

With a Foreword by Jack F. Matlock Jr., former U.S. Ambassador to the Soviet Union



# Inside <sup>the</sup> **SOVIET ALTERNATE** Universe

Dick Combs

The Cold War's End and the  
Soviet Union's Fall Reappraised

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**The Cold War's End and the  
Soviet Union's Fall Reappraised**

**Dick Combs**

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*To* CAROLE, VALERIE, *and* DOROTHY



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## **Foreword: Myths That Mislead**

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in December 1991, several unfounded myths have arisen in the public mind. One is that the Cold War ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union; another is that communism in the Soviet Union was brought down by Western military and economic pressure. These myths are based on flagrant distortions of recent history, but we must not wait until future historians, in the fullness of time, declare them erroneous—as I have no doubt they will. It is vital that American and Russian opinion makers understand the facts about how the Cold War ended, the Communist Party lost its hammerlock on the Soviet Union, and the Soviet Union collapsed.

Clarification of these features of late twentieth-century history is now urgent, for the myths have contributed to some of the most egregious foreign policy mistakes in American history. After all, the logic went, if military pressure brought down communism and started the successor states of the Soviet Union on the road to democracy and market economies, it must be a reliable instrument not only in responding to potential threats but also in implementing other aspects of foreign policy, including spreading democracy. There is a direct line of reasoning that led policy makers from these myths into the no-win quagmire now enveloping U.S. forces in Iraq.

The fact is that the end of the Cold War, the end of communist rule in the Soviet Union and the end of the Soviet Union itself are three separate events, interconnected but not identical. They happened in such quick succession that many observers, particularly those who predicted that none of these events were possible, tended to conflate the three into one and to pretend that all three were the fruits of American military and economic pressure. This, however, is far from the truth: the Cold War ended well before the Soviet Union disintegrated; the Communist Party's monopoly of political power in the Soviet Union was broken by Mikhail Gorbachev, not the United States or the West, and the Soviet Union fell apart because of internal contradictions, not pressure from the outside. In fact, if the Cold War had continued, Gorbachev's reforms would not have been possible and the Soviet Union—along with the Cold War—would probably still exist.

Were Western military and economic pressures at all relevant to what happened? Yes, relevant to the end of the Cold War, but not relevant to the collapse of Communist Party rule or of the dissolution of the USSR. The Reagan administration used military and economic pressures to encourage Gorbachev to end the Cold War: Reagan made it clear that if the arms race persisted the United States would win and the Soviet economy would suffer. But this pressure was used to make more compelling proposals to reduce arms, withdraw from military confrontations abroad, and improve protection of human rights. The aim of the pressure was to change Soviet behavior, not to bring the Soviet Union down. In fact, in the summer of 1991, President George H. W. Bush encouraged the Soviet republics other than the Baltic countries to enter the voluntary federation proposed by Gorbachev. At that time the United States preferred a democratic, voluntary union of twelve Soviet republics to twelve new independent countries.

The assumption that the Soviet Union collapsed because of Western pressure has been damaging not only to American policy. In Russia, it has contributed to the myth that the United States set out to destroy the Soviet Union in order to make Russia its vassal, intending to milk Russia of its natural resources as the United States systematically lured countries spun off from the Soviet empire into its own imperial domain. These ideas have contributed to the growth of authoritarianism within Russia and encouraged the Russian government to apply threats and economic pressure in dealing with some of its neighbors. It is high time we all got our history straight.

Understanding how and why the Soviet Union collapsed cannot in itself tell us how to solve the security problems facing us, but it can clarify what is *not* likely to work. Dick Combs' study of the Soviet collapse, therefore, is both timely and necessary. He has been able to approach the topic as a trained political scientist with extensive experience living in communist-ruled countries. Unlike some commentators (including the myth-mongers), he begins with his practical experience and observations of life under communism, then applies theories to understand what he was witnessed, rather than taking some theoretical approach off the shelf and forcing facts and events to fit it.

*Inside the Soviet Alternative Universe* not only sets the history straight, but also provides some useful lessons for present-day policy makers. As Combs explains, any effective foreign policy must be based on an understanding of the culture and mind-set of the people one is dealing with. Traditionally, American political leaders, whether "liberal" or "conservative"—terms that have little relevance to foreign policy issues—tend to assume that foreign

leaders think like Americans and share many of their basic assumptions. This is emphatically not the case: a successful American foreign policy must take into account how events and policies are perceived by others, and this means that American presidents not only need a cadre of trained professionals familiar with other cultures, but need to pay attention to what they have to say.

The United States, in fact, is well equipped with competent professionals in its Foreign Service—Dick Combs himself is one of the outstanding veterans—but foreign language expertise is short in most other American agencies. When presidents make serious errors of judgment, it is rarely, if ever, because they are ill advised by the professional staff, but because they either do not seek that advice, or that they ignore it. Worse than ignorance is the attitude that advice that does not conform to some pre-conception is disloyal. A misplaced demand for “loyalty” has contributed to some of the serious problems the United States faces at present. It would be well for all American political leaders to understand that one of the factors that contributed to the collapse of the Soviet Union was the clearly understood requirement that Soviet diplomats and intelligence officials report only what the political leaders wanted to hear. The road to hell can be paved not only with good intentions, but also with demands to tailor intelligence assessments and political advice to predetermined policies on the false grounds of “loyalty.”

Dick Combs’ study is a welcome addition to the many memoirs and scholarly studies devoted to the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union. Readers will be rewarded with a fresh view, penetrating insights and—equally important—a very good read.

Jack F. Matlock Jr.  
Booneville, Tennessee  
June 4, 2007



## Author's Preface

Given the many books and articles written about the Cold War's conclusion and the Soviet empire's demise, one would be justified in wondering why yet another volume dealing with these matters is merited. Some fifteen years on, however, our understanding of the war's end and the empire's fall remains clouded by disagreements among scholars, former insiders, journalists, and other commentators over the root causes of these remarkable events. For example, two major academic projects on the termination of the Cold War disclose that academic observers, along with practitioners on both sides of the conflict, have widely differing retrospective views on why the conflict concluded when and as it did.<sup>1</sup> The organizer of one project reports that its main outcome was "a complex and contentious body of scholarship and practical knowledge."<sup>2</sup> The organizers of the other project conclude that the end of the Cold War remains "poorly understood" and that consensus regarding the causes of its demise is unlikely ever to emerge.<sup>3</sup>

As for comprehending why the empire fell, even the late George Kennan, longtime dean of American Soviet specialists, expressed puzzlement: "Reviewing the history of international affairs in the modern era . . . I find it hard to think of any event more strange and startling, and at first glance inexplicable, than the sudden and total disintegration and disappearance . . . of the great power known successively as the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union."<sup>4</sup>

Historian of Russia and the Soviet Union Orlando Figes reinforced the point when he remarked that "the whole thing unraveled in just six years, between 1985 and 1991, and it all took place so unexpectedly that ten years later we are still unable to make sense of it—or of the societies it left behind."<sup>5</sup> While former CIA analysts tend to be defensive in the face of charges that they "missed" the Soviet regime's impending collapse, erstwhile CIA director and longtime Soviet specialist Robert Gates has been paraphrased as saying he was "amazed by the breakdown of the USSR and rests his defense on the entirely fair observation that virtually no one in the defense or intelligence business predicted that Soviet Union was bound for the dustbin of history until it hit

bottom.”<sup>6</sup> Western scholars specializing in the study of Soviet affairs did not do much better. British political scientist Michael Cox has described their general inability to foresee the collapse of the Soviet system as “the collective failure of a discipline to anticipate the implosion of an entity whose structures, leaders and policies it had been studying in minute detail for over 40 years.”<sup>7</sup>

Confusion, controversy, and surprise about the war’s termination and the empire’s collapse pose more than intriguing historical puzzles: this intellectual disarray has major implications for current U.S. foreign and national security policy. For instance, neoconservatives who give Ronald Reagan most of the credit for the war’s end and the empire’s demise have gone on to argue for application to America’s current national security challenges of what they regard as President Reagan’s winning strategy in defeating communism, a strategy featuring military strength, outspoken assertion of American values, and robust defense of American interests.<sup>8</sup> Hence accurate assessment of Reagan’s role in ending the Cold War and bringing down the Soviet empire bears directly on the validity of present-day neoconservative prescriptions for advancing U.S. national interests abroad.

A clearer understanding of the failure of the communist system can also contribute to our policy toward post-Soviet Russia—still of concern to the United States, due mainly to Russia’s vast stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction, along with related materials and know-how, as well as her vast energy resources and her role as a major regional power. Answers to such fundamental questions as the likelihood of reassertion of Russian imperialism and the prospects for the establishment of genuine democracy in Russia depend in large part on one’s understanding of what changed, and what did not change, when the communist regime collapsed.

In addition, greater clarity regarding the causes of the war’s end and the empire’s fall can facilitate a more objective evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the U.S. intelligence community’s assessment of these events as they were unfolding. If, as I shall argue was the case, the intelligence community’s analyses were significantly flawed, we should identify the problem and ensure that it does not reoccur.

Disagreement over the Cold War’s end and the Soviet regime’s demise surely does not stem from a lack of pertinent evidence. Thanks in part to Mikhail Gorbachev’s policy of *glasnost*, the historical record of the period 1985–91 is rich in detail. We have the memoirs of Gorbachev and several of his close advisors, plus the writings of other key players and knowledgeable

inside observers, American as well as Soviet—not to mention a vast number of books and articles by outside researchers, analysts, and commentators. We possess, in short, many pieces of evidence that relate in one way or another to these puzzles, and many theories purporting to solve them. Yet thus far, it seems to me, no explanation has emerged in which the key pieces are logically interrelated and form a convincing overall pattern.

Neoconservatives and other admirers of Ronald Reagan tend to assume, for example, that the pressures exerted on the Soviet system by Reagan's confrontational policies forced the Soviets to withdraw from the Cold War and shortly thereafter brought the Soviet empire down. If this assumption is correct, one might reasonably expect Gorbachev to have condemned the Reagan approach. Instead, Gorbachev has explained that the Cold War wound down as the Soviet Union and the United States realized they shared the same universal values and goals. And he has blamed the demise of the Soviet regime on his domestic opponents, not on Ronald Reagan. Was Gorbachev unwilling, perhaps embarrassed, to acknowledge the decisive role of American pressure? Was he befuddled? Or did he understand correctly that other, more important causal factors were at play?

