

# Inner Space Race

JOHN HUNT

AN INNER space race is whirling around in the squirrel cage where Washington's bureaucrats run for a living. For the adversary agencies, the Air Force and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the outer space race is, of course, important. But the agencies' officials are confined to a world where real success is most directly measurable by how much power and what appropriations you manage to obtain. Thus each of these competitors views victory over the other as Goal Number One, and while each also identifies success for itself with space victory over the Russians, neither is right unless coincidentally. The opportunities for waste and other forms of mischief are patent and sizable.

In the fairest of fairness possible in such a depressing context, it must be said that it is the Air Force, having outdistanced all previous Army and Navy competition, which is the aggressor in this newest inter-service rivalry. NASA is doing what it can to protect itself, and even making retaliatory motions, but few of the Washington observers think it stands a chance. Objective histories will show the Air Force to be by far the most successful of all government agencies—by the predatory definition of success stated above. The informed predictions are that the airmen, who already spend practically all the money appropriated on war missiles, will before too long also secure control of practically all the money used for space explorations. A decade hence, this remarkable organization, conceived since World War II and yet possessed of an old-fashioned belief in its own unlimited and manifest destiny, promises to possess the kind of power which goes with the control of thirty to forty billions a year.

While it would complete the cast of an ultra-modern morality play to present NASA as a hapless and innocent victim, this would hardly be just. For the Space Administration also connives; that is, it attempts to match the Air Force in in-fighting techniques. These techniques consist of domestic propaganda and lobbying, plus salesmanship sometimes as crass as that of a

door-to-door brush salesman. The stakes in such a game are total, and so NASA, by agreeing to play, condemns itself to getting what it deserves.

As in any respectable Washington dispute, the one between the Air Force and NASA is officially described as being between "philosophies"—"philosophy" being the Capital's current favorite word for giving stature to a technology, a mere point of view or any statement, whether written or oral, in favor of self-interest. One "philosophy," espoused vigorously by President Eisenhower and officially by President Kennedy, at the insistence of the State Department, holds that U.S. rocketeering should be divided into two parts, to wit, war and "peace." The war missileery is considered useful for deterring the Russians and impressing the rest of the world with U.S. military strength. The "peace" part is supposed to show off American scientific genius as superior to that of the Russian, and also to demonstrate America's intention to build a better, brighter world with the new technologies and not just a more dangerous one.

By analogy, the distinction is like the one between the Atoms for Peace program and the tests of nuclear warheads. A tricky angle is that the same rockets are often used to propagandize both war-making ability and peaceful intention. The Atlas, for instance, is both the principal U.S. intercontinental missile and the Astronauts' orbital taxicab, while the shorter-range missile named Thor both sends aloft TV-and-telephone satellites and defends Europe against attack from the East. But, then, philosophers have long been known for their ability to make much of distinctions.

NASA IS the creature of this war-and-peace philosophy. But the Air Force is successfully peddling the line that the whole thing is schizophrenic balderdash. This "peaceful" space program is diletantism—so the Air Force philosophy goes. Instead of orbiting the Mercury men to discover if they get sick to their stomachs and if they prefer chopped chicken liver or chipped beef while space-riding, we should be sending up the forerunners of future space fighter-pilots. Photos of Alan Shepard planting a flag on the moon might give

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us a thrill, but the digging of the first moon foxhole by a combat (Air Force) trooper would give us security. The space race is really a space war and we had better face up to this fact.

