

ALSO BY THE AUTHOR:

TET!

THE ★ TURN

FROM THE COLD WAR TO A NEW ERA

THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION 1983-1990

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N E W Y O R K
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S I N G A P O R E

well known as the moment when some things began quietly to change for the better despite the sharply rising tension between Washington and Moscow. The narrative ends with the events of the Washington summit of mid-1990, the last important meeting of which a detailed account is available to me at this time.

I have written this book primarily for the use of interested citizens, journalists and students in the United States, Soviet Union and elsewhere. To make this work as useful as possible to scholars and historians as well, I have provided extensive notes at the end of the text identifying the sources I have relied on, especially for information that was not previously or generally available, except for material given to me in confidence.

As a practitioner of what might be called "contemporary history," which seeks to transcend journalism but is written only a few years after the fact, I have been inspired by a quotation from C. V. Wedgwood, a British historian: "History is written backward but lived forward. Those who know the end of the story can never know what it was like at the time." My effort is to write an early account of one of the great turning points of history, even without knowing the end of the story. What follows is intended to convey what happened, and what it was like at the time.

Don Oberdorfer
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I. A Candle in the Cold

The snow began falling Thursday night, about an hour after Secretary of State George Shultz arrived home from a twelve-day trip of twenty-one thousand miles to China, Japan and other Asian nations. Late the next morning, federal government workers were dismissed because of the unrelenting heavy snowfall, and Shultz was warned by Metropolitan Police that if he did not leave the State Department soon he would be snowed in for the night. On Saturday, February 12, 1983, Washington awoke to a rare winter scene of sixteen to twenty inches of snow and flurries all around. As skiers frolicked on Washington streets and snow plows struggled to open two lanes for traffic on Pennsylvania Avenue, President and Mrs. Ronald Reagan canceled their plans to spend the weekend at Camp David, their Catskill Mountain retreat, and invited George and O'Bie Shultz to the family quarters of the White House for dinner. On that Saturday night in early 1983, in the wake of one of the most severe blizzards the capital had seen in this century, United States policy toward the Soviet Union began to change.*

The first two years of Reagan's administration had concentrated on the domestic economic shifts that were being called the Reagan revolution and the massive military buildup sponsored by

* A nickname derived from her maiden name, Helena O'Brien.

the President. But starting with the intimate dinner with the Shultzes, Reagan would shift more of his attention to making contact with the Soviet Union in a manner that could ease the tension between Washington and Moscow. Although no one—including Reagan himself—could have predicted it at the time, this would be the start of a change for the better in relations between the two leading nations of the world. In the beginning, the shifting of gears would be almost imperceptible, an unseen quickening of presidential interest in ties with the Soviet Union.

In the initial stage, Reagan's desire to engage the Soviet Union in more productive dialogue would not get very far. His administration was not ready and, equally important, the leadership in the Kremlin was in disarray. Eventually there would be a new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, who would develop new policies toward the United States and the rest of the world, and after that a successor U.S. president, George Bush, who would take the improved relationship with Moscow into a more openly cooperative phase. In 1989 and 1990 Bush and Gorbachev would work together as the Berlin Wall came down, Germany was reunited and Iraq was forced to end its conquest of Kuwait.

Those dramatic shifts were still unforeseen at dinner in the White House on the snow-covered evening of February 12. Reagan told Shultz that he had been fascinated by the television coverage of the secretary's trip to China, where he had met Deng Xiaoping and other Chinese leaders in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The President, encouraged by his wife, Nancy, wondered if it would be possible to arrange his own journeys to the Soviet Union and China, and how this might be done. Shultz replied that such trips would be "a great idea if it comes about in the right way." He explained that to make such top-level visits meaningful, step-by-step improvements in relations would be needed.

Reagan, reflecting on Shultz's point, said that he recognized it would be difficult to move quickly with either communist nation. The path was somewhat blocked, Reagan said, by his National Security Council staff, then headed by his longtime California associate William Clark, by his Department of Defense, headed by Caspar Weinberger, and by his own lifetime of harsh rhetoric about communists, which included the statement at his first press conference as President that the Soviets "reserve

unto themselves the right to commit any crime, to lie, to cheat" in order to promote world revolution. In his first two years in the White House, Reagan had become known at home and abroad as the leader of an anti-Soviet crusade of unprecedented intensity. Nevertheless, it was clear to Shultz that the President was interested in undertaking personal negotiations with the Soviet Union and ready to move toward improved relations.

Shultz told Reagan he was scheduled to meet at the State Department three days later, on Tuesday, February 15, with the veteran Soviet ambassador to the United States, Anatoly Dobrynin, as part of an extensive review of U.S.-Soviet relations that they had begun the previous month. "Why don't I just bring him over here?" Shultz suggested.

Reagan was enthusiastic, but he did not want the world to know about his private chat with the Soviet ambassador. Every effort should be made to keep the meeting strictly secret, the President decided. Reagan said he did not intend to get into the details of arms talks or other pending issues but to tell Dobrynin that if Soviet leader Yuri Andropov was ready to do business, he would also be ready.

Precisely at 5:00 P.M. Tuesday, Dobrynin and his two top aides, Oleg Sokolov and Victor Isakov, arrived as scheduled at the diplomatic entrance of the State Department and were escorted to Shultz's seventh-floor office. There, without prior notice to Dobrynin, Shultz told him that the President wanted to see the two of them privately. Dobrynin seemed neither surprised nor the least bit ruffled by this news. As Soviet ambassador in Washington since 1962, he had dealt with John F. Kennedy when the two nations came close to war in the Cuban Missile Crisis while Reagan was still a movie actor known best as the host of *General Electric Theater* and Shultz was dean of the Graduate School of Business at the University of Chicago. Dobrynin had conferred with every president since Kennedy, and was so familiar with the White House that when Mikhail Gorbachev came to call in 1987, the veteran ambassador guided him from the Red Room to the nearest toilet without directions or assistance, to the astonishment of the Americans present.

After informing Dobrynin of the meeting with Reagan, Shultz took him down his private elevator to a waiting White House car in the State Department basement garage. It was a familiar place to Dobrynin, whose limousine had been permitted to take him into the basement and park there in a secluded spot on his frequent confidential visits during the Nixon, Ford and Carter administrations. This practice was stopped by

Secretary of State Alexander Haig early in the Reagan administration in a symbolic declaration that Moscow's ambassador, even the long-serving dean of the diplomatic corps, would have no special privileges but would have to go through the public front door like everyone else. At Shultz's side in February, however, confidentiality was once more the order of the day. With even more stealth than the ambassador had experienced in the past, Shultz and Dobrynin were whisked past the Southwest Gate of the White House, the most convenient access point to the West Wing, where the President and his senior staff have their offices and usually receive visitors. They proceeded to the East Gate on the far side of the executive mansion, where official visitors to the President are rarely received. They were then escorted to the family quarters on the second floor of the White House, where Reagan was waiting.

Earlier in the day, Shultz had spoken once by telephone with Michael Deaver, the deputy White House chief of staff and close personal aide to Reagan, who heartily approved of the meeting with Dobrynin, and twice with National Security Adviser William Clark, who strongly disapproved. "Judge" Clark, a former California Supreme Court justice, saw the session as a ploy to engage Reagan in Soviet affairs, in Clark's view prematurely. He suspected that behind the scenes, perhaps behind the President's back, the event had been stage-managed by Shultz, Deaver and Nancy Reagan, all of whom were more interested than Clark in a warming of U.S.-Soviet relations. Shultz learned that Clark had urged the President to cancel the meeting with Dobrynin, but that his objections had been brushed aside.

For all of Reagan's well-known views about the Soviet Union, until the meeting with Dobrynin he had never had a serious business meeting with a Soviet official. Reagan had briefly met Leonid Brezhnev at a reception when the Soviet leader visited President Nixon in California in June 1973. As President, he had met Dobrynin at diplomatic functions at the White House and paid a call on him at the Soviet Embassy to sign the condolence book at the death of Brezhnev in November 1982, but that was the extent of his personal contact. For Reagan, this first attempt at face-to-face diplomacy with a representative of the other great power was of major significance. After his long career in acting, Reagan seemed to learn best by playing a role in the large or small dramas taking place around him. In the meeting with Dobrynin, Reagan for the first time was trying on the part of negotiator with the Soviet Union. He

considered this tryout encounter to be important and had prepared what he wanted to tell Dobrynin.