Another school of thought holds that the Soviet system was fatally flawed from the outset because it was based on a false conception of human nature and in 1991 finally succumbed to this defect. If this in fact was the root cause of the war's end and the empire's fall, what exactly was the flaw, and why did it take some seven decades to produce these dramatic outcomes? If the problem was evident to outsiders, why for so many years was it not identified and addressed by Soviet leaders? And what were the respective roles of Gorbachev and Reagan in causing the fatal flaw eventually to manifest itself with such destructive force?

This book offers a guide for locating the key pieces of these puzzles, arraying the pieces in their proper causal interrelationship, and then considering the relevance of the emergent causal pattern to the past and present conduct of U.S. foreign affairs. The book finds that Western scholars, government analysts, and policy makers have paid too little attention to the Soviet side of the equation and as a result have fallen short in understanding the end of the Cold War and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet empire from the Soviet point of view. President Reagan and President Bush (the elder) undoubtedly played significant roles in these pivotal historical happenings. There is no question that the Soviet regime was flawed. But to comprehend how these disparate causal factors interacted, I am convinced that one first needs to



consider how they were understood by key decision makers on the Soviet side.

While an analytical approach that emphasizes the content and logic of the Kremlin's outlook may have been neglected, it certainly is not new. Winner of the Nobel Prize for literature Czeslaw Milosz, for example, in his classic analysis of Stalinist totalitarianism *The Captive Mind*, predicted that Stalinist doctrine would be effective only so long as it was waging war against an enemy. Milosz also judged that the doctrine would be rejected by many of its followers as soon as "the Center [i.e., the USSR] lost its material might, not only because fear of military force would vanish, but because success is an integral part of this philosophy's argument. If it lost, it would prove itself wrong by its own definition; it would stand revealed as a false faith, defeated by its own god, reality."<sup>9</sup>

Milosz made these forecasts in 1951, based on his personal experience with Stalinism as a Polish intellectual and diplomat. Four decades later his predictions essentially came true. The global force traditionally seen by the Soviet leadership as generating mortal antagonism toward the USSR, international class conflict, was reassessed by Gorbachev and his supporters as having been overtaken by events. This reassessment meant that the Soviet regime no longer confronted a global enemy—and the Cold War therefore had lost its meaning. The Soviet Union's material situation, harshly illuminated by Gorbachev's policy of glasnost, suffered from malaise and then decline from which Gorbachev could offer no effective relief. As Milosz foresaw, the Stalinist worldview and the Soviet regime it had produced failed to withstand these blows. The book's middle chapters take a close look at how this came about.

The book's opening section is unorthodox and therefore requires a word of explanation. The chapters in part 1 pursue a course advocated by historian of ideas Isaiah Berlin, who, in an essay comparing the study of human affairs with the study of the physical world, argues that the essential task of the historian, in contrast to that of the natural scientist, is to understand the general structure or pattern of experience of the human characters whose actions are of particular interest. In Berlin's opinion, it is essential that the historian convey "a recognizable vision of life" and "a sense of what fits into a given situation and what does not."<sup>10</sup>

The first section attempts, through what Berlin has called "imaginative projection of ourselves into the past," to capture a historical context and a mode of thinking markedly different from our own. This approach will familiarize the reader with the author's understanding of—as well as biases regard-

ing—the Soviet regime and therefore should assist the reader in judging the validity of the analytical perspective drawn from that understanding. In the process, the first section offers a modest but needed contribution to the history of the Cold War by describing the activities of working-level U.S. diplomats behind the Iron Curtain—an aspect of the Cold War about which little has been published.

The book's second section takes the reader inside the Soviet alternative universe to examine the nature of the Soviet conception of governance, to see how this conception evolved from Lenin to Gorbachev, and, most importantly, to understand how Gorbachev attempted unsuccessfully to restructure it. This approach would have been regarded as controversial during the Cold War years, when many Western observers were convinced that ideology was cynically manipulated by the Kremlin for propaganda purposes and had little significant impact on Soviet policy. Strong evidence has since come to light—mainly in the numerous memoirs, upon which the book draws heavily, written by former Soviet political leaders and their advisors, and also in an archive of classified KGB documents smuggled out of Russia shortly after the USSR's collapse—which I believe leaves little doubt that the Soviet leadership was in fact captive of a distinctive worldview and, within that mind-set, a specific conception of governance that filtered Kremlin perceptions and shaped its decision making. Soviet leaders were not, like the Wizard of Oz, secretively manipulating ideology from behind a thick curtain only to impress the masses. The men in the Kremlin as a rule believed that the alchemy they were attempting to perform was based on science and validated by historical experience.

The book's third section examines the relevance of this analysis to current U.S. policy making. The section's first two chapters set forth what I believe was the basic pattern of causation leading to the Cold War's end and the empire's fall, showing how and why Gorbachev chose to withdraw from the Cold War and examining how his attempt to repair the Soviet conception of governance destabilized the Soviet empire and led to its implosion. These chapters examine the interrelationship between the war's end and the empire's fall, place the role of President Reagan into what I think is its proper position in the causal equation, and conclude that neoconservative triumphalism regarding the Cold War's end and the Soviet empire's demise is unfounded and thus offers a problematic model for ongoing U.S. foreign and national security policy.

The section then examines the prospects for reversion to imperial thinking,

as well as the prospects for the development of meaningful democracy, in today's Russia. It finds that Russian imperialism is unlikely to reemerge in the foreseeable future, but, because of the legacy of the Bolshevik past, genuine democracy is unlikely to flourish there anytime soon. The section's final chapter considers the continuing negative effect on U.S. foreign policy of the analytical shortcoming that I believe averted our attention from the Soviet point of view as the Cold War wound down and the empire began to crumble—an American disinclination to take seriously outlooks different from our own. It also suggests ways to overcome this shortcoming.

I owe a debt of gratitude to my foreign service colleagues, to former Senator Sam Nunn and my colleagues on the staff of the Senate Armed Services Committee and the staff of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, to my colleagues and students at the Monterey Institute of International Relations, and to the many specialists on Russia, the Soviet Union, and related matters whose research and analysis I have drawn upon. I wish in particular to acknowledge the guidance and encouragement I received as a graduate student at Berkeley from the late Julian Towster, who was my chief advisor on Soviet affairs.

I am also grateful for the assistance I received while putting this book together from three friends and colleagues. The first was Ambassador Jack Matlock, a retired career foreign service officer and specialist in Soviet and post-Soviet affairs, for whom I worked in the State Department and at our Moscow Embassy on three occasions, commencing in the early 1970s. The second was Yale historian and Cold War specialist John Lewis Gaddis, whom I first met when he participated in a scholar-diplomat exchange program (he was the scholar, I was the diplomat) at the State Department some three decades ago. The third was my neighbor Edie Schroeder, whose suggestions were particularly helpful because while she is expert in other fields, she is not a specialist in Soviet affairs. Each was kind enough to read through a preliminary version of the entire manuscript and then to offer detailed comments and suggestions. The final product has benefited greatly from their efforts, although of course whatever shortcomings it still contains are solely my responsibility.

Finally, I must express my deep appreciation to my wife and two daughters, to whom the book is dedicated. They cheerfully tolerated my long immersion in Soviet and Eastern European affairs, shared many of my adventures, and experienced some of their own, in Sofia and in Moscow, over three decades. Their understanding and support has been invaluable.

**PART ONE**    Reminiscence:  
Ten Years Inside the Empire



## Introduction

It may seem unusual that a book that is mostly analytical opens with several chapters that are mostly descriptive. This is the case because of the importance I attach to providing a real-world setting, a specific historical context for the analysis and policy recommendations in the second and third parts of the book. Before setting forth a theoretical framework for analyzing the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet empire, I want the reader to take part vicariously in the experiences and encounters I describe in this opening section and thus to develop some existential feel for the reality, and particularly for the psychological atmosphere, of Soviet communism as I came to know it. I want the reader to see that the analytical perspective I develop in Part 2 and apply to current foreign issues in Part 3 is based upon the realities of the Soviet regime as I experienced them, above all from the mind-set, the concepts, and the categories with which the Soviet leadership construed the world.

Although I was trained in political science, the approach I use in Part 1 as well as in Part 2 resembles the methods characteristic of the school of cultural anthropology represented by Clifford Geertz. In his view, the proper study of other people's culture involves discovering who they think they are, what they think they are doing, and to what end they think they are doing it. To accomplish this, Geertz contends, one must gain working familiarity with the frames of meaning within which other peoples live their lives.<sup>1</sup> And the basic data in this effort "are really our own constructions of other people's constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to."<sup>2</sup>

Understanding foreign frames of reference is also one of the main concerns—or should be—of career diplomats, who, while interested in the thinking of all peoples in a given country, are most interested in that country's leadership group and its frame of meaning. As an American diplomat dealing primarily with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, I developed my construction of the Soviet leadership's outlook from specific observations during my eight years in the Soviet Union and Bulgaria—from trying to understand

who Soviet and Bulgarian leaders thought they were, what they thought they were doing, and to what end they thought they were doing it.

My selection of observations in Part 1 and my subsequent generalizations from them in Part 2 certainly do not have the methodological rigor of anthropological fieldwork. As will become obvious in the first four chapters, most of my observations regarding leadership outlook were of necessity indirect—in those days, American diplomats had little personal contact with senior Communist leaders and had to rely on inference, imagination, and a fair bit of guesswork in attempting to understand their thinking. Still, as Geertz has nicely put it: “Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning.”<sup>3</sup>

The reader of course may not agree with my view of the Soviet alternative universe and the analytical scheme I have derived from it—indeed, given the still-contentious nature of the substantive issues with which this book deals, it would be unrealistic to expect widespread consensus, particularly among Western specialists in Soviet affairs who have formed their own understanding of Soviet leadership motivations and reached their own conclusions about the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet empire. At least my inductive approach, proceeding from descriptive particulars to more generalized analysis and then to policy recommendations, will provide explicit grounds for the specialist as well as the general reader to judge the validity of my findings.

