is a polarizing and aggressive technological step, because we would anxiously share the developments of that technology in order to provide regional protection for other countries. Why isn't that sufficient to have turned around American intellectual sentiment on the subject of SDI, or were their antecedent commitments against it so overwhelming? Mr. Feith.

MR. FEITH: There is a line from the playwright Tom Stoppard. He says you can persuade a man to believe almost anything provided he is clever enough. And what he is saying is, of course, there are some ideas that are so preposterous that only intellectuals could subscribe to them. One of them is that the world is a better place if the United States does not have the ability to shoot down incoming ballistic missiles, possibly armed with nuclear warheads. I think that from the point of view of preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, there is probably nothing the United States can do that would more beneficially affect the calculations of other countries about whether to go nuclear than if we developed the ability to shoot down incoming ballistic missiles, if we developed strategic defense, and for that matter, air defense. And the reason is, going back to a remark that we made on the last program, the calculations of a dictator like Saddam Hussein would have been quite different, and the calculations of the United States in confronting him would have been quite different if he had had nuclear weapons, and if the United States, as is the case now, had no capability to shoot down a ballistic missile that could deliver those nuclear weapons on the United States. So I think if we want to put the message out to the world that we are not going to be intimidated by the small nuclear programs of little powers interested in aggression, one way to put that message out is: It won't help you against us; we have the ability to defend ourselves, and of course we could spread the technology of defense to defend other countries around the world.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, Mr. Seitz, I've heard you in the past express doubt that there aren't ways to insinuate nuclear weapons that would defy the SDI screening process. Do you still think that's a threat that invalidates the generality there?

MR. SEITZ: It's both true and irrelevant. Ballistic missile technology is essentially universal. You don't need fissionable materials to build ICBMs. If you can build a helicopter, you can build one pretty well. Unfortunately a rocket of V-2 vintage--50-year-old technology--can carry a ton of nerve gas or a biological agent. And of course if the van bomb that killed five people at the World Trade Center, leaving 50,000 people rattled, had contained a nerve agent, that device would have left perhaps 50,000 dead and five survivors. These are things that are a thousand times worse than chemical explosives, and the delivery systems are becoming trivial.

MR. SOKOLSKI: Wait a minute. This is not right. Doug, defenses can work against crude missiles, certainly the missiles you are talking about, okay? And it's a help-- something even the Clinton administration belatedly is funding. But you're right. You can't use SDI to stop every possible use of nuclear weapons. Nor do I believe it's the best or single most important thing to do. It's one of the things we need to get on to do. And it really does matter what kind of missile it is, so it is not ubiquitous that you can get an advanced, multistaged ballistic missile. It is very difficult to do, and we have stopped at--

MR. BUCKLEY: You only need one.

MR. SOKOLSKI: Well, you know, less is better than more, and that is what this is all about. And I think that we need to be careful so that we don't spill all of our defense dollars simply on SDI or ignore the problem because, well, you know, everybody's got something that might possibly hurt us.

DR. KISSINGER: No, but we should have a rational discussion about SDI--

MR. SOKOLSKI: Yes.

DR. KISSINGER: --and it has always been a peculiar aspect of the American defense debate to argue that the vulnerability of our society is an element in our security.

MR. SOKOLSKI: Yes.

DR. KISSINGER: Before World War II, people would have been considered insane if they had said, "The more of our people the enemy can kill, the more secure we will be."

MR. SOKOLSKI: Right.

DR. KISSINGER: Now once we accept the legitimacy of SDI, then we can bring it into relation to other defenses and other dangers.

MR. SOKOLSKI: Sure.

DR. KISSINGER: But if we once accept the proposition that unless you can have the perfect defense you can't have any defense, at a minimum, SDI complicates the calculations of an attacker. He can't be sure what will get through, if anything will get through, where it will land. And I would think even more on a regional basis, in Europe, Japan and the Middle East, the capability of SDI is almost imperative. And in the United States we should get over this hurdle of considering defense as something especially dangerous or immoral, especially since we are no longer in a two-power world.