The meeting in the family quarters took nearly two hours, an unusually long conference for the President, whose attention span was notoriously short. About one-third of the meeting was devoted to the overall relations between Washington and Moscow, with Reagan emphasizing his willingness to be constructive. About a third involved the status of the arms control negotiations aimed at reducing strategic and intermediate-range nuclear weapons. The final third covered human rights.

Reagan devoted special attention to the plight of seven Pentecostal Christians from Siberia who had been living as unwelcome guests in the basement of the U.S. Embassy in Moscow since June 1978. The Pentecostals had pushed their way past surprised guards and taken refuge in the diplomatic building in an effort to obtain permission to leave the country. When Soviet authorities refused their demand to emigrate, the United States had permitted them to stay in the Embassy for humanitarian reasons. Reagan emphasized to Dobrynin that such cases ought to be solved quietly and quickly, and that release and safe passage for the Pentecostals would make it easier for him to take positive steps toward the Soviet Union.

The problem of the Pentecostals in the Embassy was just the sort of human interest story that seized the attention of Reagan, who was often bored with military hardware questions or broad foreign policy issues but was fascinated with the plight of individual people. More than a year earlier, when career diplomat Jack Matlock saw the President at the end of a tour of duty in Moscow, Reagan to his surprise did not ask him about General Secretary Brezhnev, Soviet foreign policy or arms control but about the Pentecostal Christians holed up in the U.S. Embassy basement. "Are we doing enough for them? Why do not the Soviets let them go? What goes on in their minds that they can't let people go? Why is it they won't let them practice their religion?" had been the questions on Reagan's mind. When Vice President George Bush and Shultz visited Moscow for Brezhnev's funeral in November 1982, they had taken time to look in on the Pentecostals in their cramped Embassy refuge because of Reagan's interest in the case.

After the discussion with the President, Shultz and Dobrynin returned to the State Department at 6:59 P.M. to join several aides on each side who had been swapping stories and making small talk while waiting for

them. During the review in Shultz's office that followed the White House meeting, Dobrynin referred to the case of the Pentecostals as "the special topic." The canny ambassador knew that this question—unlike many broader issues that had been raised—was something he might be able to do something about in the short run. In the cable he drafted that night on his surprise meeting with Reagan, Dobrynin recommended that arrangements be made to resolve the Pentecostals' plight quickly in view of the President's plea.

Reagan's interest in improved relations could hardly have come at a more difficult time, so far as Moscow was concerned. Andropov, who had been looking for ways to get talks with Washington going again since taking office at the death of Brezhnev, dropped out of sight from the end of January to February 21 for reasons that were not disclosed at the time, but that made a meeting with Reagan increasingly unlikely from that time on. That February, Andropov, who had a long history of kidney disease, suffered kidney failure so serious that for the rest of his life he had to undergo regular hemodialysis, a procedure of mechanical cleansing of the blood to remove the impurities that healthy kidneys would otherwise eliminate. Several times a week Andropov was hooked up to a dialysis machine in his office, in his Moscow apartment or in the special VIP section of the Central Clinical Hospital, and his blood was circulated through the device. When Reagan was initiating his contact through Dobrynin, the collapse of Andropov's kidneys was a state secret.

Dobrynin's cable did not receive an enthusiastic welcome in the Kremlin. The top levels of the Soviet leadership were worried about Andropov's health and furious at a long succession of insults and slights from Reagan as well as apprehensive about the massive U.S. military buildup. It appeared to the Kremlin that Reagan was "speeding up the arms race and making all kinds of nasty statements, and at the same time he's trying to get these people [out] and creating an impression that it will change much in our relations," according to Georgi Kornienko, who was first deputy foreign minister at the time. Nevertheless, it seemed to the professional diplomats in Moscow that it should not be hard to provide exit permits for two families of Siberians if Reagan was so interested in them. The Kremlin leadership agreed that the continuing presence of the Pentecostals in the U.S. Embassy was "a stupid obstacle" to improved relations and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko recommended that it be solved, recalled Andrei Aleksandrov-Agentov, the foreign policy assistant to General Secretary Andropov.

On February 28, a few days after Andropov returned to work in the Kremlin, the Soviet Embassy notified the State Department that Moscow would reassess the situation of the Pentecostals in the Embassy, "taking all factors into account"—language that suggested that they would be permitted to leave. By April all the Pentecostals had left the American Embassy, and before the end of June they and other members of their extended families were on their way out of the country.

On July 28, U.S. and Soviet negotiators agreed on a new long-term grain agreement worth \$10 billion in sales to U.S. farmers over the next five years. Reagan insisted at the time, and repeated in his memoirs, that this was a concession to the Kremlin in response to the release of the Pentecostal Christians, which he considered "a hope-giving development" in a situation of almost total conflict between the two countries, and "the first time the Soviets had responded to us with a deed instead of words." While Shultz agreed that the release of the Pentecostals was a clear sign of Soviet willingness to work with Reagan, the secretary did not believe that the grain accord was an adequate quid pro quo. The Soviet leaders were well aware of the domestic pressure on the administration from American farmers to sell the grain, making it a less than convincing gesture of reciprocity, Shultz insisted.

• EVIL EMPIRE AND STAR WARS

Ronald Reagan was of two minds about the Soviet Union, and even some of his closest associates disagreed about which one was dominant. Michael Deaver, who had been an aide to Reagan since 1966 and had almost a filial relationship with the older man, was convinced that Reagan saw that he was destined to change the United States relationship with the Soviet Union. In Deaver's view, "He was the last president that we will ever have who had lived through two [world] wars and the depression. He was the most anti-communist president we would have or ever have had. And yet deep down I knew he believed that each of us was chosen for something and that this might be what he could do . . . because of his background, his age, his philosophy." William Clark, who had been an aide to Reagan even longer and who had originally hired Deaver in California, held a very different view of what Reagan believed. As the national security adviser saw it, Reagan was flatly opposed to just about everything the Soviets stood for and was skeptical about moving forward

with them until there was a clearcut structure for dialogue, a workable agenda and tangible Soviet moves to justify confidence.

The clash between Reagan's two oldest advisers on the White House staff is suggestive of the dichotomous nature of Reagan's views. On the one hand, he could condemn the Soviet leaders with sincerity and zeal, using the harshest rhetoric ever heard from a U.S. President, and on the other he could express a persistent willingness, even an eagerness, to reach out to them in constructive discussions. To some extent Reagan's duality of mind arose from his formative experiences as president of the Screen Actors Guild in Hollywood, which had left him with two vital convictions. One was a passionate opposition to communists, domestic or foreign; the other was an unbounded confidence in his own ability to convince others of the rightness of his positions in face-to-face encounters. By 1983 Reagan's vociferous opposition to Soviet communism was universally known. Only a few people knew that, at the same time, he was eager for contacts with Moscow. According to Shultz, the President never wavered or hesitated when given the opportunity to engage in dialogues with the Soviets, despite the opposition from close associates in the White House and elsewhere in the administration. Robert McFarlane, who observed Reagan at close range as his deputy national security adviser or national security adviser from 1982 to the end of 1985, ascribed some of his willingness to engage to a "self-confidence that he was an historic figure and that he was terribly effective in persuasion. . . . He had enormous self-confidence in the ability of a single heroic figure to change history."

The paradox of Ronald Reagan was never more pronounced than in early 1983. While seeking to open a working relationship with the Soviet Union along the lines discussed with Dobrynin on February 15, Reagan on March 8 delivered his famous dictum that the Soviet Union was "an evil empire" and "the focus of evil in the modern world." On March 23, he announced the ambitious and controversial Strategic Defense Initiative, fiercely resisted by the Soviets, to neutralize the Soviet military threat to the United States by making ballistic missiles "impotent and obsolete."