More generally, I hope my episodic account of diplomatic life and times behind the Iron Curtain will convey a sense of the texture and flavor of those times and illustrate U.S. diplomacy at the working level during the last phase of the Cold War, from the mid-1960s to the late 1980s. To this end, I have included descriptions of the routine of living and working inside the Soviet empire, along with selective accounts of experiences that illuminated the nature of that empire. I hope this will benefit younger readers, for many of whom America’s costly and sometimes dangerous preoccupation with the Soviet threat over the four decades following World War II doubtless seems a distant, closed chapter in American history.

Part 1 is not intended as a personal memoir, although the episodes are arranged in rough chronological order for the sake of clarity and are of necessity personal in nature. The episodes are described as accurately as memory allows, with the exception of my using pseudonyms and changing or omitting nonessential facts in a few instances, out of respect for the privacy of the

specific individuals concerned and also with due deference to a few still sensitive matters pertaining to U.S. national security.

A word of explanation may be in order regarding my background and experience, to demonstrate the nature of my specialization and also to provide something of a road map for the four chapters that follow. I was one of a core group of U.S. Foreign Service officers who specialized in Soviet and Eastern European affairs during the last three decades of the Cold War. My interest in communism and the Soviet Union had a somewhat unusual genesis: it was stimulated by my father, who was engaged professionally in such matters as chief counsel and chief investigator for the California Senate's Committee on Un-American Activities from the early 1940s to the 1960s. Despite his extensive firsthand experience with American communism, he could never satisfy my curiosity as to why intelligent Americans would opt to dedicate their lives to the Soviet-led communist movement.

I pursued this interest as an undergraduate and graduate student at the University of California at Berkeley, learning Russian at the Army Language School during a three-year stint in the military between my undergraduate and graduate studies. As a graduate student I specialized in Soviet affairs in Berkeley's Department of Political Science, from which I received a doctorate in 1966. My dissertation dealt with the internal logic of Marxism-Leninism and the ways in which this doctrine appeared to shape Soviet policy-making. In working on the dissertation, I became convinced that despite what struck me as Marxism-Leninism's overall falsity and pretentiousness, if one temporarily suspended disbelief and assumed its basic assumptions were valid, the doctrine had a seductive internal logic, was consistent over time, gave the true believer a sense of participating in a scientifically grounded just cause, and did in fact appear to play a major role in shaping Soviet policy.

I had many subsequent opportunities to test and refine these conclusions through direct exposure to the Soviet empire. I joined the foreign service in 1966 and was initially posted to the U.S. Legation in Sofia, Bulgaria, for two years. Next came a year of advanced Russian language training and Soviet area studies at the U.S. Army's Russian Institute in Germany, after which I was assigned for two years (1969–71) to our Moscow embassy. Chapter 1 highlights my experiences in Bulgaria, at the Army Institute in Germany, and on an extensive, institute-sponsored tour of the Soviet Union. Chapter 2 describes the impressions I drew from these experiences as well as from my first assignment in the USSR.

My initial Moscow assignment was followed by a posting to the U.S. Mis-



sion to the United Nations, where I served as the mission's specialist on the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe (1971–73). My next assignment was to the State Department's Office of Soviet Union Affairs (1973–75) and led to my return to Moscow for a four-year tour of duty at the embassy (1975–79). My experiences in the Soviet Union during those years are sketched in Chapter 3. I then went back to the State Department to work as one of two assistants to Marshall Shulman, who was Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's Special Assistant for Soviet Affairs. Next came a second posting to the Office of Soviet Union Affairs, where I served as principal deputy director during the initial years of Ronald Reagan's presidency (1980–83). Following that, I served for two years (1983–85) as director of the Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs. And in 1985 I returned to the USSR for my third Moscow assignment, this time as the embassy's deputy chief of mission. Chapter 4 highlights those two years.

My departure from Moscow in the summer of 1987 marked the end of my foreign service assignments inside the Soviet empire. But three subsequent positions outside of the Department of State brought me back to the USSR and its successor states many times from 1988 through the late 1990s. The first position was head of Soviet and Eastern European affairs at the Congressional Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, on loan from the State Department (1988–89). The second, immediately following my retirement from the foreign service in 1989, was foreign affairs advisor to Senator Sam Nunn (1989–95), in his capacity as Chairman and later ranking Democratic member of the Senate Armed Services Committee and also as a member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. The third position was director of programs in the former Soviet Union and research professor at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies (1995–98), a component of the Monterey Institute of International Studies. Chapter 4 also touches upon those experiences.

# 1

## Initial Encounters with the Other Side

### Sofia, Bulgaria

*Getting to Sofia.* In the mid-1960s, fledgling American Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) were as a rule not posted behind the Iron Curtain on their first overseas tour of duty. The Department of State wanted to season and assess its young cadres before putting them on the front line of freedom. So the typical initial assignment was as a consular officer, dealing primarily with visas and passports, in a developing country distant from the main battle zones of the Cold War. When initial assignments were read out to our foreign service orientation class in the spring of 1966, I therefore was surprised to hear that I had been posted behind the Iron Curtain to the U.S. Legation in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Once in Sofia, I learned informally of some of the circumstances surrounding this assignment. Some months earlier, the legation's only consular officer had been sent home by the U.S. chief of mission—a "minister" rather than an ambassador, because as a symbol of American displeasure over the lack of free elections in Bulgaria our mission there was a modest "legation" rather than a full-fledged embassy. I was never informed officially of the reasons for my predecessor's unscheduled departure, although I gathered from legation gossip that the individual in question had, in his official capacity, carried out some sort of controversial operation involving Bulgarians without first obtaining the approval of his legation superiors. As the personal representative of the U.S. president, the minister was supposed to be informed of all significant activities undertaken in the name of the U.S. government in the country to which he was accredited. I assumed that the consular officer was dismissed for violating this principle.

The legation's consular officer was responsible for issuing visas to official and unofficial Bulgarians and for looking after the few Americans who visited

the country, as well as the surprisingly large number of American citizens who resided in Bulgaria—well over one hundred retired Bulgarian Americans chose to live there, mainly because their retirement dollars had much greater purchasing power in Bulgaria than in the United States. The legation's complement of American officers fluent in Bulgarian was small and fully occupied with their assigned duties, so the State Department needed to find someone to send to Sofia as consular officer. I was selected, probably because I knew Russian, which is linguistically close to Bulgarian, and was available at the time of need. In any case, the Department of State's one Bulgarian language teacher gave my wife and me an improvised crash course in the evenings while I was completing FSO basic training during the day, and we were off to Sofia in the early summer of 1966.

*Insecurity, Tear Gas, Surveillance, Smog.* The American Legation in Bulgaria was a curious place—and a security nightmare. It consisted of a leased, five-floor office complex in the center of downtown Sofia. The legation was not in a separate building but was located, like a large townhouse, in the middle of a Bulgarian-built office building. The consular and cultural sections were on the ground floor, off of a library that was overseen by a receptionist, an American citizen (the wife of one of our administrative officers) who had learned colloquial Bulgarian. Public access to the legation during working hours was through an unlocked door leading from the street directly into the library. Legation staff had no control over public access. The receptionist sat behind a raised desk at the left end of the room as one entered. To the right of her desk was a heavy steel door that was unlocked during business and led to a stairwell and elevator that provided access to the legation's upper floors.

The administrative section, overseen by three American officers but staffed with five or six English-speaking Bulgarian clerks and translators, took up the second floor. Most of the legation's substantive staff—the minister, deputy chief of mission, cultural affairs officer, and political and economic officers, along with their respective American secretaries—were on the third floor. Two American military attachés and their small, all-American staffs shared the fourth floor with the communications center and the mailroom. Several staff apartments were on the fifth floor. Bulgarian nationals were not allowed above the second floor unless escorted by American personnel. The elevator went only to the third floor, where access to the working spaces on that floor and the floors above was blocked by jail-like welded iron bars and a gate equipped with an electric cipher lock.

Potential security problems stemmed from the fact that the Bulgarian regime, which of course viewed the United States as an enemy, had free access to the legation's outer walls on each end of each floor, as well as to whatever was beneath the basement, which housed workshops for the legation's Bulgarian maintenance staff, a lounge for on-call Bulgarian drivers, and storage space. The Bulgarians also controlled the front sidewalk and the back courtyard, and had easy access to the roof.

During office hours, when the door from the street into the library was unlocked, the front entrance was guarded from the sidewalk by one Bulgarian militiaman (roughly equivalent to a uniformed city police officer in the United States) armed with a small automatic pistol. If the Bulgarian security service decided to send strange individuals into the legation, which on occasion I believe they did, or if unusual characters wandered in on their own, which also happened from time to time, there was no way legation staff could prevent them from entering the library during working hours. A legation did not qualify for U.S. Marine security guards, and so we had no American guard force. The American receptionist could do no more than observe who entered the library, although, in case of emergency, she did have a button under her desk that activated an alarm on the upper floors. (My tour in Bulgaria obviously occurred years before the threat of terrorism caused the United States to enhance the physical security of its overseas facilities.)

Access to the legation after office hours was through a massive metal door that opened directly from the street into the stairwell and elevator shaft that ran up one side of the building. Of course, this door was kept locked at all times. Each American employee and his or her spouse was issued a key.

Our mission was upgraded to embassy status in 1967, about a year after my arrival. The title and rank of the chief of mission was elevated from minister to ambassador, and a small contingent of U.S. Marines was assigned to guard the premises—although even then no Marines were stationed on the ground floor to control access. During my first year in Sofia, American officers took turns performing after-hours security duty in the legation building. This entailed making random physical security checks of the premises during the night and sleeping on a cot near the communications room to provide a small measure of protection (we were not armed) for the communications gear, which was locked in a vault, and to summon one of our two communications specialists if an urgent coded message came in (which would trigger an alarm bell). No such message ever arrived while I was on duty, and I volunteered often because one received overtime pay for this work. As a

junior officer with the rank of third secretary, comparable to a first lieutenant in the Army, this was a welcome source of supplemental income.