The interpretation of all NASA and Air Force activities in terms of tactics in their inter-service battle for the billions is guaranteed to be an engaging exercise. Some persistent detective work will be necessary, since the present Administration avoids permitting troubles within itself to show through. What is needed is a little education in the methodology of the Washington spacemen; out of deference to them, we may call it the philosophy they don't talk about. The key tenet is that anything is possible for a space salesman. The Administration and Congressional officials who sign the checks must keep their own propaganda mills churning, and they lack the means to evaluate the scientific claims made for the proposed space projects. Since these claims—for instance on a rocket's range and weight-lifting ability—can't be proved until the thing is actually built and tested, the salesman can hardly be faulted if he promised too much. Indeed, many changes in plans are taken for granted as research and development go on. Promises are never lies—they represent optimism and determination and even courage. Should the delays and extra costs get embarrassing, the Air Force will announce routinely that the original version of the rocket is being put aside in favor of a more "advanced" version, probably involving some "break-through."

Should this sound too cynical, let it be added at once that it is the patriotic duty of each man in these competing agencies to sell his agency. The detail that probably tells most about how pervading the atmosphere of high-pressure salesmanship has become on the space scene, is that the Air Force recently instructed contractors, when they submit some current project proposals (which the Air Force will use to sell the appropriations people), to restrict the documents to so many pages. One recent project was rated at 150 pages, but the limits will doubtless grow as the projects get more expensive.

Unfortunately for NASA, it is in a much weaker position than the Air Force when it comes to sending the space salesmen off on their rounds. For one thing, the Air Force is insatiable, but more important, Air Force and NASA are engaged in a new version of one of Washington's oldest battles, the one over whether government projects should be developed in government arsenals or by private industry. As it happened, NASA was initially established with government-owned facilities. Indeed, NASA rose from the ashes of a previous Air Force victory: the one over the Army, which had brought the German rocketeers to this country after World War II. And was doing some fine space work until the comparatively unimaginative soldiers, deci-

mated by Air Force attacks, found themselves stripped of practically all space assignments. Possessing arsenals, NASA favors the arsenal system, and has recently been asking for more direct control, and less contractor control, over NASA properties and projects.

In contrast, the Air Force farms out, quite literally, the planning, programing, developing and testing of its rocket work on defense as well as space. It is little known that the Air Force doesn't develop or build rockets; it lets contracts. In this regard, the Air Force operates like a broker who buys and sells ideas and technology. There is hardly any wonder about this, since the Air Force never did luck into possession of a scientific staff of its own, as NASA did. Thus, the airmen have on their side all the salesmanship the contractors can provide, inspired by their natural enmity toward the arsenal system. And it doesn't hurt the Air Force's cause at all when one of its drummers points out to a Congressman that the airmen plan to pump some hundreds of millions into a company in the legislator's district. The least that can be said is that the Air Force and most of the aerospace industry are highly articulate and have such vital interests in common that they're thicker than thieves.

FROM ITS inception, the space rivalry has been marked by some fantastic and often funny fakery—and, naturally enough, the fantasies, the fun and the fakes reach new peaks now that the contestants have been honed down to two. A likely *modus operandi* in tracking the NASA—Air Force rivalry is to believe half the claimed successes and none of the stories about failures. Just to consider a few examples:

When Astronaut Scott Carpenter went into the Atlantic far from any ship or base, NASA showed its shock by committing the crime that was hardest to forgive. For endless minutes it said nothing about the man's fate. NASA knows that, given one big error, the Air Force will attack.

Within recent years, an observer has been able to find some stunning claims about how an Air Force rocket named Thor, based in Europe, scares the Russians with its accuracy. But what is this thing called Thor? In adaptation it was the rocket that repeatedly fizzled when the Atomic Energy Commission attempted to detonate a high-level nuclear blast over the Pacific. It was also the rocket—again in adaptation—that lofted the "switchboard" satellite for A.T.&T. and NASA. The space agency, lacking a rocket of its own for the communications job, did everything it could think of to make sure that the word "Thor" was never used, but that all the writers would say "Delta" instead.