Some Reagan partisans would say later that the President portrayed the Soviets as evil and announced the Star Wars program in order to build up his bargaining power for future negotiations with Moscow. The evidence suggests, however, that Reagan, at least, was acting out of longstanding and strong convictions rather than any considerations of

strategy. While Reagan later found SDI useful in dealings with the Soviet Union, he was not a Machiavellian or even a Kissingerian figure seeking to manipulate the international environment through his pronouncements. Reagan held to a very broad strategy for dealing with the Soviets, which he had enunciated even before coming to office: build up U.S. military power and then negotiate from a position of strength. But he was not a tactician and was often uninterested in and even uncomprehending of the details of the negotiations themselves. Whatever others might think, Reagan saw no contradiction between speaking his mind against godless communists in Moscow and seeking to establish a working relationship with them, or between starting a new high-technology program that would negate the very basis of Soviet military power and at the same time seeking to persuade Moscow to make large-scale cuts in its nuclear weapons arsenal.

Reagan's denunciation of the Soviet Union as "an evil empire" was probably the most famous bit of oratory that this rhetorically inclined President ever uttered. But while it was cited in praise or condemnation hundreds of times by others, Reagan himself hurled his celebrated epithet at Moscow only once, on March 8, 1983, before the annual convention of the National Association of Evangelicals at Orlando, Florida. Reagan never repudiated the statement, but he also never repeated it. In fact, when asked by *Time* in mid-December 1983 if he felt his comments had been appropriate and if he would say the same thing again, Reagan responded, "No, I would not say things like that again, even after some of the things that have been done recently," a reference to the downing of Korean Air Lines Flight 007 and the Soviet walkout from the arms talks. Much later, at the 1988 Moscow summit, Reagan would say that the Soviet Union was no longer "an evil empire." Asked about his famous remark after he walked through Red Square, Reagan replied, "I was talking about another time, another era."

The words "evil empire" and "focus of evil in the modern world" originated with Reagan's conservative speechwriter Anthony Dolan, in his first draft of the proposed presidential speech to the convention of the Evangelicals, who were part of Reagan's conservative political constituency. Dolan had written the President's powerful anticommunist speech to the British Parliament the previous June and at every turn sought to dramatize Reagan's anticommunism, just as others in the Reagan staff and State Department sought to mute it.

Despite Reagan's interest in the Pentecostal Christians living in the

Moscow Embassy and the encouraging word from the Soviet government he had received a few days before, the President made no mention of this topic to the U.S. Evangelical leaders. Most of the speech concerned religious and sexual morality issues, especially the administration's demand that parents be notified if minor children were to be given birth control devices. Reagan's stand on this issue was so hotly debated within the White House that the President finally wrote this section of the speech in his own hand to silence the dissension. There was less attention in the White House to the briefer remarks on foreign policy, although at one stage a draft was returned to Dolan with the Soviet Union section entirely eliminated with a big "X" drawn across the paper by someone on the White House staff. When the matter was referred to Reagan, he restored the offending section and even strengthened it to some extent.

The main purpose of the international section of the speech was to enlist the Evangelicals in the administration's fight against the nuclear freeze movement, which sought an immediate halt to production of nuclear weapons. The nuclear freeze, which was backed by many American churches, was under intense debate in Congress. Reagan's argument against it was buttressed partly on policy grounds, such as the necessity for "peace through strength," but also in an emotionally charged message of moral judgment:

Let us pray for the salvation of all of those who live in that totalitarian darkness—pray they will discover the joy of knowing God. But until they do, let us be aware that while they preach the supremacy of the state, declare its omnipotence over individual man, and predict its eventual domination of all peoples on the earth, they are the focus of evil in the modern world. . . .

So, I urge you to speak out against those who would place the United States in a position of military and moral inferiority. . . . In your discussions of the nuclear freeze proposals, I urge you to beware the temptation of pride—the temptation of blithely declaring yourselves above it all and label both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire, to simply call the arms race a giant misunderstanding and thereby remove yourself from the struggle between right and wrong and good and evil.

Toward the end of the address, Reagan turned to a prediction about the future of the Soviet system that seemed merely hyperbolic at the

time, but in the light of world events later would appear prophetic: "I believe we shall rise to the challenge. I believe that communism is another sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages even now are being written."

Reagan had made a career of lambasting the Soviet Union from his days as a spokesman for General Electric two decades earlier to his campaigns for the presidency in 1976 and 1980, and thus it was hardly a surprise for him to speak out in vivid and even elemental terms. In this context, no one who read the draft of the Evangelical speech in advance predicted that the words would become a label for Reagan's views long after the occasion was forgotten. However, the catchy phrase "evil empire" seemed to sum up Reagan's early view of the Soviets in a world of black and white. Moreover, it was an allusion to the popular 1977 George Lucas film, *Star Wars*, a futuristic morality play about the struggle to wrest control of a galaxy from a threatening and immoral "empire," and its 1980 sequel, *The Empire Strikes Back*. Reagan's address to the Evangelicals was dubbed by the press the "Darth Vader speech," after the villain in the Lucas films.

Much has been written about the origin of the Strategic Defense Initiative, which quickly became known as the "Star Wars" plan, and which became a central issue in U.S.-Soviet nuclear arms negotiations. The key point in nearly all the accounts is that even before entering the White House, Reagan was uncomfortable with nuclear deterrence based on the principle of mutual assured destruction, in which each side checks the other with the threat of annihilation. He was fascinated with the prospect of a technological breakthrough that would create hardware that could stop incoming missiles. Reagan often called the idea "my dream," which suggests the magical nature of its hold on him. Some of his aides saw SDI as a way to create bargaining leverage with the Soviet Union; others saw it as an obstacle, making serious agreements with the Soviet Union improbable if not impossible. Reagan, though, appears to have been deeply committed to the idea for its own sake. No one was ever able to shake his deep belief that his dream could actually come to fruition and thus change the world for the better.

On July 31, 1979, almost eighteen months before becoming President, Reagan visited the North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), the underground nerve center responsible for defense against nuclear missile attack. There he discovered to his shock and dismay that there was no defense against even a single Soviet missile fired against the United States. According to Martin Anderson, who accom-

panied Reagan to NORAD and later served on his White House staff, Reagan left the command post shaking his head with dismay and worried that as President he would have only two choices—"to press the button or do nothing"—if there was a nuclear missile attack.

By early 1983, as recounted by Anderson in his book *Revolution*, the concept of creating a defense against ballistic missiles had been endorsed by the Republican party and explored in several high-level meetings in the Reagan White House, in which Anderson participated. Adding to Reagan's strong views were his experiences at periodic doomsday exercises after becoming President in which he was forced to consider what he would do if informed that missiles had been launched against the United States. Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger, who participated along with Reagan in these periodic exercises, observed that they were "a very unsettling experience" for the President. Weinberger knew from discussions with Reagan going back to their California days that "he had a very deep revulsion to the whole idea of the nuclear weapons" on a philosophical level and that he was even more gripped by "the spectacle of not having any defenses, having these things coming in, and what does he do as president? Does he order retaliation or what? How many minutes have we got? 12 minutes, 9 minutes, all that."

In a highly classified briefing by the Defense Department, Reagan was informed that at least 150 million Americans would be killed in a nuclear war with the Soviet Union, a horrifying prospect. Reagan, who sponsored the most massive peacetime military buildup in U.S. history, was no secret dove. He was, however, deeply opposed to the possession and use of nuclear weapons, despite the fact that they had become the central ingredient in U.S. military power. Reagan stated his anti-nuclear weapons views on many occasions but, strangely enough, it was a shock when they later surfaced in negotiations with the Soviet Union. Most officials of the administration, as well as much of the public, did not take his anti-nuclear weapons statements seriously because they seemed dreamy and impractical for a U.S. president, especially one with Reagan's anticommunist policies and hard-edged oratory.