I saw no evidence of Bulgarian attempts to penetrate the premises during my frequent stints as after-hours duty officer. None of my colleagues did either, as far as I knew. The American staff included a dedicated, energetic security officer. One bit of folklore around the legation was that he once found a suspicious wire that appeared to run through one of the Bulgarian-controlled walls in the fourth-floor mailroom. When he had tunneled around the wire and began to pull on it, he reportedly felt someone pulling against him from the other end (I don't recall who won the tug-of-war). Another bit of folklore involved the supply of firewood at the legation's villa, an attractive, two-story resort home located near the Borovets ski resort, about an hour into the mountains by car from Sofia. After I lit a fire in the villa's large stone fireplace one chilly fall evening, during our first overnight stay there, our eyes began to sting and water. I checked the damper: it was fully open and no smoke was visible in the room. I recounted the experience to American colleagues who stopped by for lunch the next day. They laughed and said we should have been warned: the security officer had recently stayed at the villa and found cockroaches in the basement woodpile. His solution, they said, was to seal the basement and set off a tear gas grenade—presumably on hand in case of hostile attack by Bulgarians. I don't know how this affected the cockroaches, but the tear gas permeated the firewood and gassed unwitting individuals like us who subsequently burned the wood in the fireplace.

Late one evening I came into the mailroom when our security officer was on after-hours duty and was surprised to see an enormous, loaded .45-caliber revolver on the desk at which he was sitting. When I asked about the weapon, he said in a grave tone that the Bulgarian security forces were on the other side of the wall, could break through at any moment, and he intended to be ready for them.

They never broke through, but we had to assume that we were being closely watched and listened to in our apartments as well as at work, unless we were in the legation's acoustically secure (so we assumed) room. I was never aware of being followed, whether on foot or by car, except on one curious occasion. My wife and I had shipped in backpacks and camping gear, and one weekend we went on an overnight backpacking trip in the scenic mountains near Sofia. When we paused along the winding mountain trail for lunch, two Bulgarian men dressed in dark business suits appeared on the trail behind us. When they saw that we had stopped, they retreated furtively. In

our small tent that evening we could hear someone (or something—it could have been an animal) moving around in the brush near our campsite. As we looped back to our car the next morning, the same two men, still dressed in business suits, were behind us all the way.

We were housed initially in a small apartment on the fifth floor of the legation. We then moved to larger quarters in a three-story apartment building near the middle of the city. The other occupants seemed to be Bulgarian; in any event, the building was unguarded and undistinguishable from other apartment buildings in the area. The neighborhood was quiet, and we were in easy walking distance of the legation. But we were located in a low-lying part of town, a factor that became important as winter set in and city heating plants, as well as individual stoves, were fired up. The predominant fuel was low-grade coal that gave off an oily, smelly black smoke, which the Bulgarians called “mogla” (pronounced mo-GLA). Sofia is situated at the foot of a mountain range and is subject to weather inversions. Under these conditions, mogla hung in the air like Los Angeles smog on a bad-air day and was particularly dense in low elevations of the city. We carefully sealed the windows with masking tape and putty, but the mogla inexorably seeped through, was visible in the air of the hallway and the larger rooms, and coated everything with a thin film of greasy black coal dust.

*Consular Work and Walk-ins.* As consular officer, I worked with local Bulgarian officials on such mundane matters as traffic accidents involving Americans, medical and legal problems encountered by American visitors, payment of Social Security and other pension benefits to American citizens of Bulgarian descent who had returned to Bulgaria after retirement, and the status of property previously owned by Bulgarian Americans who had managed to leave Bulgaria before the communist regime came to power. In addition, I was fortunate to have developed contacts with young Bulgarian scientists and intellectuals through an American exchange student who had married a well-connected young Bulgarian scientist. And I got to know well several of the Bulgarian American retirees who lived in or near Sofia and were an excellent source of information about daily life in the country.

Given the somewhat unusual circumstances surrounding my assignment, the Bulgarian security service and its KGB advisors may have suspected that I was a CIA officer working under cover. Whatever they thought, it seemed to me that the security service attempted to test my true colors by sending an assortment of officially inspired visitors to the Consular Section to see me during my first couple of months on the job. For example, one rugged-look-

ing young Bulgarian whispered to me that he was part of an anti-regime underground group that wanted American weapons. On another occasion, a wild-eyed older man said he was a rocket scientist and knew firsthand that Soviet missiles operated with extremely cold rather than extremely hot propulsion fuel. At various times, Bulgarians who seemed mentally disturbed made their way into the library, and one entered brandishing a small axe. We persuaded them all to leave without undue fuss.

The walk-in I remember most vividly appeared in my office shortly after Christmas of 1966. Reeking of Bulgarian plum brandy, he pulled out a picture of a baby boy sitting naked on a blanket in front of a Christmas tree. This, he said, was his new son Lyndon Baines Takov, named after the American president. Mr. Takov added that he and his wife greatly admired the United States and had been severely criticized and even threatened by local Bulgarian Communist Party members for naming their child after President Johnson.

Given the man's somewhat belligerent demeanor and his apparently semi-intebriated condition, it was hard to take his story at face value. His credibility was further undermined by the widely publicized fact that President Johnson a few months earlier had presented a Pakistani truck driver with a new American-made pickup truck because the man had named his newborn son Lyndon Baines. Still, we were under a worldwide directive to report to Washington any local mention of President Johnson's name. So I reported the incident and in due course received an instruction from the State Department to congratulate Mr. and Mrs. Takov on President Johnson's behalf for the birth of their son. The man seemed disappointed when I did so—I think he was hoping for an American truck.

*Up to the Political Section.* I was transferred from the Consular Section to the Political Section at the beginning of my second year in Sofia. This was an upward move, not only from the first floor to the third but professionally, in that I hoped eventually to specialize in political affairs. Political reporting and analysis were considered the most prestigious foreign service activity and the most promising path to an eventual ambassadorial appointment. In Bulgaria, however, political work consisted mostly of reading and reporting items in the Bulgarian news media. Our political and economic officers had little contact with ordinary Bulgarian citizens, who often, understandably, did not want to come to the attention of the Bulgarian security service for taking part in unauthorized meetings with American diplomats.

Meetings with Bulgarian officials were tightly controlled. Our chief of mission's main contact was the head of the Foreign Ministry's Western Hemi-

sphere and USA Department, an unforthcoming bureaucrat out of the Soviet mold. As consular officer, I had dealt primarily with junior members of the USA Department, with the head of the Foreign Ministry's Consular Administration, the head of the official Bulgarian tourist agency and his staff, and with various other functionaries concerned with the handling of American visitors and resident U.S. citizens, such as tourism officials, doctors, hospital staff, local militia, and legal authorities. I also made several trips around the country to check on the welfare of resident American citizens who received Social Security benefits. As political officer, I dealt for the most part with junior members of the Foreign Ministry in Sofia, although I was able to maintain my earlier contacts and continue my travels outside of Sofia.

Our chief of mission did his best to meet Bulgarian officialdom. Borrowing a technique that had been used successfully in Moscow during the Khrushchev period, he invited a large number of Bulgarian officials to a special showing of the just-released film *West Side Story* in the legation library. Each American officer was asked to contribute to the list of official Bulgarian invitees. Formal invitations were specially printed in Vienna, addressed by hand, and, as required by Bulgarian Foreign Ministry, delivered in one large batch to the Ministry's Protocol Section for further distribution to Bulgarian officials. The library tables were removed and the room was thoroughly cleaned and polished. Large amounts of food and drink were set out. The library was divided into small sections, and one American officer was assigned to act as host in each section, so that all Bulgarian guests would feel welcome and be properly attended to.

Out of more than one hundred official invitees, only two official Bulgarians and their wives showed up, for a grand total of four Bulgarian guests: the head of the Consular Administration, with whom I had developed a good working relationship, and a junior member of the Foreign Ministry's USA Department whom I had also gotten to know well. The two Bulgarian couples acted as if nothing was unusual. Our chief of mission was furious—certain he had been snubbed by Bulgarian officialdom—but decided to roll the film. The four Bulgarians stayed through the last reel and seemed to enjoy the evening, although they were unable to make much of a dent in the food and the beverages we had provided. That was the first and last U.S. film showing for Bulgarian officials during my two years in Sofia.

*Adventures at the World Youth Festival.* The most noteworthy substantive event during my year in the Political Section was the 1968 World Youth Festival, a Soviet-sponsored propaganda extravaganza calculated by Moscow to



win the hearts and minds of “progressive” young people from around the world. It was a combination of the Olympic Games, a large political rally, and a massive folk festival. The real story of this festival, which I believe was the last of its kind, was the courageous refusal of the large Czechoslovak delegation to follow the official Soviet/Bulgarian political line. This was the time of the Prague Spring, when the Czechoslovak leadership was striving for a measure of independence from the Kremlin. The Czechoslovak delegation to the festival reportedly had smuggled in small printing presses and many portraits of their relatively liberal leaders, Party First Secretary Alexander Dubček and President Ludvig Svoboda (whose last name, in almost all Slavic languages, means “freedom”).

I found a good vantage point from which to observe the opening day parade of delegations down Sofia’s main street. The Czechoslovak delegation, smartly dressed in matching outfits, marched in unison, carrying large portraits of their country’s leaders and enthusiastically chanting “Dubček-Svoboda, Dubček-Svoboda.” Dark-suited, stocky individuals—obviously Bulgarian security agents—emerged from the crowd-lined sidewalks and tried, without much success, to grab the portraits. The August 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was being foreshadowed on the streets of Sofia.

I don’t remember whether the Czechoslovak delegation attended the festival’s gala closing ceremony, held in the city’s main soccer stadium. In any event, it came off as a totally staged propaganda event—with at least one spontaneous happening that involved me personally. After hundreds of young Bulgarians performed mass gymnastics, and other hundreds performed mass folk dances, after card stunts and fireworks, city water trucks loaded with Bulgarian rose oil (famed in the international perfume industry) misted the oil into the stadium. I was standing inside the stadium, just above one of the exits. A Bulgarian worker was in the exit-way immediately below me, operating a tired-looking hose fitted with a misting device. Suddenly the hose split, sending a sizeable stream of rose oil straight at me. It took several vigorous washings to get the heavy smell out of my hair. I never got it out of the suit I was wearing. I can still conjure up the smell some forty years later.

*Communism the Bulgarian Way.* Two years in Bulgaria proved to be a good introduction to my later assignments in Moscow. The small U.S. official presence in Sofia (our staff consisted of about ten substantive officers, including the administrative and security officers, plus some twenty other American secretaries, technicians, and marine guards) meant that I dealt directly with our chief of mission and his deputy, who both were long-time members of

the foreign service's Soviet/Eastern European clan, and of course I knew well all of my other legation/embassy colleagues. I could readily see in microcosm how a U.S. diplomatic mission was structured and how it was expected to operate.