MR. BUCKLEY: How would Japan respond to an open invitation to Japan to develop an SDI, of which they would be the primary beneficiaries at the first round against Korea and China?

MR. SOKOLSKI: They'd be pleased.

DR. KISSINGER: Enthusiastically.

MR. SOKOLSKI: They'd be pleased.

MR. BUCKLEY: Would they--

MR. SOKOLSKI: Highly motivated.

DR. KISSINGER: It would strengthen their position. I mean, I don't think the Japanese look at the international environment the way Americans do. I don't believe that they look at it from the point of view of world cooperation, which may not even translate into Japanese. [laughter] But I think they have a very finely honed sense of the regional balance of power vis-a-vis China, Korea and elsewhere. And they would look at it from the point of view of strengthening their hand vis-a-vis China. And our next problem would be, what do we do if China then says they want an SDI.

MR. FEITH: Four years ago--

MR. BUCKLEY: Why do we care if they have one?

DR. KISSINGER: We shouldn't care.

MR. BUCKLEY: We shouldn't care. But is this a part of the public discussion underground? Are people thinking of this possibility?

MR. SOKOLSKI: Sure.

MR. FEITH: They're thinking, but it's not factored in enough. For instance, take one of the principal problems in the proliferation area right now, which is Iran. If the United States had developed an effective ballistic missile defense and could share it with countries like Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia and other key friends of the United States in the area, friends that happen to be the obvious possible targets of an Iranian nuclear capability, the Iranians would have to take into account the possibility that the enormous expense--and not just financial expense, but expense of, you know, being a pariah state--the expense involved in going after a nuclear capability might not be that useful to them after all, because it would confront the ballistic missile defenses of the various countries that they might target. It would be enormously beneficial to try to influence the Iranian calculations in that way.

DR. KISSINGER: And would help even vis-a-vis their missile capability if they don't use nuclear weapons.

MR. SOKOLSKI: Which is more likely.

MR. FEITH: Yes, and it would certainly be useful even in the absence of nuclear weapons because even the Scud-type--

MR. BUCKLEY: Are you talking about something that might have in fact been done by now or are you talking about something that can prospectively be done if scientific problems a, b, and c are met and challenged and overcome?

MR. SOKOLSKI: To say nothing of expense.

MR. FEITH: Well, we don't have the capability right now.

MR. SOKOLSKI: Right.

MR. FEITH: That's why it needs to--

MR. BUCKLEY: Is it a capability that we don't have because we eschewed the challenge or is it a capability we don't have because we have run into problems we can't cope with?

MR. FEITH: No, I think--and I would defer to Russell Seitz on this--but I believe it is a scientifically solvable problem if you formulate the problem correctly. I think that Dr. Kissinger pointed out that many of the opponents of SDI

formulated the problem in a way that couldn't be solved, which is the--

MR. BUCKLEY: Total screening.

MR. FEITH: --total screening against every possible kind of attack of every weapon in the Soviet arsenal simultaneously. I mean, there are ways of formulating it that you can't solve it.

MR. SEITZ: The proper formulation is very simply this: Strategic defense should be the arms control of the future evolving out of the technology of the present. The opponents framed it in the following fashion. Well, considering what you'll be faced with in the year 2010, can you solve the problem with 1980 technology? to which the answer was no. But if the problem is taking out 1945 vintage, you know, neo-V-2s from nuclear wannabes, it's a solved problem.

MR. SOKOLSKI: It's solved, by the way, and I think you folks are fighting a war that's over, which is to say, money is being spent to deal with first generation ballistic missiles. The question you need to focus more on is how much do you want to "share" what is essentially, by the way, missile technology.

MR. FEITH: Right.

MR. SOKOLSKI: Just saying defense in front of it doesn't help. You can also use these things offensively, the technology. So you'd better be careful on how you share the benefits--that's what you want to share, the benefits of defense, not the technology. And you do care whether the Chinese get it. You do not want to give it to just anybody. I'm sorry, it's--

MR. BUCKLEY: Tell me why.