A postscript to the Thor story is that it might well be worth shedding a tear of fury each time this rocket flops—for it was once pitted in competition, as the Air Force entry, against the Jupiter. The latter, an Army

product, was designed at Huntsville as a 1,500-mile war missile, but a version was rigged specifically to send a package into orbit. For months, the Army showed off Jupiter—for instance, by sending one of these rockets more than 3,000 miles down the Atlantic, and with such accuracy that President Eisenhower was later able to produce the nose cone on TV. The military commanders at Huntsville had to give specific orders to the Jupiter builders, it is reliably reported, that under no circumstances should they fuel the Jupiter's fourth stage on these test flights. If they had, an orbit would almost certainly have been achieved, most likely before Sputnik. Finally, this super-successful Army rocket was matched against the Thor, which had hardly been built, let alone tested and perfected. Propelled by Air Force salesmanship, Thor won, and Jupiter has passed from the space scene.

And then there is the incredible story of the Centaur—almost a fairy-tale. This rocket came about when governmental commanders were convinced—by the Air Force—that the country couldn't wait for NASA to develop such giant space-exploration rockets as Saturn, which will have more weight-lifting ability than anything the Russians have presented so far. Based on the Atlas, Centaur would plug the time gap; in the official terminology, Centaur was termed "vital" to the space program.

But there was a catch: it had no clear military use; this, under the official space "philosophy," meant it had to be assigned to NASA. This was done, but with the proviso, which the Air Force was able to sell, that actual management should be done by the Air Force. Lacking managers, as explained earlier, the Air Force assigned the deal to its pet contractor, General Dynamics/Astronautics. As a peripheral detail, the Centaur was to orbit a satellite for use in military communications. Development of this package was assigned to the Army. It was almost like throwing a whipped dog a small bone, since the Army had long since been stripped of virtually all other space assignments.

**INVESTIGATING** Congressmen now charge that the Air Force and G.D./A. followed an astonishing course in building Centaur. The agency and the company, in the middle of the outer space race, worked casually and slowly, the investigators report. All the stress was put on the Atlas—a G.D./A. missile built for the Air Force itself. In time, the delays became so severe that management of the Centaur was taken from the Air Force and given to NASA. For once, the Air Force didn't complain, and NASA should have been warned accordingly.

For within weeks the investigation began—and it was NASA that was stuck with the blame. Its own officials were hard-pressed to dig their way out of this

hole, since they hadn't wanted Centaur in the first place. Meanwhile, the Pentagon decided that Centaur was so far behind schedule, and that its weight-lifting capacity was turning out to be so much less than expected, that the communications-satellite project should be "reconsidered." Under reconsideration, the satellite assignment was taken from the Army and given to—the Air Force. With a failure of its own, the Air Force thus managed to get the ashes of criticism heaped on its new rival, NASA, and tweak the nose of its late rival, the Army.

As if all this weren't enough, an Air Force Atlas, being tested by General Dynamics/Astronautics, exploded with such violence that it irreparably damaged the Centaur NASA was desperately trying to get into shape for flight. As you might have guessed, it was the only Centaur NASA had even close to completion, after an expenditure of \$350 million.

But aren't such mistakes inevitable in any program involving so many billions? The two-part answer is: (1) indubitably, but (2) the "philosophy" of the inevitability of error is a bureaucratic commonplace for reciting on days when errors have been found out and so is hardly likely to do much for civilian morale depressed by doubts about where the missile money goes. The view of some observers is that the space program was jerry-built, or, perhaps more accurately, was slapped together as were so many of the emergency agencies and programs during the wars. In those beginning years, when the government had more hopes than rocket power, the official and understandable "philosophy" was that competition among the services was a good thing, since it would impel all services to do their best, and even better than that. At that time, the Air Force loudly supported the competition principle, and joined in opposing proposals that a new Missile Agency, on the style of the Atomic Energy Commission, should be set up.

But now, as a matter of hard fact, the competition is over. Two missile agencies exist, with clearly defined responsibilities—the Air Force in full charge of the war work, NASA running the scientific show. Each minute these agencies spend trying to get at each other's throat is a disaster of sorts—for they can only hurt each other, not the Russians. Unfortunately, no one has ever been able to convince the Air Force of these facts. But then the Air Force organization, most spirited and high-powered in government, has from its beginning been operated on the conviction that the first purpose of existence is to grow, and has done it so successfully as to make its rivals feel fortunate to survive.