Reagan's abhorrence of the nuclear threat was an important factor in his decision to launch the ballistic missile defense program in a meeting with the uniformed heads of the U.S. military services, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, on February 11, 1983. It was the Friday of the great Washington snowstorm and the day before the cozy dinner of the Reagans and Shultzes. Road conditions were so bad that the chiefs had to use

four-wheel-drive vehicles to get to the White House for the noon meeting. Once around the table in the Cabinet Room, the military leaders, partly by prearrangement with McFarlane, then deputy White House national security adviser, reported that the possibility of a space-based defense against incoming missiles was more promising than in the past.

"Wouldn't it be better to protect the American people rather than avenge them?" General John Vessey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs, asked Reagan, in a phrase he had picked up from a preliminary briefing by the chief of naval operations, Admiral James Watkins. When the chiefs finished their report, McFarlane interjected:

Mr. President, this is very, very important. For 37 years we have relied on offensive deterrence based on the threat of nuclear counterattack with surviving forces because there has been no alternative. But now for the first time in history what we are hearing here is that there might be another way which would enable you to defeat an attack by defending against it and over time relying less on nuclear weapons.

As McFarlane anticipated, Reagan immediately seized on what had been said and insisted that something be done to pursue strategic defense. During the dinner with Shultz the following evening, the President mentioned the possibility of a defensive shield over the United States, but the secretary of state was not aware of the discussion with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and did not realize that Reagan's remarks had any immediate or operational significance.

To the shock of even some of the chiefs and the surprise of all but a very few intimate aides, the President proceeded in rapid fashion to develop the idea the Joint Chiefs had given him. On March 23, only six weeks after the meeting with the military leaders, Reagan announced in a televised address his high-priority program to intercept and destroy incoming missiles:

Wouldn't it be better to save lives than to avenge them? Are we not capable of demonstrating our peaceful intentions by applying all our abilities and our ingenuity to achieving a truly lasting stability?

I think we are. Indeed, we must. After careful consideration with my advisers including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I believe

there is a way. Let me share with you a vision of the future which offers hope. It is that we embark on a program to counter the awesome Soviet missile threat with measures that are defensive. Let us turn to the very strengths in technology that spawned our great industrial base, and that have given us the quality of life we enjoy today. . . .

With these considerations firmly in mind, I call upon the scientific community in our country, those who gave us nuclear weapons, to turn their great talents now to the cause of mankind and world peace, to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete.

If the United States could perfect a defense against ballistic missiles or even make such a defense somewhat effective, the nature and balance of military power in the world, the workings of alliances and much else would be altered fundamentally, as the world was altered by the development of the first atomic bomb or the intercontinental ballistic missile. However, high administration officials, who normally were deeply involved in international decisions, knew nothing of this revolutionary aspiration until the very eve of the announcement. A large number of experienced government professionals thought (and still think) that a space-based shield to stop ballistic missiles was impractical. But whether they were inclined to scoff or to believe, just about everyone had serious qualms about the way the program was launched. Far more than the development of the atomic bomb or the intercontinental ballistic missile, this dramatic development was a bolt from the blue, even to senior officials of the government.

McFarlane, who had helped engineer the surprise decision, was rebuffed when he proposed trying to enlist the support of top congressional leaders of both parties and major U.S. allies before the announcement. Reagan wanted it held strictly secret until it could be announced on his own terms, McFarlane was told. Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, who later became a leading proponent of strategic defense, was appalled to be handed a copy of Reagan's intended text near midnight in Lisbon, Portugal, where he and Secretary of Defense Weinberger were attending a NATO meeting. "That's no way to surface a new policy," Perle protested. With the approval of Weinberger, who had opposed the Joint Chiefs' original recommendation, Perle initiated a transatlantic blitzkrieg of telephone calls seeking a delay until

the matter could be more fully discussed and allies informed. The request was rejected.

Shultz, who also received an "eyes only" draft of the statement just a day or two in advance, was immediately concerned that a sudden and radical change in U.S. strategic doctrine would "hit the allies right between the eyes." The more Shultz looked into it, the more he believed that the program had not been thought through. Shultz detected a confusion in Reagan's mind, which persisted for years to come, about whether the shield would stop all nuclear weapons, including those on bombers and cruise missiles, or only ballistic missiles. To allay Shultz's concern, some changes were made in the speech. But the day before the announcement, Shultz told Reagan in a telephone conversation that he had "great reservations" about the implication that the United States was changing its strategic doctrine.

In Moscow, the SDI announcement brought forth fierce opposition. If ballistic missiles were actually to be rendered "impotent and obsolete," the principal basis of the Soviet Union's claim to be one of two great nuclear powers would be demolished. The creation of an antimissile shield would make it theoretically possible for the United States to plan, threaten or even execute a nuclear strike against the USSR with diminished fear of retaliation. Even more frightening to the Kremlin was the prospect of being forced into an expensive high-technology race with the United States that it could not afford and probably could not win.

The first retort came from Andropov himself on March 26, only three days after the Reagan SDI speech and the day when the Soviet leader resumed his official activities after what was rumored to be several days of kidney treatment. In an interview with *Pravda*, Andropov accused Reagan of telling a "deliberate lie" about Soviet military strength, the harshest personal comment from a Soviet leader against his U.S. counterpart in many years. He charged that the SDI plan was "a bid to disarm the Soviet Union in the face of the U.S. nuclear threat."

Experts at the Soviet Academy of Sciences, stimulated by physicist Yevgeni Velikhov, who had just returned from discussions with American physicists and space scientists at the time of Reagan's announcement, argued that the Star Wars program was impractical and that any partial success it might achieve could be nullified by modest countermeasures. But despite such advice and doubts about its practicality, the Soviet leaders "could not ignore such a position" as that outlined by Reagan on March 23, especially since it was soon to be backed up by many

billions of dollars, according to Andropov's foreign policy assistant, Andrei Aleksandrov-Agentov. "So whether it was a practical idea or not, they had to account for the reality—the real factor in the policy of the United States. That's why this Star Wars declaration was a contribution for substantial worsening of our relations without any doubt. And perhaps it was good that the reaction of Andropov was so swift, just to make things clear," said the Kremlin aide.

Reagan could hardly have guessed when he promulgated the SDI program that it would dominate negotiations with the Kremlin for the next four years or that it would be a catalyst for a critical reassessment in Moscow of the place of military power in the security of the Soviet state.

• A GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

The year 1983 marked the fiftieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between the United States and the Soviet Union, but it was not an auspicious time. The two most powerful nations were unremittingly hostile in their speech and thought about each other, and the powerful buildup of weapons on both sides continued at a rapid pace. George Kennan, who had had longer personal experience in U.S.-Soviet diplomacy than any other American, having arrived in Moscow as a young Foreign Service officer shortly after President Franklin Roosevelt extended diplomatic recognition to the Soviet state, said in May 1983 that U.S.-Soviet relations were in "a dreadful and dangerous condition." A prestigious commentator on Soviet affairs, Kennan declared that the antagonism, suspicion and militarization of thought between Washington and Moscow "are the familiar characteristics, the unflinching characteristics, of a march toward war—that, and nothing else."

Aside from the U.S. purchase of Alaska from the czarist government in 1867 and the brief U.S. intervention in Siberia against the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the interaction of these two vast and populous continental countries had been limited until the fortunes of war made them allies against Hitler's Germany in World War II. While remarkably different in many respects, Russia and America had been linked from time to time as potentially powerful outsiders that could dominate the Old World. As far back as the 1830s the French historian and political

theorist Alexis de Tocqueville, in his classic work, *Democracy in America*, wrote:

There are at the present time two great nations in the world, which started from different points, but seem to tend towards the same end. I allude to the Russians and the Americans. . . .

All other nations seem to have nearly reached their natural limits, and they have only to maintain their power; but these are still in the act of growth. All the others have stopped, or continue to advance with extreme difficulty; these alone are proceeding with ease and celerity along a path to which no limit can be perceived. The American struggles against the obstacles that nature opposes to him; the adversaries of the Russian are men. The former combats the wilderness and savage life; the latter, civilization with all its arms. . . . The principal instrument of the former is freedom; of the latter, servitude. Their starting-point is different and their courses are not the same; yet each of them seems marked out by the will of Heaven to sway the destinies of half the globe.