MR. SOKOLSKI: Well, I'll tell you why.

MR. BUCKLEY: Because of progressive permutations?

MR. SOKOLSKI: The fact of the matter is the technology for defense is the same technology for discriminate, long-range offense, and therefore, it can--just like nuclear energy--it can be used for dual purpose. And to give it out randomly to everyone and say that that's as good as sharing the benefits with everyone is a little bit like saying kissing your sister--

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, now wait a minute.

MR. SOKOLSKI: --is as good as getting married.

MR. BUCKLEY: What if it were an atmospheric technology using brilliant pebbles, which would simply--

MR. SEITZ: Well, Bill, as a navigator I think you will appreciate that for \$1,000 you can now buy a GPS computer that will tell you where you are within 50 feet.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes.

MR. SEITZ: Well, if you also buy an Apple Newton and a model airplane, you have just bought yourself a Cruise missile. So we have already arrived at a rather dystopic future in which the appropriate technology on the consumer level makes it imperative that we address the problem--

MR. SOKOLSKI: Yes.

MR. SEITZ: --of dealing with these things in real time.

MR. SOKOLSKI: No one's arguing--I hope we're not arguing still whether regional defense with missile defenses is important and that the money that even the Clinton administration is spending, which is a lot of money, somehow doesn't exist.

DR. KISSINGER: I'll tell you, the thing that worries me about SDI now is that there is no conceptual agreement on what we are trying to do, and the money that is being spent seems to me to be due to avoid criticism rather than to develop a strategic concept. And if you do not give it the right priority and address these questions systematically and say we are going to be able to deploy something--the level of deployment, who are we going to share it with, this is something that needs study--then you are just going to fund enough of it to protect yourself against domestic attacks, but not enough to have a really overall strategic design. I am very much afraid that that's what we're heading into, and then a point often gets reached--which we reached, for example, in the first ABM--where you have done so little that you figure you might as well save this money and give it to something that you are taking seriously.

MR. SOKOLSKI: Certainly the bottom line is, are we going to deploy systems of any sort, because we've already-- How many years have we spent money? And what do we have to show for it? We need to get at least beyond that stage so that we can start talking theory.

DR. KISSINGER: If the top policymaker's ideologically opposed to SDI, you can get funding and still have no program.

MR. SOKOLSKI: That's true enough. That's what we have now.

DR. KISSINGER: That's what we have now.

MR. SEITZ: It certainly would afford very gainful employment for the tens of thousands of weapons lab employees in the Soviet Union who have been abruptly unemployed by the demise of the late Cold War.

MR. BUCKLEY: Sure, but the point that Mr. Kissinger makes, I think, is basic: Unless we welcome it as a protective technology, we are not in fact going to encourage its production, and my own feeling for it is that it's receiving stepfatherly treatment from us. And for that reason we might be much better off by handing what technology we've developed over to the Japanese and encouraging them, with a very proximate threat to cope with, to develop it.

MR. SOKOLSKI: Well, certainly from an alliance standpoint, it would be nice to cooperate on defensive technologies, high technologies with the Japanese to show them that we consider their security vital, that we would prefer to cooperate that way than to see them go unilaterally with a militarization or a nuclearization.

DR. KISSINGER: In the 21st century I suspect we are going to be in a situation in Asia that is somewhat comparable to Britain's position vis-a-vis Europe in the 19th century, which is we will have to decide between Japan, China, Korea, Russia, where to throw our weight in any given 10-year period, and I don't take it as axiomatic that any of the countries we now identify as friendlier than others will be in exactly the same position in the year, say, 2010.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, but surely this isn't an argument to exclude SDI technology from Japan.

DR. KISSINGER: No, I think at this stage I would favor some SDI technology for Japan.