I could also observe, in the relatively tiny Bulgarian regime (the total population of the country was then about eight million, roughly the population of the city of Moscow), how a Soviet-style system was structured and was intended to operate. The Communist Party apparatus clearly controlled everything of importance in the country. The party leader, Todor Zhivkov, was treated as a political icon. The security apparatus was patterned after the Soviet KGB. The ideology/propaganda apparatus carefully censored the public media and virtually all printed material. Individual citizens had no inalienable rights and no significant political power.

My legation colleagues and I soon realized, however, that most Bulgarians, official and unofficial, did not seem to have their hearts in it. None of the Bulgarians I encountered, whether official or unofficial, came across as a true believer in Marxism-Leninism, or a blind admirer of the Soviet Union, or a dedicated critic of the United States and its "capitalist" way of life. To be sure, the Bulgarian news media shamelessly glorified the Soviet Union and relentlessly depicted the United States as the leading imperialist power, implacable foe of socialism, communism, and the world proletariat, ruthless exploiter of American workers and minorities, and all-round international troublemaker. As best we could tell, little of this propaganda rubbed off on the Bulgarian people.

My official contacts were always cordial if not uniformly forthcoming. The many unofficial Bulgarians with whom I came in contact in a wide variety of circumstances revealed absolutely no personal hostility toward the United States, and considerable curiosity about our country. Their general inclination seemed to be to stay as far away from Bulgarian officialdom as possible and lead as comfortable and rewarding a life as they could manage. This was not as challenging as one might assume: the country was scenic, with high mountains and numerous Black Sea resort areas that featured cheap but decent accommodations and beautiful, well-maintained beaches. The climate was mild. And, thanks to favorable agricultural conditions, fresh produce was plentiful. (As I later discovered, Soviet food production seldom kept up with local demand, and Bulgarian canned fruits and vegetables were usually available in larger grocery stores in the Soviet Union.)

The Bulgarian security service had a robust ability to assess each of us

for possible personal weaknesses that could be exploited for blackmail and recruitment. Bulgarian maids and cooks worked in our apartments. The legation employed some twenty Bulgarians as interpreter/translators, clerks, maintenance personnel, administrative assistants, language teachers, and drivers. We assumed that all telephones, apartments, and unsecured areas of the legation were bugged. The Bulgarian security service certainly had the resources to keep all of us under visual as well as acoustic surveillance virtually anywhere in Bulgaria. Still, I was never aware of having been targeted for entrapment or recruitment, nor do I recall hearing about such attempts against my American or NATO colleagues in Sofia. The fact that a number of Bulgarian Americans chose to retire in Bulgaria indicated that life for unofficial American citizens residing there was quite tolerable (it probably also indicated that the Bulgarian regime valued the dollars these American citizens brought into the country).

A specific example of the relaxed official attitude, even regarding counter-intelligence, was the experience of one of our two military attachés during a family vacation at Bulgaria's Black Sea coast. He and his wife had driven with their several small children from Sofia to the seaside resort town of Varna for several days of relaxation at the beach. A team of surveillants, presumably from Bulgarian military intelligence, followed closely behind, from Sofia to Varna by car and on foot down to the beach at Varna. Wanting a break from his kids, my colleague approached the chief surveillant and asked if one or two members of his team would watch the children while the parents went off to lunch at a nearby beach restaurant. As my colleague recounted it, the Bulgarian agent readily agreed, and my colleague and his wife enjoyed a relaxing luncheon break, confident that the Bulgarian surveillance team would ensure the well-being of their children.

*Bulgarian National Identity.* One reason why Soviet-style communism did not take firmer root in Bulgaria undoubtedly had to do with the Bulgarian national character. There was a strong historical affinity between Bulgaria and Russia, due largely to the fact that the Russian army had been instrumental in liberating Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire in the late nineteenth century. Yet daily life in Bulgaria in the mid-1960s was in many ways more Turkic than Slavic. After five hundred years of domination by the Ottoman Empire (referred to in Bulgaria as the period of the "Turkish Yoke"), Bulgarian national dishes, folk dance, folk costumes, and folk music were much closer to Turkish than Russian tradition.

While Bulgarian news media echoed the Soviet line on international issues,

Bulgaria was a bit player in these matters, and its foreign policy was more focused on Balkan affairs than Warsaw Pact and Soviet affairs. No Soviet military forces of consequence were stationed in Bulgaria, although there was a huge Soviet embassy and several Soviet consulates in the small country. Bulgarian armed forces comprised a tiny part of the Warsaw Pact military establishment. The Bulgarian leadership appeared to be more concerned about the large Turkish minority in the country's southern districts, and about the Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia on its western border, than about traditional Cold War issues. Bulgarian nationalists in the leadership were suspicious of the Turkish population, which of course was predominately Muslim rather than Bulgarian Orthodox. The nationalists insisted that Macedonia was part of "Greater Bulgaria" and maintained that the Macedonian language should be considered a dialect of Bulgarian.

Bulgarians had their own historical identity, but, as of the mid-1960s they had little to be proud of. They had been a province of the Ottoman Empire for five centuries. They had been on the losing side of two world wars. Their Soviet-inspired and assisted effort to build "socialism" had produced little material wealth. The Bulgarian national leadership consisted of Soviet-style, colorless apparatchiks, headed by Todor Zhivkov, known for the passionate if manly on-the-mouth kisses he exchanged with his Soviet counterpart, Leonid Brezhnev, each time the two met.

Still, Bulgaria found one historical event from its distant past that was officially commemorated with national pride each year. This was Cyril and Methodius Day, celebrated as a state holiday and featuring a large parade through downtown Sofia. The cause for celebration was the introduction of the Cyrillic alphabet—first in Bulgaria—by the Greek monks Cyril and Methodius in the ninth century. The parade consisted mainly of small children, neatly dressed in their school uniforms, carrying large posters depicting the various characters of the Cyrillic alphabet, as well as portraits of Cyril and Methodius. Portraits of Zhivkov and the other Bulgarian Politburo members may also have been on display, but on this occasion they were not the center of attention.

*Uncontrolled and Controlled Demonstrations.* Two large anti-American demonstrations took place in front of the embassy building during my two years in Bulgaria. The first was not organized by Bulgarian authorities; the second one was. When the 1967 Arab-Israeli War erupted, initial international news dispatches erroneously reported that U.S. warplanes were aiding the Israelis. This triggered what I believe was a spontaneous march on the U.S.

mission by several hundred young Arabs who were studying at Sofia University. I was in the fourth-floor mailroom when we heard shouting and breaking glass. I ran downstairs and saw, through the main entrance to the library, that the street in front of the legation was full of agitated and in some cases frenzied young people shouting anti-American slogans, throwing rocks at the legation's large display windows, and overturning American vehicles parked in front of the building (fortunately, I had walked to work that day).

The emotion of the mob appeared to be genuine. Some demonstrators had pried up heavy iron grates from around trees planted along the sidewalk and were using the grates to smash car windows. Several cars had been set on fire. The sole militiaman on guard at the embassy entrance evidently had gone into his small booth to telephone for reinforcements. Several rioters leaned against the booth's door, keeping the militiaman pinned inside.

It took at least thirty minutes—or so it seemed at the time—for Bulgarian militia reinforcements and firemen to arrive and restore order. Remarkably, the mob did not try to enter the unguarded embassy, and no one was seriously injured. We quickly vacated the ground floor, and the sole American casualty—luckily only minor—was our cultural affairs officer, who had been hit on the side of the head by a baseball-sized rock as he tried unsuccessfully to lower an emergency metal barrier just inside the library entrance.

The second demonstration was a staged and carefully controlled political rally held as a scheduled event during the Youth Festival. We were officially informed well in advance. A large squad of Bulgarian militia, including some twenty militiamen on horseback, cordoned off the street and sidewalks in front of our building. The demonstrators were allowed only on a side street perpendicular to ours. I was posted in a park bordering on that street. The demonstrators, among them some genuinely radical Third World participants, were allowed to fill the street near the legation building for about fifteen minutes, during which they shouted anti-U.S. slogans and waved propagandistic signs and banners. The event came to an end when a group of a hundred or so heavy-set Bulgarian men and women, dressed in sweat suits, with arms linked and jogging more or less in unison, gently but firmly pushed the demonstrators down the street, away from our building. I overheard a Bulgarian, standing near me in the park, tell his companion with pride “these are our people,” as the Bulgarian human juggernaut lumbered by.

Still, genuinely bad things could happen. At the end of my tour, a prominent Bulgarian physician was arrested and charged with espionage on behalf of an unnamed Western country. This doctor, fluent in English and French,

was popular in the Western diplomatic community for his medical skills (there were no Western doctors in Bulgaria in those days) and was a frequent guest in the homes of Western ambassadors. I later heard that the poor man was found guilty, sentenced to death, and executed.

*Social Life in Bulgaria.* Entertaining Bulgarian officials was an adventure, as the legation's poorly attended film showing illustrated. Another memorable, legation-hosted event took place in the industrial town of Plovdiv, Bulgaria's second largest city. The occasion was the opening of a traveling U.S. Information Agency exhibit dedicated to the American home-building industry. It was an impressive show, displaying American technology for the home by using contemporary audio and video devices, colorful displays of state-of-the-art appliances and fixtures, and large amounts of operating machinery. Well over a hundred Bulgarian officials and their wives turned up for the grand opening, which featured a special tour of the exhibit, followed by a lavish buffet luncheon.

The last piece of equipment demonstrated before lunch was a machine that produced plastic hard hats. The operators had made up several hundred of them in advance and handed them out to each of our Bulgarian guests. The doors then opened to an adjoining banquet hall, in which several large tables were laid out with great quantities of food prepared by Plovdiv's best hotel: various cold meats and fish, chicken, caviar, fresh-baked breads and rolls, fresh fruit, cheeses, and fancy pastries, along with a variety of wines and spirits. China, glasses, linen napkins, and silverware were available as one entered the room.