De Tocqueville's prophecy seemed to be coming true when the United States and Soviet Union emerged from World War II as the two most powerful states and the leaders of global alliances that dominated the world politically and militarily. With the rapid growth of nuclear weapons programs, Washington and Moscow became the acknowledged leaders of a bipolar world, each holding the other at bay in a potentially suicidal grip described by J. Robert Oppenheimer as "two scorpions in a bottle."

By the mid-1980s, the United States and the Soviet Union, with about 11 percent of the world population, accounted for 23 percent of the world's armed forces, 60 percent of its military expenditures, 80 percent of the weapons research and 97 percent of all nuclear weapons. The world's stockpile of nuclear weapons, which totaled three in 1945 (one was test-fired and the two others destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Japan), had grown to over sixty thousand by 1983. The nuclear arsenals contained the equivalent of more than 1 million Hiroshimas. They represented 2,700 times the explosive energy released in all the battles of World War II, when 38 million people died.

Despite the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaties (SALT I and II) of 1972 and 1979, which were intended to limit the growth of their weap-

only, by 1983 the United States possessed more than ten thousand "strategic" nuclear weapons capable of hitting the Soviet Union on long-range missiles or bombers, and the Soviet Union possessed nearly eight thousand "strategic" weapons deployed to strike the American homeland.

With their two formal alliances, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact, and an extensive network of bilateral arrangements, Washington and Moscow could put military forces almost anywhere on the globe within a matter of days. The United States maintained more than three hundred major installations abroad, covering 2 million acres. The Soviet Union had fewer permanent sites but, since the 1970s, had demonstrated a global reach of impressive proportions. Soviet military aircraft had flown Cuban troops into African wars at short notice. In a direct application of military force, more than one hundred thousand Soviet troops were fighting outside the country's borders in Afghanistan.

Conflict, violence and international tensions had increased in nearly every region of the world, with 45 of the world's 164 nations involved in forty conventional and guerrilla wars in 1983, according to a study by the U.S. Center for Defense Information, a private think tank led by former senior military officers. The United States supplied arms to twenty of the nations at war and the Soviet Union supplied arms to thirteen, but in many cases neither of the great powers could dictate to their clients the course or limits of conflicts that were fueled by religious fundamentalism, national and ethnic discord and struggles over resources.

Reagan had come to power convinced that, for the first time, the Soviet Union had achieved military superiority over the United States, placing the United States in a vulnerable position, and that a massive U.S. military buildup was necessary to rectify this imbalance. The prevailing climate of thinking in the Reagan administration was exemplified by the Defense Department's policy guidance for fiscal year 1983. A document stamped secret and intended to be used for military planning and internal consumption rather than public relations, it described the international strategic environment in dire terms:

The U.S. faces grave challenges to its national security in the 1980s. Traditional areas of superiority over the Soviet Union have been eroded or reversed because of the massive Soviet buildup of military power that has been inadequately answered

by the U.S. and its Allies. As a result, the Soviets are increasingly disposed to and capable of projecting their power abroad (directly and indirectly through surrogates) and exacerbating existing instabilities. Moreover, Soviet inspired and/or supported "wars of national liberation" will continue. Thus, the Soviets pose a serious threat to the U.S., its Allies and its interests at all levels of conflict and on a global scale.

The response to this threat, as the Reagan administration saw it, was the largest military buildup in U.S. peacetime history. Its purposes were described in the Pentagon's secret policy guidance:

U.S. forces must be capable of dealing with Soviet aggression in any area—Europe, the Persian Gulf, Northeast Asia, or elsewhere—both by defending in the given area and, if to our advantage, by exploiting Soviet vulnerabilities elsewhere at times and places of our choosing. This ability to act simultaneously in widely separated theaters requires a mix of ready and sustainable forward deployed and U.S.-based forces, prepositioned stocks, U.S. naval superiority, mobility and support structure assets that will allow us to project power and fight at whatever level of intensity is required. This will involve utilizing the combined capability of the U.S., its allies and friends.

The deepening of antagonism reflected, in part, the rise in the United States of the conservative movement that sponsored the election of Reagan, who was the least centrist president of the modern era, and the shattering of the internationalist consensus that had dominated U.S. foreign policy since 1941. The objectives of the U.S. government abroad seemed to many to have shifted from the management of conflicts to more ambitious aims—to "prevail" in any possible war, to roll back what was perceived to have been an advancing tide of communism in the 1970s. In Moscow, the Soviet leaders believed that after herculean efforts they had finally achieved global equality with the United States in the 1970s, and that Washington had accepted this. They responded with bitterness and anger, tinged with a sense of betrayal, to the military buildup and anticommunist activism from Washington. In both camps, black and white thinking seemed to be prevailing over shades of gray.

The United States and the Soviet Union were shaving the tolerance that had averted dangerous confrontations in earlier decades.

The most prominent struggle between Washington and Moscow in 1983 was over influence in Europe, specifically the battle over deployment of the new U.S. intermediate-range missiles in West Germany, Italy and Britain. The Reagan administration had inherited this battle from the Carter administration, under whose leadership NATO vowed in December 1979 to deploy the new weapons within four years unless Moscow agreed to eliminate the threat posed by its own new intermediate-range nuclear deployments. The perception in the West was that the U.S. Pershing II and ground-launched cruise missiles would restore the military balance in Europe by compensating for the Soviet SS-20s that had been deployed in large numbers in the 1970s. But in Moscow, the new U.S. weapons, especially the highly accurate Pershing II, were seen as upsetting an existing balance and posing an ominous threat of surprise attack to the Soviet Union.

Western European peace activists, who saw their countries becoming the front line of nuclear battle between East and West, were marching in massive demonstrations against deployment of the new atomic weapons close to home. As the battle of the Euromissiles raged, it took on a political importance that overshadowed the military interests involved: For the United States to lose the right to deploy the missiles on the soil of its European allies would be a devastating blow to the NATO alliance; for the Soviet Union to lose the fight against those new U.S. weapons would be a powerful blow to its prestige in Europe. The stakes were high on both sides and, after years of negotiations, no compromise solution was in sight.

• MOVING TOWARD A THAW

In January, Shultz had begun his series of extensive discussions with Ambassador Dobrynin after sending Reagan a paper on "U.S.-Soviet Relations in 1983" proposing an intensified dialogue with Moscow and obtaining the President's permission to proceed. A month after the dinner with the Reagans on the snowy February weekend and the subsequent meeting of Reagan and Dobrynin, Shultz sent to the White House a more detailed paper outlining "Next Steps in U.S.-Soviet Relations." Shultz's

March 16 proposals were for a slow but steady opening to the Soviets through discussions across a broad agenda covering arms control, regional conflicts, trade and other bilateral issues and human rights. The last specifically included the case of the Pentecostals, who were then still in the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, and that of Anatoly Shcharansky, the Soviet human rights activist who had been imprisoned since 1978.

Shultz suggested that if things went well, he might travel to Moscow in July to see Foreign Minister Gromyko and General Secretary Andropov, and that in September Gromyko might come to Washington to see Reagan when the Soviet minister made his annual visit to the United Nations General Assembly. All this would help set the stage for a Reagan-Andropov meeting in 1984, a U.S. presidential election year.

Clark was strongly opposed to moving rapidly on relations with Moscow. Clark's deputy, McFarlane, told Shultz that he "couldn't believe the fly specking" of his proposals at the hands of the National Security Council staff. Another White House official said Clark sent his own handwritten message to Reagan, accompanying Shultz's proposals for movement on the Soviet front, expressing a sharp dissent. Vice President Bush told Shultz that "absolutely vicious memos" went to Reagan from the National Security Council staff whenever he sent over a memo from State. Indeed, Shultz seemed out of step with the strongly anti-Soviet tenor of the administration's rhetoric and its military buildup, and especially with the reluctance of Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger to contemplate any conciliatory moves toward Moscow. Yet Shultz remained convinced from his private talks with Reagan that the President was ready to move ahead toward more serious engagement with the Soviets.

