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U.S. -- POLITICS AND NUCLEAR CONTROL

WASHINGTON, NOV. 1 (SPECIAL)-- THE FOLLOWING EDITORIAL APPEARED SUNDAY IN THE WASHINGTON STAR:

THE SPREAD OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS THROUGH WIDENING CIRCLES OF NATIONS, LARGE AND SMALL -- AND EVEN TO RECKLESS GROUPS WITHIN THOSE NATIONS -- PROBABLY POSES THE TOUGHEST CHALLENGE THE NEXT PRESIDENT WILL FACE, WHETHER HE IS GERALD R. FORD OR JIMMY CARTER, WHO OCCASIONALLY FLASHES HIS CREDENTIALS AS A "NUCLEAR ENGINEER."

THE CHALLENGE IS NOT EASILY SIMPLIFIED OR DRAMATIZED, WHICH EXPLAINS ITS ABSENCE FROM CAMPAIGN DISCUSSION. REMARKABLY, PRESIDENT FORD'S POLICY STATEMENT ON THE NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY- NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION QUESTION JELLED ONLY IN THE LAST WEEK OF THE CAMPAIGN. ASTONISHINGLY, SPEAKING OF IT IN OHIO, HE EXTOLLED IT AS MEANING "6,000 JOBS FOR SOUTHERN OHIO." THE STAKES ARE INFINITELY LARGER.

WHAT POLICIES SHOULD GOVERN U.S. EXPORT SALES OF NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY; HOW THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THOSE POLICIES SHOULD BE APPORTIONED AMONG VARIOUS EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENTS AND AGENCIES; HOW THEY CAN BE CO-ORDINATED WITH THE POLICIES OF OTHER NATIONS EXPORTING NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY THESE ARE QUESTIONS OF DAUNTING COMPLEXITY AND SUBTLETY. SO MUCH SO, IN FACT, THAT LAST SPRING'S INQUIRY INTO THE SUBJECT BY THE SENATE'S GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE GENERATED A REPORT RUNNING TO 2,048 PAGES.

YET WITHOUT OUTRAGEOUS SIMPLIFICATION, THE ISSUE MAY BE SUMMED UP IN FEWER THAN 2,048 WORDS.

OTHER NATIONS, INDUSTRIALIZED AND ECONOMICALLY PRIMITIVE, STABLE AND CHAOTIC, ARE IN THE MARKET FOR NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY -- CHIEFLY NUCLEAR POWER GENERATING PLANTS AND REACTORS -- AND THE FUELS TO OPERATE THEM. ONLY A FEW NATIONS, PRINCIPALLY THE U.S., FRANCE AND WEST GERMANY, OFFER TO SELL THAT TECHNOLOGY IN ABUNDANCE; AND TO THE SELLERS THE WORLD MARKET HOLDS OUT TRADE ADVANTAGES BEYOND THE DREAMS OF NATIONAL AVARICE.

MOREOVER, SOME OF THE PURCHASER-NATIONS -- NOTABLY INDIA, TWO YEARS AGO -- MAY SECRETLY DIVERT NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY FOR "PEACEFUL" USES TO THE MANUFACTURE OF WEAPONS. THE FUELS USED IN POWER GENERATION MAY IN SOME FORMS (REPROCESSED PLUTONIUM, FOR INSTANCE) BE USED TO MAKE BOMBS. EVEN WITH THE NUCLEAR NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY IN PARTIAL EFFECT, IT IS DIFFICULT TO KEEP ACCOUNT OF THE STORES OF SPENT, UNSPENT AND REPROCESSED FUELS, AND THERE IS NO INTERNATIONAL INSPECTION SYSTEM. SO THE "WORST CASE" OUTLOOK -- AS THE MILITARY JARGON WOULD HAVE IT -- IS THAT MORE AND MORE COUNTRIES WILL BE SEEKING ON THE SLY TO DIVERT "PEACEFUL" NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY TO MILITARY USES. WHILE EXPORTING NATIONS YIELD TO THE COMPETITIVE URGE TO SELL IT TO THEM FIRST, WITHOUT INSISTING ON STRICT SAFEGUARDS AND ACCOUNTANCY.