The most senior Bulgarian officials were the first to enter the banquet room. They picked up plates and eating utensils in the expected fashion and proceeded to the food with appropriate dignity. The sight of all those delicacies was too much for most of the other guests near the front of the line. They ignored the plates and silverware and charged the food tables, using their just-acquired plastic hard hats as buckets into which they unceremoniously scooped food. Once their inverted hats were full, they departed. After a few minutes, the platters and bowls of food were bare, looking like they had just been hit by swarms of famished locusts. The unfortunate guests at the back of the line had to make do with meager reserve food supplies hastily produced from the kitchen, although wine and spirits were still in abundance.

Because entertaining Bulgarian officials was such a challenge, Sofia's non-Warsaw Pact diplomatic corps mostly entertained each other. The typical diplomatic dinner in Sofia was ritualized, overly alcoholic, and usually boring

from beginning to end. The ritual began at 8:00 P.M. with cocktail hour, during which everyone milled around and engaged in small talk. At 9:00 P.M. or so, a formal, sit-down dinner was served by hired Bulgarian waiters: white wine with the salad and soup; red wine with the entree (usually lamb, a Bulgarian staple); champagne with the dessert course and the obligatory toasts. The host would propose a welcoming toast and thank the guests for coming; the senior guest by diplomatic protocol, seated to the right of the hostess, would respond by thanking the host and hostess for the wonderful evening. Following these formalities, the host would then invite the men to join him at one end of the living room or in the den for coffee, drinks, and cigars. The women would cluster together for coffee and tea. As the cigars burned down, the men and women intermingled for after-dinner drinks and more small talk. Somewhere between 10:30 and 11:00 P.M. a round of tall drinks would be served. Shortly thereafter, the senior guest would note the late hour, thank the host and hostess once again, and depart. This, despite ritual protestations from the host and hostess, was the signal that the evening was over.

In Moscow, social events like this often proved useful for exchanging substantive information. In Sofia, as a rule no one had any substantive information, and diplomatic dinners offered little more than unneeded calories, too much alcohol, and unwelcome sleep deprivation. It was usually at least midnight, with a workday ahead, when one got home and got to bed.

## Garmisch and the Grand Tour of Soviet Lands

*The Army's Russian Institute.* The U.S. Army Advanced Russian Institute was founded by farsighted American military personnel at the end of World War II, when a large number of Soviet displaced persons were located in southern Germany and faced the grim prospect of being returned to Stalin's Soviet Union and very likely being sent to prison camp as traitors. Someone on the American side got the idea of selecting well-qualified individuals from this group to create a school in West Germany for graduate-level study of the Russian language and Soviet affairs, including politics, economics, literature and the arts, military affairs, and history—with the entire curriculum conducted in Russian. In the late 1960s, the institute was situated in the picturesque West German resort town of Garmisch-Parkenkirchen, at the foot of the Bavarian Alps about forty miles southwest of Munich.

The institute's student body consisted mainly of career U.S. Army officers

who had opted to specialize in Soviet affairs. For most of them, this involved a four-year training program: a year of Russian language study at what was then the Army Language School in Monterey, California, next a year of academic study toward an MA degree at a U.S. university, followed by two years of language and area studies at Garmisch. One of the highlights of the Garmisch program was an extensive, all-expenses-paid familiarization tour of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe during the summer between the two academic years.

Shortly after the school was established, the army agreed to include several FSOS in the second year of training. In return, the State Department agreed to include army personnel in its language programs and other classes at the Foreign Service Institute in Northern Virginia. The State Department used Garmisch to polish the Russian skills of FSOS who had a good basic knowledge of the language and were slated for an assignment in Moscow immediately following their Garmisch year. The FSOS began their Russian experience at the institute with the field trip, along with the army officers who had just completed the first year of study at the institute. The FSOS then joined those officers for their second academic year at Garmisch.

*The Grand Tour.* As an aspiring Soviet specialist, I was delighted to be assigned to the institute immediately following my two years in Sofia. My arrival in Garmisch was delayed by several weeks so that I could assist Embassy Sofia in covering the World Youth Festival. I arrived—involuntarily bringing with me the faint odor of Bulgarian rose oil—just as my classmates-to-be were in the final stages of preparation for the five-week tour of communist lands.

Soviet and Eastern European authorities knew our group's exact travel plans well ahead of time. The institute had to obtain tourist visas and make travel reservations through a German travel agency in Munich, which in turn had to deal with the official Soviet travel bureau, Intourist, and its Eastern European counterparts weeks in advance of our departure (these latter travel organizations obviously cooperated fully with the KGB and its Eastern European clones). Our itinerary was ambitious, including Moscow, Leningrad, Volgograd, Irkutsk, Bratsk, Novosibirsk, Lake Baikal, Baku, various cities and historical sites in Central Asia, Yerevan, Tbilisi, Batumi, Sochi, Odessa, and Kiev, together with Warsaw, Bucharest, Sofia, and Budapest. (We were also scheduled to visit Prague, but the August 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia eliminated that stop.) We traveled by train, plane, boat, bus, and car. It was a remarkably rewarding, educational adventure. Unfortunately for subse-



quent classes of Garmisch institute students, however, our group in effect closed down this aspect of the institute's program for years to come.

The army officers knew that this trip most likely would be their only experience inside the Soviet Union, and they were determined to make the most of every minute. They brought video cameras, 35-millimeter cameras, Polaroid cameras, a considerable supply of whiskey and cigarettes, plus assorted giveaway items that included magazines, paperbacks, Kennedy fifty-cent pieces, souvenir pins, and ballpoint pens. They were determined to meet and converse with as many Soviet citizens as time and circumstances would allow. My three foreign service colleagues and I were enthusiastic about the trip but less anxious to make each moment count, knowing that shortly we would be spending at least two years on assignment at Embassy Moscow.

Upon our arrival in the Soviet Union—I believe Moscow was our first stop—we were greeted by a “country guide” from Intourist. The guide, a personable and intelligent man who looked to be in his mid-thirties, had been designated to travel with us throughout our entire stay in the USSR. He spoke fluent English and proved to be both personable and efficient. In addition to getting to know each of us, and undoubtedly making extensive notes about us for later written assessments for the KGB and GRU (military intelligence), he took care of all arrangements: tickets, hotels, meals, and, in collaboration with local Intourist representatives at each stop, the details of our daily activities.

We took the official Intourist tour of each city. We visited endless museums, monuments, industrial enterprises, a power station, farms, a coal mine, clinics, schools, circuses, shops, resorts, farmers markets, religious institutions (such as the seat of the Russian Orthodox Church in Zagorsk, near Moscow, and the seat of the Armenian Church, near the Republic of Armenia's capital city of Yerevan), sports facilities, restored pre-1917 palaces, a champagne factory, and a militia headquarters. We also poked around on our own, taking pictures, buying souvenirs, handing out our souvenirs, and striking up conversations in Russian wherever and whenever we could.

Our most memorable encounter began when we met several male Uzbek university students at an outdoor tea shop in Tashkent. They invited us to visit them in their university dormitory that evening, and six of us decided to go. The Uzbek students greeted us at the entrance to their dorm and escorted us to one of their rooms, where they had laid a table with fresh fruit, tea, and various snacks. Our military colleagues produced several bottles of whiskey. Within a few minutes, other students who appeared to be ethnic Russians drifted into the room. Our Uzbek hosts looked uncomfortable; one of them

whispered to us that the new arrivals were activists in the school's Komsomol (Communist youth league) organization.

Shortly thereafter, four uniformed, armed Kazakh militiamen entered the now crowded room to announce that our group had violated university regulations by bringing alcohol into the dormitory. A militia photographer materialized to take snapshots of the incriminating whiskey bottles. The six of us were politely but firmly escorted to militia vehicles and taken to a nearby police station. Our names were recorded, we were asked a few factual questions, then requested to sign a brief document in Russian describing what had happened. We read the document carefully, signed it, and were promptly released.

We were about halfway through our tour of the USSR, and this was our first run-in with Soviet law enforcement authorities. We had been scolded a couple of times for photographing (inadvertently) official buildings and a port facility. An elderly woman in an outdoor farmers market in Siberia became upset when one of our group took her picture without her permission. And, during a lengthy trip on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, a Soviet military officer who shared a four-person sleeping compartment with two of our group, and who seemed friendly at first, claimed at the end of the train ride that while he was sleeping one of our folks had tried to steal or tamper with the military medals pinned to his uniform, which he had hung at the foot of his bunk.

Toward the end of our visit to Kiev, our last stop in the Soviet Union, our country guide told us at breakfast that, if we wished to do so, we had enough time and sufficient money left in our travel budget to visit the Kiev militia headquarters that afternoon. So, on our last afternoon in the USSR, we were ushered into the spacious, high-ceilinged office of the chief of militia for the city of Kiev. Several senior, uniformed militia officers accompanied him. There were also three or four middle-aged men in civilian clothes seated along one side of the room. They were not introduced.

The chief gave a short, largely uninformative presentation about the work of his organization. Our leader, an army lieutenant colonel who was the deputy commandant of the Garmisch institute, responded with a brief talk about the institute and our trip. Then came a strange question-and-answer period, during which the chief seemed determined not to disclose any hard facts about his operation. We asked how many militiamen worked for him. His answer: an adequate number. We asked how many traffic accidents occurred

in the city annually. His answer: not many. We soon realized that we were wasting our time and his and indicated that we had no further questions.

The chief then announced that a representative of the Soviet Ministry of Defense wished to make an official statement. One of the men sitting along the wall opened a thick folder and, in solemn tones, read what he described as a formal document of his ministry. The gist of it was that our group had abused the hospitality of the Soviet Union by behaving badly throughout our visit. We had taken illegal and inappropriate photographs; we had tried to steal military decorations from a sleeping Soviet officer; we had crudely violated Tashkent university regulations; and we had committed other untoward acts, the details of which I have forgotten—probably because they had no meaningful basis in fact. The document wound up by condemning our behavior and criticizing our leader by name for not exercising proper discipline over us. We left in sullen silence and departed Kiev for Warsaw by train the next morning without incident.

Overall, this trip was an illuminating introduction to contemporary Soviet life. We saw that the Soviet system, while crude and cumbersome in comparison with the West, could, at its “Intourist” best, function tolerably well. We knew that our Intourist-arranged activities involved only the most presentable facilities. Still, decent food was available in state stores and farmers markets, as well as in the many hotels and restaurants we visited; things were being produced; the managers we encountered seemed competent; and the infrastructure we saw appeared adequate, if antiquated. Our many unscheduled encounters made clear that common Soviet citizens were neither enthusiastic about official Soviet ideology nor totally deluded by Soviet propaganda. Their main reaction to us was curiosity about the United States. They knew they were not getting the full story from the censored Soviet information media and were eager to hear our accounts of daily life in the West. They often were skeptical about what we had to say, but they wanted to hear it.