Let me give one final case history. It involves the recent Disney movie "Moon Pilot," supposed to be a comical story of the first moon journey. Moon exploration is, by official decree, NASA's responsibility, but the Air Force managed to wangle itself into the movie deal,

and, eventually, all services, Air Force, NASA, Army and Navy, were supposed to be cooperating with the studio. The joint effort soon became a race. The Air Force soon forged far ahead. As usual, it had an aggressive information officer on the scene in Hollywood. He was able to provide Disney executives VIP treatment

at a missile launching at the Air Force's Vandenberg Base. Finally, the officer popped the big question. Why shouldn't all the officers shown in the movie be presented as Air Force officers? Walt Disney agreed, and all the actors were dressed in Air Force blue. In that sense, anyway, "Moon Pilot" was futuristic.

### *At the United Nations*

## Sanctions and South Africa

STEPHANIE GERVIS

EARLY IN November, the United Nations ended ten years of condemnation without instrumentation in the area of racism—on paper. By a vote of sixty-seven to sixteen, with twenty-three abstentions, the General Assembly passed an Afro-Asian resolution not only condemning the Republic of South Africa for its policy of apartheid, but recommending sanctions and, if necessary, expulsion of South Africa from the U.N. for continued refusal to abandon its official separation of the races. The key to the probable effectiveness of the resolution, however, is not how many voted for it, but who did and who did not.

Three of the sixteen who did not were the United States, Britain and France. Even the Africans admit that whether they have actually succeeded in adding any bite to the U.N.'s annual bark of protest against apartheid depends on the participation of the Western powers in the recommended sanctions: the breaking off of diplomatic relations with the government of South Africa, the prohibition by each state of the entry of South African ships into its ports and of its ships into South African ports, a boycott of all South African goods and restraint from exporting goods, "including all arms and ammunition" to South Africa, and the refusal by each state of landing and passage facilities to aircraft which belong to the South African government or to companies which are registered under the laws of South Africa.

Although the Western "big three," plus Greece, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, Australia, Belgium, Canada, and, of course, South Africa voted against the resolution, an unsuspecting democrat would naturally assume that, with the obvious exception of South Africa, the dissenters would go along with the majority. Ironically enough, the very democracies that taught the

Africans the principle of majority rule are now about to instruct them in the art of breaking it, because there is little doubt on either side that those who did not vote for the resolution will not implement it—or at least not the paragraphs on sanctions.

Every nation that spoke on the subject in the U.N. joined in the condemnation of South Africa, but those who dissented, those who abstained, and even some of those who voted for the resolution as a whole questioned both the wisdom and the efficacy of sanctions and the threat of expulsion. Had the Africans allowed a paragraph-by-paragraph vote on the resolution they would have won on the sections deploring apartheid, the provision for a U.N. watchdog committee to "keep the racial policies of the Government of the Republic of South Africa under review," and probably on the request that member states "inform the next session of the General Assembly" of what they have done to dissuade the South African government from "pursuing its policies of apartheid." The fate of the sanction and expulsion paragraphs, however, would have been doubtful. Since for the Africans these last were the really significant sections of the resolution, they pushed for a vote on the draft as a whole and won.

ONE OF THE leaders in the fight for the resolution, J. E. Jantuah of Ghana, summed up the African sentiment when he told the Special Political Committee that while all delegations agreed in denouncing the policy of apartheid, not all of them had the honesty and the courage to take the steps really necessary in order to eradicate it.

Speaking for the anti-sanction forces in the Special Political Committee debate, U.S. Ambassador Francis T. P. Plimpton asked whether the passage of a resolution recommending sanctions would bring about the practical result sought. "We do not believe," he answered, "this would bring us closer to our objective—

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