THE UNITED STATES, UNTIL RECENT YEARS, ENJOYED (IF THAT IS THE WORD) A VIRTUAL MONOPOLY ON THE MANUFACTURE AND SALE OF THIS TECHNOLOGY, AT LEAST IN THE WEST, AND LIKewise CONTROLLED THE FUELS AND WASTE MATERIALS. THAT MONOPOLY IS NOW FORFEIT. SO THE U.S. MUST RESORT TO PERSUASION -- AND GOOD EXAMPLE NOT ALWAYS EVIDENT IN RECENT YEARS -- TO ARREST THE SPIRAL OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION.

(PTO)
B.V

THERE IS NO LONGER, IF THERE EVER WAS, A FOOLPROOF APPROACH TO THE PROBLEM. IN A RECENT FOREIGN AFFAIRS ARTICLE, PROF. PAUL JASKOW OF MIT, AFTER AN INTENSE STUDY OF THE INTERNATIONAL NUCLEAR INDUSTRY AND ITS ECONOMICS, CONCLUDED GLOOMILY THAT "THERE IS NO EASY SOLUTION AT ALL." SEN. ABRAHAM RIBICOFF HAS PROPOSED A SO-CALLED "MARKET-SHARING" CARTEL AMONG THE MAJOR NUCLEAR SUPPLIERS, TO WHICH THE STATE DEPARTMENT TAKES EXCEPTION FOR A NUMBER OF POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC REASONS.

YET WHATEVER FORM IT IS TO TAKE, AMERICAN LEADERSHIP IS THE ONLY PROMISING APPROACH WE HAVE. UNLESS THE U.S. IS PREPARED TO RESTRAIN ITS OWN APPETITE FOR LUCRATIVE OVERSEAS MARKETS FOR NUCLEAR PLANTS AND MATERIALS (AND THE TEMPTATION TO DANGLE NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY IN EXCHANGE FOR DIPLOMATIC CONCESSIONS, AS TO PRESIDENT SADAT OF EGYPT LAST YEAR) IT CAN HARDLY EXPECT ITS ALLIES OR THE SOVIET UNION TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT. IT IS THEREFORE A HOPEFUL SIGN, AT LEAST, THAT PRESIDENT FORD HAS MOVED SIGNIFICANTLY TOWARDS SETTING THAT EXAMPLE.

HIS ELEVENTH-HOUR INITIATIVE HAS BEEN UNGRACIOUSLY RECEIVED BY GOVERNOR CARTER, WHO BEAT MR. FORD TO THE PUNCH ON THIS ISSUE SOME MONTHS AGO. BUT NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY EXPORT IS NOT A PARTISAN MATTER. IT IS NOT A MATTER ON WHICH EITHER PARTY -- OR ANY ADMINISTRATION -- CAN AFFORD TO BE LESS THAN WORLD-MINDED.

THE URGENT NECESSITY AT THE MOMENT IS TO HALT THE SALE OR SPREAD OF REPROCESSING PLANTS CAPABLE OF CONVERTING NUCLEAR "WASTE" INTO FISSIONABLE PLUTONIUM, EXCEPT UNDER STRICT INTERNATIONAL CONTROLS. IT IS THIS NECESSITY THAT MR. FORD'S NEW POSITION PAPER EMPHASIZES. AND THE COMPLEMENT IS THAT U.S. CAPACITY TO MAKE AND SUPPLY LOW-ENRICHMENT URANIUM (SUITABLE FOR POWER GENERATION BUT NOT FOR THE MANUFACTURE OF WEAPONS) MUST BE INCREASED -- THE SOURCE OF THOSE "6,200 JOBS FOR SOUTHERN OHIO" MR. FORD MENTIONED THE OTHER DAY.

THAT THE FORD ADMINISTRATION, EVEN SO LATE IN THE CAMPAIGN, SHOULD FIND IT ADVISABLE TO STAKE OUT A CLEAR AND RELATIVELY ADVENTUROUS POSITION ON NUCLEAR TECHNOLOGY IS A WELCOME SIGN THAT THE NEED FOR FORESIGHT IS TAKING HOLD AMONG SOPHISTICATED VOTERS AROUND THE COUNTRY. IF THIS IS POLITICS, IT IS POLITICS SERVING A SOUND PURPOSE.