The happening at the Kiev militia headquarters, while unpleasant at the time, highlighted another side of Soviet reality in the late 1960s: official Soviet behavior could be incredibly ham-handed and stupidly counterproductive. Our group of eleven Americans, even if regarded as professional spies—and from time to time the Garmisch institute had been referred to in Soviet media, totally without foundation, as a school for American espionage against the Soviet Union—obviously shared a major career interest in Soviet affairs. In fact, my three foreign service colleagues and I would go on to serve a grand total of almost thirty years in the Soviet field, counting all our subsequent

assignments in the USSR and in Soviet affairs in the State Department. The Kiev confrontation reminded us that we had been under surveillance throughout the trip. It also underscored that Soviet hard-liners were willing to sour our generally favorable impressions of Soviet attainments and hospitality with a confrontation staged to score propaganda points in stereotypical Cold War fashion.

Sadly for the Garmisch institute students who followed us, our visit was the last of its kind allowed by the Soviet regime. My guess is that Soviet intelligence agencies had decided that we were more trouble than we were worth. In any case, subsequent visa requests by the Garmisch institute for similar trips were denied by the Soviet Foreign Ministry, which cited the “unacceptable” behavior of our group as the reason.

*The Garmisch Learning Experience.* The eight months of language and area studies in Garmisch that followed our trip were relaxing and rewarding, although reverberations of the Cold War could be felt even in that tranquil corner of Western Europe. The faculty members varied greatly in their respective attitudes toward the Soviet Union. At one extreme, a deeply religious married couple openly despised the Soviet system and was involved in various efforts to assist co-religionists inside the USSR. Most instructors kept their personal views to themselves and tried to be objective in teaching their specialty. At the other extreme, an instructor in his thirties, who had recently left the Soviet Union, was critical of anti-Soviet attitudes among other faculty members and argued that the daily lives of Soviet citizens should be understood in terms of normal human emotions and motives. This man, Yuri Marin, was energetic and outspoken. He said he had worked as a journalist in Siberia and had defected to the West out of frustration over regime restraints on his personal freedom. Many of the older faculty members, especially the religious couple, were convinced he was a Soviet agent and were anxious that all students become aware of this.

Marin was my instructor for a one-on-one course of selected readings from the Soviet press and discussion in Russian of the contemporary Soviet scene. Aware of his criticism of other faculty members for their anti-Soviet bias, I asked him to recommend current Soviet journal pieces that he felt depicted Soviet reality accurately. He agreed, and, using the institute library’s excellent collection of Russian language materials, put together a list of short stories, mostly from the relatively liberal literary monthly *Noviy Mir* (New World). After I had read a short story or article, we would discuss how it reflected Soviet reality. His main point was that we in the West had an exaggerated

notion of the repressive nature of the Soviet system. In fact, he insisted, most Soviet citizens led lives free from direct regime pressure or interference. I remember thinking at the time that even if Marin was a covert Soviet intelligence operative, my conversations with him were interesting and thought-provoking.

It turned out that Marin—if that was his real name—was in fact a covert Soviet intelligence operative. About a year later, I was at our Moscow apartment one evening watching a Soviet television documentary on espionage, and there was Yuri Marin. He obviously had left Garmisch and returned to the Soviet Union. He was filmed with his back to the camera, “for reasons of state security,” but his voice and distinctive rear profile—not to mention his message—gave him away. He said that his mission had been to penetrate the U.S. spy school in Garmisch, West Germany, which he had done successfully. As he had managed to become a member of the faculty there, he could confirm the anti-Soviet nature of the Garmisch institute and verify that its mission was to train American espionage agents.

Watching Marin’s television performance, it occurred to me that after two years in Soviet-dominated Bulgaria, followed by the institute-sponsored tour of the USSR and Eastern Europe and my one-on-one course in Garmisch with a covert Soviet agent, my KGB file must have been substantial even before I had begun my first diplomatic assignment in the Soviet Union.

A quite different faculty member from whom I learned a great deal about the Soviet system was Abdurrahman Avtorkhanov, who prior to World War II had been a Communist Party official in the Chechen-Ingush region of southern Russia. While at the institute, Avtorkhanov had written a scholarly analysis of the Soviet regime as a “partocracy,” a system dominated by the Communist Party apparatus. Since I had studied the role of ideology in Soviet policy-making, Avtorkhanov and I spent most of our one-on-one reading and conversation sessions loudly debating the nature of the Soviet regime (Avtorkhanov was both spirited and hard of hearing).

He was determined to convince me, through guided readings and discussion, that Soviet ideology, while important as a determinant of leadership decision making, was equally important for the way it permeated and shaped key institutions such as the party, the economic apparatus, the military, and the KGB. He insisted that the key to understanding the Soviet system was to understand the party as a corporate entity with a unique, distinctive outlook that included Marxism-Leninism but also involved derivative attitudes regarding governance, the economy, the military, and many other aspects of

the regime. Avtorkhanov argued strenuously that one needed to comprehend the broad official mind-set, of which doctrine was a part but was not itself in the forefront of the minds of most party careerists.

The official Soviet outlook that Avtorkhanov described was consistent with my general impressions from our tour of the Soviet Union, but it did not seem to fit the Bulgarian regime I had just experienced. The Bulgarian Communist Party and Bulgaria's other formal institutions obviously were Soviet in form, because the regime had been constructed according to Soviet blueprints. But the system and the psychology that surrounded it were strikingly Bulgarian in content, heavily influenced by the five-hundred-year "Turkish yoke," and focused more on Balkan national rivalries and ambitions than on building socialism and rebuffing imperialism. My subsequent years in the Soviet Union would demonstrate, however, that Avtorkhanov was absolutely correct about the pervasive, integral nature of the Soviet Communist Party's official outlook.

# 2

## Working Levels of the Soviet Regime

### Living and Working Conditions in Moscow

*The Moscow Embassy.* In the late 1960s, the American embassy building in Moscow was, in its way, as strange as the U.S. embassy in Sofia. Our Moscow mission originally was located across from the Kremlin, next to the National Hotel in the very center of the city. Stalin reportedly could see from one of his Kremlin office windows the American flag that was flown every working day from the embassy's front façade, which faced the Kremlin. When the Cold War set in, Stalin is said to have ordered the entire embassy, along with its flag, moved out of his sight.

When I arrived in 1969, the embassy occupied all of a large ten-story apartment building located about a mile west of the Kremlin, close to the Moscow River. The building fronted on Moscow's main ring road, which had multiple lanes of traffic that circled the entire city. Two small portals in the embassy's front façade divided the building into three wings: north, central, and south. The portals led through archways to a large rear courtyard where a small cafeteria, medical clinic, workshops, an auto repair garage, and storage sheds had been constructed. A high masonry wall ran along the sides and back of the compound and was joined to a tall wrought-iron fence that ran across the entire front of the embassy grounds, set off by a few feet from the building's front wall. Vehicular and pedestrian traffic went through the two front portals, guarded twenty-four hours a day by shifts of four armed Soviet militiamen, two on each gate. Unlike the Bulgarian militiaman stationed in front of our mission in Sofia, his Soviet counterparts at Embassy Moscow carefully checked the documents of each person seeking to enter the compound, except for embassy personnel and others whom the militiamen recognized by sight.

As in Sofia, there was no American control over access to the embassy building and grounds. Once past the militia guards, a visitor—whether Soviet,

American, or from a third country—was free to enter the ground floor of the embassy building or proceed into the courtyard. Apart from a small vaulted room in the back of the Consular Section, located on the ground floor of the north wing, the courtyard and the first seven floors of the building were unsecured. Most of this portion of the building consisted of staff apartments and the quarters of our U.S. Marine detachment. Soviet employees—clerks, translators, language teachers, maintenance personnel, drivers, cooks, and maids—had unimpeded access to this area. The carefully secured part of the building, where classified material was stored and where the sensitive work of the embassy was conducted, encompassed the upper three floors and the attic. Regular access to this area was through one door to the ninth floor, located off a stairwell landing at the south end of the building's central wing. Two small elevators and a large set of stairs provided access from the ground floor to this ninth floor entryway. A U.S. Marine guard was on duty just inside the access point twenty-four hours a day, seated at a large podium equipped with closed-circuit TV monitors and other security devices.

*Living Conditions.* We were assigned to one of three apartments leased by the embassy in a large, Soviet-built apartment building located on the southwest outskirts of Moscow, in the vicinity of Moscow State University (most embassy personnel lived in similar apartment buildings around the city). There was no landscaping—no lawns, flower beds, or shrubs to speak of. A large courtyard, equipped with a few park benches, was located immediately behind the building, and a paved parking lot was behind that. The rectangular, six-story apartment building extended across the entire front of the compound. A large fence surrounded the rest of the compound, running from the ends of the building, along the sides of the grounds, and across the back of the parking lot. Only foreigners lived in the building, which was guarded around the clock by an armed militiaman stationed at the sole pedestrian and vehicle gate, located at the right front corner of the facility.

The exterior of the building looked shoddy, as did most other apartment buildings and most other structures in and around the city. The public areas inside the building were poorly maintained, dirty, and smelly. Each stairwell contained a garbage chute where, over the years, bits of refuse had accumulated in the nooks and crannies. The entryways were roughly finished in concrete, with no serious attempt at interior design. The cleaning crews, made up of elderly women, did their best but were poorly equipped with twig brooms, primitive cloth mops, and virtually no cleaning compounds.

The interiors of the American apartments were much more attractive than



the public areas. Our quarters consisted of three small Soviet apartments that had been joined together, refurbished, and re-equipped by Soviet employees of our embassy. Off of a central hall that ran the length of the entire apartment were a laundry room, kitchen, dining room, sitting room, and four bedrooms—all small but adequate for the four of us (we had engaged an American nanny to help care for our young daughter) and for limited entertaining. Carpets, drapes, furniture, and appliances had been shipped in from Western Europe and the United States. Painting and other maintenance work inside the apartment was performed by the embassy's Soviet workers.