The situation began to change in the spring when Jack Matlock, a career professional with extensive Soviet experience, was recruited to replace Richard Pipes, a Harvard professor known for his anti-Soviet views, as the chief Soviet policy official on the National Security Council staff. Matlock, who was U.S. ambassador to Czechoslovakia, was summoned home in May. In asking that he take the NSC post, McFarlane told him that "the President had felt that when he came into office we were too weak to negotiate, particularly after the shambles that our defense establishment was in, that his first priorities had to be getting the economy back in shape in terms of inflation and economic growth and getting the defense budget moving up to a more adequate level. And though this had not been totally achieved, he felt that the trends

were now sufficiently positive that it was time to move to the next phase of his agenda, which was to engage the Soviets in negotiation now that he had the chips to do it." Matlock took the job.

The restoration of U.S. self-confidence was a theme of Shultz's June 15 testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, which took a strange journalistic bounce and inadvertently played a role in cementing the administration's policy. The committee had been asking for months for a top-level presentation on Soviet policy, and Shultz's lengthy statement, which took him forty-eight minutes to read, was by far his most extensive since he arrived at Foggy Bottom. "Having begun to rebuild our strength," said Shultz in testimony that had been personally approved by Reagan, "we now seek to engage the Soviet leaders in a constructive dialogue—a dialogue through which we hope to find political solutions to outstanding issues." Shultz set out a very broad four-part agenda for dialogue with the Soviet Union, covering human rights, arms control, regional issues and bilateral questions, that was to shape U.S.-Soviet discussions for the rest of the Reagan administration. At the same time, Shultz outlined an ambitious policy of active opposition to Moscow, declaring that "where it was once our goal to contain the Soviet presence within the limits of its immediate postwar reach, now our goal must be to advance our own objectives, where possible foreclosing and when necessary actively countering Soviet challenges wherever they threaten our interests."*

The following morning, the two leading newspapers that reach the capital had opposite interpretations of Shultz's testimony in their top news positions on page one. *New York Times* reporter Philip Taubman, under the headline "Shultz Testifies Rifts with Soviet Aren't Inevitable," interpreted the testimony as unusually conciliatory and gave little attention to the confrontational aspects. My report in *The Washington Post*, under the headline "Shultz Outlines Policy of Opposing Soviets," accentuated the ambitious strategy of checking the Soviets everywhere and gave less play to his conciliatory statements. Shultz, who had not intended to declare a policy change in either direction, was puzzled by the contradictory newspaper accounts. The State Department bureaucracy was equally perplexed and unsure how to explain Shultz's policy to inquiring journalists and foreign diplomats. After hours of uncertainty,

* Shultz also spoke of forging an American response to the USSR "beyond containment," a phrase that had little resonance in 1983, but would return with a different meaning and greater emphasis in the first year of the Bush administration.

State Department aides were authorized to conduct briefings along the lines of the *Times* version of the testimony. On June 18, Shultz enunciated the emerging consensus in a private meeting with Dobrynin, stressing that the United States had restored its strength and confidence and was ready to talk. "That was a watershed" in U.S. diplomacy, according to Thomas Simons, then the State Department's director of Soviet affairs. From that moment on, State's internal position papers and a growing number of public statements bore down on the theme of a stronger United States and its willingness to negotiate.

By coincidence, as Shultz was testifying in the Senate, Andropov was speaking to the final session of a policymaking plenum of the Communist Party Central Committee. On June 15, his sixty-ninth (and last) birthday, the Soviet leader suggested it was time to take a new look at Soviet foreign policy, declaring that "the threat of a nuclear war overhanging the world makes one appraise in a new way the basic meaning of the activities of the entire communist movement." The evidence is that Kremlin leaders were trying to decide if there indeed was any chance to deal with this strange, exasperating U.S. President, who was strident one day and seemed to be sending feelers for negotiation the next. Some argued the conciliatory line was all a charade, intended to boost Reagan's fortunes past the 1984 election. Others saw a possibility of working with Reagan. Either as diplomatic courtesy or in hopes of improvement, Andropov sent a July 4 message to Reagan, pledging the "unbending commitment of the Soviet leadership and the people of the Soviet Union to the cause of peace, the elimination of the nuclear threat and the development of relations based on mutual benefit and equality with all nations."

Several days after receiving the Independence Day message, Reagan decided to draft his own reply. This was not a new venture for the President, who had sent a letter to General Secretary Brezhnev in April 1981, while recuperating from the attempt to assassinate him. The President liked to write letters and hoped in this way to establish a direct connection with Soviet leaders. In the letter to Andropov, as with the Brezhnev letter, Reagan put his own ideas on paper in longhand and then discussed the missive with his top advisers.

Reagan's draft of his July 11 letter to Andropov reflected his strong antipathy to nuclear weapons. If it had been sent as Reagan originally wrote it, it would have been a historic document that first established

his goal of eliminating all nuclear weapons, a goal that the President, almost alone in his administration, ardently sought. Reagan wrote:

Let me assure you the govt & the people of the United States are dedicated to the cause of peace & the elimination of the nuclear threat. It goes without saying that we seek relations with all nations based on "mutual benefit and equality." Our record since we were allies in W.W. II confirms that.

Mr. Sec. General don't we have the means to achieve these goals in the meetings we are presently holding in Geneva? If we can agree on mutual, verifiable reductions in the number of nuclear weapons we both hold could this not be a first step toward the elimination of all such weapons? What a blessing this would be for the people we both represent. You and I have the ability to bring this about through our negotiators in the arms reduction talks.

Scratched out by Reagan after the last words of his longhand draft was another mention of his goal—"reduction talks that could lead to the total elimination of all such weap."

Reagan handed his draft to Clark the next morning, and the national security adviser in turn consulted some of the foreign policy experts on the White House staff. As was true with few exceptions during the course of the administration, the experts were horrified by the idea of eliminating nuclear weapons, considering this to be impractical and heedless of the nuclear deterrence that had kept the peace since 1945. In a memo to Reagan July 9, Clark recommended that references to nuclear weapons be eliminated "to counter the risk of so emphasizing the importance we attach to arms reductions as to lead the Soviets to up the ante." Reagan accepted his staff's advice and took out the references to reducing or eliminating nuclear weapons. Using the Clark memo as his guide, Reagan recopied the letter in his own handwriting on White House stationery, dated July 11, 1983, with these final paragraphs:

Mr. General Secretary could we not begin to approach these goals in the meetings now going on in Geneva? We both share an enormous responsibility for the preservation of stability in the world. I believe we can fulfill that mandate, but in order to do so, it will require a more active level of exchange than we have

heretofore been able to establish. There's much to talk about with regard to the situation in Eastern Europe and South Asia and particularly this hemisphere as well as in such areas as arms control, trade between our two countries and other ways in which we can expand East-West contacts.

Historically our predecessors have made better progress when they communicated privately and candidly. If you wish to engage in such communication you will find me ready. I await your reply.

The letter was received with surprise and confusion in Moscow, according to Kornienko, especially because the handwritten missive from Reagan coincided with a standard diplomatic demarche from Shultz giving no hint of potential movement in U.S. interaction with Moscow. The Soviets were puzzled about which U.S. view to accept as authentic and how to respond. After a few days, they solved the problem by sending back two separate replies—a tough Foreign Ministry response to the State Department message and a more positive Andropov letter to Reagan, also drafted in the Foreign Ministry, which was delivered by the Soviet Embassy to the White House August 4 in a sealed envelope. The letter included a brief PS in the Soviet leader's handwriting expressing the hope that Reagan would "give serious consideration to the thoughts I have expressed and that you will be able to respond to them in a constructive spirit." Andropov's handwriting was so shaky that White House aides felt Andropov was either under great tension or suffering from a motor infirmity.