MR. BUCKLEY: Because to the extent that they became aggressive, they could develop their own aggressive technology without --

DR. KISSINGER: It is in our national interest for the future that I can foresee to maintain a cooperative relationship with Japan as much as we can. On the question of China and Russia, we will have to look at it as time goes on.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, is it--looking down the road 30 or 40 years--is it conceivable that the United Nations might actually be useful as an agency which would be in charge of defense installations and forbidden obviously to convert that into an aggressive installation?

MR. FEITH: It's hard to predict 30 or 40 years out, but I'd be surprised--

MR. BUCKLEY: I have no problem with it at all. [laughter]

MR. FEITH: I'd be surprised if any sensible person would want his national defense in the hands of the U.N. But I would like to make one general point that's very interesting about the way the discussion is--

MR. BUCKLEY: It would be supplementary defense, not unique defense.

MR. FEITH: If I may, we've discussed strategic defense in connection with nonproliferation policy, we've talked about possible military options for the United States in connection with nonproliferation policy. We've talked about the general taboos that apply, even the countries that have the capabilities and the materials. It is very interesting that most discussions of nonproliferation that you hear--and nonproliferation has become a very hot topic and there are innumerable seminars in Washington on the subject--most focus almost exclusively on supplier controls. And I would just hope that we would dwell one moment on the point that the problem of nonproliferation is a multifaceted problem, and it is a much richer problem than simply getting a few supplier countries to agree to restrain themselves, even though that is enormously important. It's a multifaceted problem and it should be seen as part of our overall national security policy and not as a thing unto itself. And that also goes in part toward the question that you had posed earlier about discriminating among countries or trying to have a universal policy on nonproliferation. If you see the problem properly, as an element of our national security policy, you realize you can't have any kind of blanket nonproliferation policy. You have to distinguish--you have to be willing to make moral judgments about specific countries, about their responsibilities.

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes.

MR. FEITH: If you are unwilling to do that and you try to take a legalistic approach that puts everybody under the same standard--

MR. BUCKLEY: I completely agree with you.

MR. FEITH: --you're not going to have a constructive policy.

MR. BUCKLEY: I completely agree with you. Well, doesn't the Clinton administration have a new arms accord in the works--

MR. SOKOLSKI: Well, they have a proposal. They have a proposal.

MR. BUCKLEY: --the purpose of which would be to keep everybody from developing any fissile material, is that it?

MR. SOKOLSKI: Yes, I was just going to say, you may want a universal goal and have differentiation in dealing with nations to get to it--

MR. BUCKLEY: Yes.

MR. SOKOLSKI: --by the way, and this leads to the proposal. The proposal on its face actually doesn't look all that bad until you learn more about it. The proposal is, let's have a cutoff of the production of plutonium for weapons purposes-- we'll get back to that phrase, "weapons purposes." Now that shouldn't be a problem for us. We haven't produced plutonium in years. Okay? Nor shall we produce--we should encourage nations to stop producing highly enriched uranium. Again, not a problem for the United States. We haven't produced it for years, nor do we have any need to. The problem comes when you try to discern what they mean for weapons purposes and how you're going to distinguish plutonium for weapons purposes from the other plutonium, which, by the way, also can be used for weapons purposes, but is called peaceful. Highly enriched uranium is made in a facility called an enrichment plant. It can be used to produce highly enriched uranium, which can produce bombs, or it can produce lightly enriched uranium, which is for peaceful reactors. How you can look at that facility and make sure it's not producing bombs material on a given Wednesday and have enough warning a year or two whether it's being diverted is very difficult. And they intend, I assume, to have some kind of international authority eventually try to do the impossible.

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, do I understand you to say what you worry about is that it would estop any conversion of nuclear energy for beneficent uses and countries won't lie down and accept that willingly.

DR. KISSINGER: But if I understand you, you are saying it will create the same problem we faced in Iraq and elsewhere.

MR. SOKOLSKI: That's it.

DR. KISSINGER: That you can then label what is indistinguishable as peaceful, it lowers the threshold of inspection and verification.

MR. SOKOLSKI: And warning and concerns.

DR. KISSINGER: And warning and concerns.

MR. BUCKLEY: Therefore you are in favor of this ban, this cut-off.

MR. SOKOLSKI: If it was serious and didn't make distinctions between peaceful and civilian plutonium, which is phony, and enrichment facilities--

MR. BUCKLEY: You want it to be comprehensive.

MR. SOKOLSKI: Absolutely, sir.

MR. BUCKLEY: And what about the Clinton administration? Will it come out as a comprehensive ban?

MR. SOKOLSKI: Well, maybe it will watch this program.

DR. KISSINGER: But I don't know--

MR. BUCKLEY: Are people lobbying for the naive version of it?

MR. SOKOLSKI: No, I think ironically the left is very good on this. They even see--

DR. KISSINGER: But what would it do to the British and French?

MR. SOKOLSKI: What it would do to the British and French is tell them that they should stop sending separated plutonium to the Japanese and the Germans--

MR. BUCKLEY: Because they will need it themselves, huh?

MR. SOKOLSKI: If they keep doing that, for sure they will, number one; and number two, it's bad business anyway. You know, *The Economist* came out against Britain going down this path of trying to make peaceful plutonium and selling it. So maybe the invisible hand of economics should have some sway over public policy when it's also in their security interest. Not a bad idea, free market nonproliferation.

MR. BUCKLEY: Are we talking big bucks in terms of the impact of this on Britain and France?

MR. SOKOLSKI: In the long run, yes, because what it will do is free up resources that otherwise would have to be spent to subsidize this activity. If you think of the total economics associated with producing more weapons-useful materials, nobody wants to pay more money for it, because the world has a lot of fissile material available for peaceful purposes already at very cheap prices, and with the dismantlement of U.S. and former Soviet stockpiles, there is even more. So the only way

you can keep pushing this is have governments involved. The Japanese government wants to separate plutonium, lots of it. The British government has to decide whether it wants to subsidize separating plutonium. So too with the French. And we should discourage this.

MR. SEITZ: We had agreed to take 500 tons of weapons-grade uranium off of the Soviets' hands for a fair price over a 20-year period. That's certainly a large step in the right direction, I think.

MR. BUCKLEY: What will we do with it?

MR. SEITZ: Primarily dilute it back to non-weapons grade, put it in reactors, make electricity rather than carbon dioxide. If we fail to pay attention to the evolution of the situation in the Soviet Union, we could get badly burned. Throughout their weapons laboratories, there is something of a yard sale in progress. They're in Chapter 11. They're selling hardware right and left; they're scrapping a lot of it. And most importantly they are abruptly and totally unemployed. And finding gainful employment for them, which is by and large economically advantageous since they are smart people for sale cheap, could help to avoid the contingency of people going down the dark path to becoming hired gun proliferators. Past history is somewhat perplexing. We now know that the Shah of Iran was getting nuclear information from the Russians for pretty hard cash. And if that could happen, Lord knows what could happen in the Iran of today. The--

MR. BUCKLEY: Well, do you believe that the anti-nuclear psyche has poisoned any enthusiasm for the use of nuclear energy for electricity, for making love not war? Is that out?

MR. SEITZ: I think that amongst the most hard-bitten environmentalists, the sentiment is slowly spreading that since the nuclear force is a million times stronger than that unleashed when coal is burned, that if there is a problem with how mankind is transforming the planet's atmosphere, the obvious solution is not to pollute the sky with chemicals when we can get power out of the atoms themselves. The really criminal mischief of Chernobyl has taught us a very hard lesson about how not to harness the atom. And in time future I think the same technology that will help us to prevent destruction from the use of nuclear weapons arising may help us in fact save the planet.

MR. BUCKLEY: Thank you, Mr. Russell Seitz of Harvard; thank you, Mr. Henry Sokolski of Boston University; Mr. Douglas Feith of Washington; and Henry Kissinger.