In response to Reagan's suggestion of confidential communication, a procedure that was second nature in the Kremlin, Andropov wrote:

I shall welcome a concrete, businesslike and candid exchange of opinions with you on these and other questions. I agree that the exchange be confidential when the interests of the matter so dictate. For my part I would propose to do this through the Soviet Ambassador in Washington and a person whom you would designate.

Despite Dobrynin's status as dean of the diplomatic corps and his long experience in dealing with Washington officialdom, the Reagan administration was not happy about dealing with Moscow exclusively

through him. Dobrynin, a bluff, hearty man who had been an aide to Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov as well as Andrei Gromyko before becoming ambassador to Washington in 1962, was something of an operator, in Washington parlance, and officials were uncertain at times whether the ideas he expressed were his own or those of his government. In addition, Shultz often found that he could not understand what Dobrynin was saying in his accented but rapid-fire English, and the ambassador was much too practiced to use an interpreter. He also rarely took notes and usually was not accompanied by a note-taker, even in important meetings, raising doubts in Washington about the accuracy of what he sent back to Moscow.

Dobrynin, in turn, considered Shultz lacking in flexibility and may have doubted his clout within an administration that was sharply divided on Soviet policy. Dobrynin made a number of efforts to do business directly with the White House, as he had done in the days when Henry Kissinger was running President Nixon's foreign policy from the White House basement as national security adviser, often without the knowledge or participation of the State Department. After telephoning Clark on the occasion of the death of Brezhnev, Dobrynin opened a dialogue with the Reagan national security adviser and on several occasions exchanged confidential written messages between the Kremlin and the White House by sending an Embassy official to Clark's apartment. Shultz knew nothing of these exchanges.

In the summer of 1983 Clark sought to obtain formal responsibility for high-level dialogue with Moscow for himself and McFarlane, arguing to Reagan in a July 9 memorandum that "it's clear that the Russians have never taken any subordinate level seriously" and that the NSC staff (unlike the State Department) had a proven record of keeping secrets. Shultz, whom Clark described as "a solid economist," should perhaps take charge of a Pacific Basin initiative, the NSC adviser proposed to the President.

Clark also volunteered to travel to Moscow to pursue the U.S.-Soviet dialogue, an idea that had been suggested by Dobrynin. The notion that Shultz might go to Moscow in the summer, as the secretary had suggested in the spring, had faded because of the lack of progress in the relationship with the Kremlin. As it turned out, neither Clark nor Shultz went to Moscow in 1983.

• SHOWDOWN FOR SHULTZ

The summer of 1983 was not a good time for Shultz, who had been named secretary of state the previous summer after the ouster of Reagan's first secretary of state, Alexander Haig. Besides the differences of opinion and bureaucratic competition with Clark on Soviet policy, Shultz was engaged in what seemed to be a losing battle for control of policymaking regarding more urgent issues of Lebanon and Central America. Shultz had learned to his dismay in mid-July that McFarlane had gone to Syria and Saudi Arabia on a secret trip related to Lebanon aboard the airplane of the Saudi ambassador to Washington, Prince Bandar. Clark maintained then and later that Shultz had been informed of the NSC deputy director's clandestine visit, but the secretary of state was certain he was neither consulted nor even informed.

Even worse was the infighting over Central America. In the third week of July, Reagan approved a Defense Department plan for a large increase in U.S. air, sea and land operations near Nicaragua, including preparations for a possible U.S. naval blockade. The first Shultz knew of it was when *The New York Times* disclosed it with a splash on Saturday, July 23, in a front-page article by Philip Taubman. There was an immediate uproar in Congress, where Central American policy was under heated debate. When Shultz asked Clark on Monday morning if a new presidential order had been issued on Nicaragua, as reported in the *Times*, Clark was evasive. The NSC staff aide for Central America, Alfonso Sapia-Bosch, had shown a copy of Reagan's order to Shultz's assistant secretary for Latin affairs, Langhorne Motley, but refused to give him a copy and said he would only show it to Shultz if the secretary read it in his presence. The Pentagon plans had not been disclosed in interagency meetings at Motley's level that were supposed to be formulating Central American policy, nor at a National Security Council meeting on Central America that Shultz had attended.

At the White House on Monday morning, Shultz complained to Reagan that he was very concerned about disarray in administration policy. Clark, who was present, said everything was fine. Hearing two opposite opinions from Shultz and Clark, the President had said nothing. At another meeting with Reagan in the afternoon, Clark objected that Shultz's criticism was unfair. However, Shultz learned that the presi-

dential order on Central America, which he had not seen until after the contents were disclosed in the *Times*, had been issued fully a week earlier.

Making all this more humiliating for Shultz was the widespread press and public perception that Clark had become the dominant figure in U.S. foreign policy, as depicted in cover stories about Clark in *Time* and *The New York Times Magazine* and a front-page story by Lou Cannon in *The Washington Post* describing Clark as “the strong man of President Reagan’s many-sided policy in Central America.” On August 3, NBC’s veteran diplomatic correspondent, Marvin Kalb, reported it was unlikely that Shultz would serve in a second Reagan administration, if Reagan were reelected. Shultz complained to an aide, “The unraveling of my image is a problem. If they want to paint me as a hopeless, irrelevant person, it will be hard to correct.”

Confronted with this, Shultz boiled over, marching into the Oval Office and telling Reagan he was ready to resign. “Either you want a secretary of state who is sort of an errand boy—and if that’s what you want, that’s not me—or you want somebody that you can have some confidence in,” Shultz exploded. He said he was ready to leave, and nobody need worry about him because “I’ve got tenure” at Stanford University. In this first of at least four attempts to resign during his six-and-a-half-year stay at the State Department, Shultz gave the President a list of potential successors. Reagan, astonished at the sudden volcanic eruption by this seemingly steady team player and dismayed at the prospect of losing another secretary of state to internecine struggles, mollified Shultz with words of confidence in him and promises of greater authority and regular meetings with the secretary in the Oval Office.

George Pratt Shultz, sixty-three, a former Princeton football player and ex-Marine with a baby-pink complexion, brought to the job long experience in government and an interesting American background. An early ancestor, Peter Shultz, came to the United States from Germany around the time of the American Revolution, possibly as a mercenary to fight for the British, but soon took up the colonists’ cause. Later the family settled on farms in western Indiana and became Quakers; nevertheless, the second Peter Shultz, the grandson of the founding immigrant, was not a proper Quaker pacifist but a soldier for the Union army in the Civil War. Birl Shultz, the secretary of state’s father, was a history

teacher and high-school principal in Indiana before he became one of the first of his family to move East to obtain his Ph.D. at Columbia University. In 1922 he organized the New York Stock Exchange Institute to provide training for employees of the big board. “Doc” Shultz, as he was known, was the author of standard textbooks on the securities market and the respected mentor of a generation of Wall Street stock traders, including Donald Regan of Merrill Lynch, later secretary of the treasury and White House chief of staff. Regan described the elder Shultz as “tweedy, patient, encyclopedic in his knowledge of Wall Street and its workings . . . a worldly Mr. Chips.” Margaret Pratt, “Doc” Shultz’s wife, was the daughter of a prominent Episcopalian minister. The couple reared their only child, George, as an Episcopalian, but his Quaker heritage may have contributed to his reserved, self-contained way of dealing with others, an attribute that often made his personal views difficult to discern. An official who worked under him in the Nixon administration said that frequently “the only way you could get a clue about what George thought was how high he raised his eyebrow” even in meetings with close aides. Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle, who spent many hours conferring with Shultz on contentious issues, said, “There are substances that absorb radiation and substances that bounce it back, and he’s like lithium—he just absorbs enormous quantities of whatever you throw at him and you don’t get anything back.”

Shultz was an economics major at Princeton, where he acquired a Princeton Tiger tattoo on his rump that would fascinate his children and intrigue the public when its presence was reported in the press decades later. After combat service as a U.S. Marine officer in the Pacific in World War II, Shultz obtained his Ph.D. in industrial economics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1949 and began a career as a professor, with a sideline as a labor-management mediator. By the time he became secretary of state, he had held a wide variety of posts in a multifaceted career combining academia, government and business: professor at MIT; staff economist for the Eisenhower administration’s Council of Economic Advisers; dean of the Graduate School of Business at the University of Chicago; secretary of labor, director of the budget and secretary of the treasury in the Nixon administration; and president of Bechtel Corporation, the giant worldwide construction company headquartered in San Francisco. While at Bechtel he kept his hand in his original career by concurrently serving part-time as a professor of management and public policy at Stanford University and living in a faculty

house on the Stanford campus. Even on this part-time basis, Shultz was granted tenure on the Stanford faculty, which he retained along with his faculty house in an "on leave" status after resigning from Bechtel to become secretary of state in 1982. By that time, Shultz was a wealthy man from his business career, but he considered the campus his home. When troubled or challenged, he threatened to return to it as he did in the 1983 conversation with Reagan.

Shultz first met Reagan when Reagan, then governor of California, invited him to Sacramento in 1974, shortly after Shultz left the Nixon administration to live in California, and interrogated him relentlessly about the workings of the federal government. It was clear to Shultz that Reagan was planning to run for president and thinking about how to do the job of president if he should be elected in 1976. Later Reagan and Shultz sized each other up again at a dinner at Shultz's house at Stanford. Eventually Shultz served as chairman of Reagan's economic advisory committee in the 1980 campaign and was a spokesman on economic issues.

Flexible on many political issues but absolutely unyielding on questions that struck him as matters of personal or public ethics, Shultz as secretary of the treasury clashed with President Nixon in refusing to order the Internal Revenue Service to investigate the President's political enemies and in refusing to stop an IRS audit of Nixon's income tax returns. Nixon referred to Shultz as a "candy ass" in an Oval Office conversation that was taped and eventually made public in connection with Watergate. According to Reagan biographer Lou Cannon, Nixon wrote Reagan after the November 1980 election that "I do not believe that he [Shultz] has the depth of understanding of world issues generally and the Soviet Union in particular that is needed for this [secretary of state] job." Subsequently there were numerous reports that Shultz was Reagan's first choice as secretary of state but that a misunderstanding in a telephone conversation with Shultz during the transition period led the President-elect to believe Shultz had turned down the job. Shultz is certain that the job was never offered. Cannon, who looked into the incident extensively, concluded that Shultz was the first choice of Reagan's transition committee but that, perhaps because of Nixon's memo, Reagan chose Haig.

Shultz obtained his initial familiarity with the Soviet Union on two official trips to the USSR in 1973 while serving as Nixon's treasury secretary. He conferred with General Secretary Brezhnev, Premier Alek-

sei Kosygin and other high officials about a U.S.-Soviet trade agreement. As president of Bechtel, Shultz also had experience with Soviet officials, canceling the contract for construction of a proposed Moscow trade center after he came to suspect it could somehow be involved in espionage. Shultz was unimpressed with what he saw in the Soviet Union, which he described before becoming secretary of state as "a failure in economic terms" and "appalling as a system in human terms." While he was deeply conservative and skeptical about Moscow, Shultz's experiences also left him believing it was by no means impossible to deal constructively with the Soviet leadership. In 1983, Shultz was one of the few top officials in the foreign policy ranks of the Reagan administration who thought so, and the only one who had any practical experience in dealing with Soviet leaders.

Shultz was a very different figure from the secretaries of state who had preceded him over the previous decade. Henry Kissinger was a professorial conceptualizer of international affairs, a strategist who had a sophisticated European view of the flow of power among nations, but who was saddled with the task of ending an unsuccessful war and presiding over the ebbing of American endurance and international prestige. Cyrus Vance was a lawyer who took on the world, case by case, with great energy and integrity until sheer fatigue and accelerating conflict in Iran and Afghanistan shattered the chances for rational mediation. He resigned on principle over President Carter's unsuccessful hostage raid in 1980. Edmund Muskie, who served briefly after Vance's resignation, was a political figure of great prestige and communications skills who did not have time enough to make an impact in the job. Alexander Haig, Reagan's original secretary of state, was a career military officer turned politician, with a broad view of global strategy but also a transparent ambition for the presidency that poisoned his relations with Reagan's protective phalanx at the White House.

As an economist and a professor, Shultz brought to the job a patience for long-term enterprises and objectives that was unusual. His extensive labor-mediating experience gave him confidence in the utility of personal negotiations and a stolid equanimity when everything seemed on the verge of falling apart. On a bureaucratic level his four cabinet posts—more than any other American in history, except for Elliot Richardson, who tied the record—provided Shultz with a sure sense of how the Washington game was played. On the other hand, he was a newcomer to many international political and military issues that were familiar to

those around him, seeming at the start, for example, to be surprisingly naive about the Middle East, and he was a novice on arms control questions, many of which have highly technical aspects. As a correspondent covering U.S. diplomacy, I often found Shultz difficult to fathom, almost mysterious at times, because he so rarely gave a clue to what he was thinking or advocating in the inner circles. Much of what is in this book about Shultz's attitudes and especially his relations with Reagan was unknown to me and other journalists at the time because "the Sphinx," as we sometimes called him, would not tell us.

One thing stood out. Shultz was renowned in governmental circles as a man of integrity and good judgment. Kissinger, who later became critical of Shultz's plodding pace and lack of grand strategy as secretary of state, wrote in awe of his qualities in his memoir, *Years of Upheaval*, which was published just about the time Shultz was named secretary of state in 1982. "If I could choose one American to whom I would entrust the nation's fate in a crisis, it would be George Shultz," Kissinger wrote. By 1983, however, Shultz was facing a crisis of his own inside the Reagan administration.

By the time Reagan went to his ranch in California for his summer vacation in mid-August, the administration's inner struggle had abated temporarily and Shultz had decided to stay on. Moreover, Washington and Moscow had begun to take some modest steps toward improving relations. The Siberian Pentecostals who had been living in the U.S. Embassy had left the USSR for new homes in the United States, and a KGB official indicated to a U.S. diplomat that the celebrated dissident Anatoly Shcharansky might be released from prison early the following year. The Soviets had agreed to talks on upgrading the emergency "hot line" communications link with Washington and to separate discussions on the consular and cultural agreements that Shultz had proposed. More reasonable Soviet positions were noticed in the Madrid talks on European security and human rights issues, and on some minor aspects of the Geneva arms talks. The arrangements for the new Long Term Grain Agreement had been agreed to by negotiators on both sides. And on August 20, in a gesture recommended by Shultz, Reagan ended U.S. controls on the sale of gas pipeline equipment to the Soviet Union.

From California on August 24, Reagan sent a new letter to Andropov, which like the first one was not made public. This one was much less personal, being largely written by the White House staff, and in the main was a statement of the U.S. position in the Euromissiles dispute

in response to arguments advanced by Andropov in his August 4 letter. But in a broader dimension, Reagan observed in the first paragraph of his letter that he could see from Andropov's earlier letter "that we both recognize the awesome responsibility history has placed on our shoulders to guide the two most powerful countries in the world in this difficult and dangerous period." Reagan went on to say, in a passage that reflected his desire for dialogue:

c. H. S. I.

You have asked me to try to understand Moscow's view of some of the critical issues, and I can assure you that I do try. Could I ask in return that you take a look at the world as it appears from Washington? As Commander-in-Chief, I have not a single military unit on combat status. If all national leaders could say the same we would be on our way to a safer world. If each of us determined we would not resort to war as a solution to any problem, arms reduction would be simply and easily achieved. If on the other hand we approach the issue holding to a belief that war is somehow inevitable, then we are doomed to failure. I think that we must find a way either to discuss these problems frankly, or at the very least, to give greater weight to the attitudes of the other party when making fateful decisions. In the end, it really makes no difference whether we reduce these problems by specific understandings or by simply acting so that they are reduced. The essential point is that they must be reduced if we are to give the other important items on our agenda a fair chance of success.

Within a week of Reagan's letter, a serious new problem, unforeseen by either the President or the General Secretary, was to bring a crisis in their relations, beginning with a burst of rocket fire against a civilian airliner high above Soviet Asia.