There were minor problems. The exterior walls consisted of precast concrete slabs. The wooden window frames fit poorly into the preformed openings and had to be caulked with large amounts of putty and sealed with masking tape every winter. The district heating facility turned on the steam heat according to the calendar, not the temperature outside. The radiators had valves but no thermostats, so one had to regulate the temperature by adjusting the valves and the double-framed windows. Each year the hot water was turned off for about four weeks for the maintenance, repair, and replacement of underground pipes. This was done during the late summer or early fall, regardless of how cold it was outside. Still, housing was adequate by Western standards and luxurious by Soviet standards. On top of that, the only expense to us was a minuscule monthly telephone bill.

*Daily Life.* The routine chores of living in Moscow were much more easily accomplished than was the case in Sofia, thanks to the greater size and importance of Embassy Moscow, together with the much larger international community resident in Moscow. Schooling for legion or embassy children, for instance, had been a major problem in Sofia. One American teacher provided by the Department of State operated a one-room school facility in her apartment for grades one through eight. Families with high school-aged children had to use boarding schools in Western Europe or in the United States (and were given educational allowances by the State Department to help defray this considerable expense). The high school problem was the same in Moscow, but the American and British Embassies jointly operated a full-sized grade school, with a well-qualified principal and a youthful, adventurous teaching staff recruited mainly from the United States and the United Kingdom. (The French Embassy operated its own school, as did the Japanese Embassy and a group of Arab embassies.)

Some American embassy families sent their small children to Soviet kindergartens, and we decided to give that a try with our daughter, who was then

four years old. The experiment was a great success. For a few rubles a month, a kindergarten near our apartment building would accept children commencing at 7:00 A.M. and, if necessary, keep them until 7:00 P.M. each weekday. Each child had a comfortable steel-frame bed for midmorning and midafternoon naps. A hot lunch was provided, as were morning and afternoon snacks. The teachers seemed well motivated, well intentioned, and competent. Our daughter soon picked up flawless, unaccented Russian, learned little songs glorifying Lenin and the Soviet Union, and participated happily in various school ceremonies and performances.

The embassy had a small grocery store in the basement of the central wing that featured fresh milk and produce brought in weekly by train from Helsinki, along with U.S. canned and dry goods trucked in periodically from large U.S. military commissaries in Berlin and Frankfurt. In addition, the Soviets operated a grocery store for diplomats (as well as for Soviet citizens who had hard currency) that was many times larger than the comparable facility in Sofia. The Moscow store carried fresh-baked bread, fresh eggs, an uneven supply of fresh meat (featuring high-quality beef filet that sold out quickly), imported frozen chicken, a usually good assortment of cheese and sausage, a wide variety of canned goods from Western and Eastern Europe as well as from the Middle East and Asia, plus a wide selection of Western-made tobacco products, soft drinks, beer, wine, and liquors. Good-quality fresh fruit and vegetables were rare but usually could be purchased at a premium in the several large farmers markets located around the city. The conditions in these markets were unsanitary, but the produce, at least in theory, was fresh off the farm.

Crime, corruption, and drunkenness of course existed in the Soviet Union as of the late 1960s, but, except for an occasional drunk, we saw little of these problems in and around the parts of Moscow we frequented. Our greatest concern in this department was the repeated theft from our personal automobiles of windshield wipers and side-mounted rearview mirrors. One could understand why thieves would want our wiper blades for personal use or sale on the black market: spare parts for Soviet-produced automobiles and trucks were difficult to obtain through legal means. We quickly learned to do what Soviet car owners routinely did—remove the wipers and lock them in the car when it was parked in an unsafe location.

The popularity of the rearview mirrors was harder to understand, since they were difficult to detach, could not easily be attached to another car, and presumably would be as vulnerable to theft on a Soviet car as they were on

our automobiles. One explanation was revealed to me by coincidence at the Moscow circus one winter evening. As I entered the large vestibule where the coat racks were located, I saw a Soviet woman, who had just checked her coat and fur hat, dig into her large handbag and, without a trace of self-consciousness, pull out one of these mirrors, still housed in its chrome mounting. She used it to check her hairdo and then stuffed it back into her bag. Evidently the quality of the mirror and the durability of its housing were superior to Soviet-produced hand mirrors.

We tried never to forget that the embassy and its personnel were under constant observation by the KGB, who doubtless were trying to figure out the identity and monitor the activities of American intelligence operatives and were also looking more generally for personal weaknesses that might be used for blackmail and recruitment. This problem was more than hypothetical. As I arrived in Moscow, an embassy officer was being sent home after he voluntarily admitted to falling into a KGB recruitment trap. The officer was traveling alone to the Caucasus on official business. (I don't recall why he was not accompanied by another American—for security reasons the embassy usually required its American staff to travel within the Soviet Union in pairs.) The KGB knew the details of his travel plans, because all tickets and reservations had to be obtained through the one official Soviet travel agency for foreigners, Intourist. In addition, official permission from the Foreign Ministry was required at least forty-eight hours in advance for any trip by Western diplomats outside of the Moscow region.

As the American diplomat boarded his flight in Moscow, he observed (so the story went) an unusually attractive Soviet woman sitting across the aisle. During the flight, this woman asked the American for a light and acted as if she found him attractive. As our officer was checking into his hotel at the other end of the line, the same woman appeared at the reception desk, evidently with a reservation at the same hotel. One thing led to another, and after dinner that evening the embassy officer wound up in a hotel room alone with the young lady.

Back in Moscow a few days later, the officer was approached by one of the embassy's Soviet employees, who said he had an embarrassing message to convey. Color photographs had been taken of the officer and his female Soviet acquaintance in compromising positions. If the officer would agree to minor cooperation with Soviet "competent authorities," no one on the American side would ever know about this indiscretion. Otherwise, a set of the photographs would be sent to the American ambassador. To this officer's credit, he

told the employee he would like a set of the photos for his own collection and then promptly reported the whole affair to the embassy security officer. The Soviet employee was immediately fired, and the officer (who in any event was nearing the end of his tour) was sent home, I believe without irreparable damage to his foreign service career.

This certainly was not the only instance in which embassy personnel allowed sexual desire to overpower good judgment. I learned through the grapevine of three other cases during my first tour in Moscow, and there doubtless were other episodes that I did not know about. Incredibly, a single American employee who lived in the embassy compound and walked her dog in the vicinity of the building every morning and evening somehow developed a love affair with one of the embassy's uniformed militia guards. Equally incredibly, a single FSO who lived in the compound also wound up in a love affair with a militia guard. While these two cases were gross violations of embassy regulations—the rules against “fraternization” with Soviet citizens were strict and known well by all American employees—the cases did not to my knowledge involve disclosure to the Soviets of classified information. The third case involved a newly arrived U.S. Marine, who made repeated, blatant sexual overtures to married embassy women and soon was on his way back to the United States before he could get into trouble with women outside our embassy community.

## Working-Level Encounters

*Consular Work at Embassy Moscow.* The same U.S. laws, regulations, and procedures for issuing visas and passports and assisting American citizens applied in Moscow as they had in Sofia. In contrast to small, insignificant Bulgaria, however, the Soviet Union was the largest country in the world in terms of geographical expanse and of course was vital strategically to America's national interests. It therefore was to be expected that Embassy Moscow's Consular Section included four bilingual Soviet clerks, an American Foreign Service secretary, and three full-time FSOs on their second or third overseas tour—compared with embassy Sofia's minimal Consular Section, which comprised one junior FSO and one bilingual Bulgarian clerk.

Another unique dimension to consular work in Moscow as compared to Sofia was the ever-present potential for publicity. In the late 1960s, about twenty-five American correspondents resided in Moscow, and several of them

attempted to cover the U.S. Embassy—including the Consular Section—as they would cover a police precinct back home. No American journalists resided in Sofia, and it was an occasion when one turned up there for a brief visit.

In addition, American officials, journalists, businesspeople, and tourists were more consistently treated as “the enemy” by Soviet officialdom than was the case in Sofia. Consular work in Moscow therefore dealt with issues of alleged American misconduct, including subversion and espionage, much more frequently than in Sofia. One quickly discovered that Soviet officials at all levels in Moscow were prone to ideological and stereotypical thinking and hence were on guard and often suspicious when dealing with American citizens, whether official or unofficial. Most nonofficial Soviets were leery of contact with U.S. Embassy personnel, although, as we had seen during our Garmisch institute tour, this caution tended to ease as one traveled away from Moscow. Still, when embassy personnel and other Americans encountered an unusually friendly native, either in Moscow or elsewhere in the Soviet Union, it was prudent to consider whether the person was genuine or perhaps was working in some capacity for the KGB.

*Working-Level Exposure to Soviet Reality.* Most of the FSOs assigned to the Consular Section in Moscow during the Cold War years hoped to specialize in political or economic reporting and regarded a year of consular work as the initiation fee for a later assignment “upstairs” in the Political or Economic Section. This was the case for me and my fellow consular officers in 1969. The section chief was a specialist in economic and commercial affairs; my other colleague shared my intention of specializing in political work. As in Sofia, however, I learned as much or more as a consular officer in Moscow about how the regime actually operated than did my Political and Economic Section colleagues, who spent much of their time reading Soviet newspapers and journals, meeting with a narrow, generally uninteresting group of midlevel Soviet officials cleared for such encounters, and conferring with diplomats from other embassies.

Our experience as consular officers with working-levels of the regime in Moscow and throughout the USSR (there were no other American consulates in the Soviet Union at that time) ranged from dealing with physical and mental health issues of varying degrees of severity to coping with major violations of Soviet law allegedly committed by American citizens. The incidence of psychological disturbances among American visitors was surprisingly high, due to such factors as the long, usually exhausting trip to the Soviet Union,

and the stress of being an American in a totalitarian state that regarded the United States as its mortal enemy. In the worst such case I was involved in, an American tourist of Lithuanian descent jumped to his death from his fourth-floor Moscow hotel room, mistakenly convinced (as we found out from his brother, who was in the room at the time of the tragedy) that the KGB was coming to arrest him.

Dealing with health problems in Moscow and other parts of the country revealed the rudimentary nature of Soviet health care. Even the best Moscow hospital to which foreigners were admitted was crowded and poorly equipped, and it was common for family members of Soviet patients to bring in fresh fruit (when available) and dairy products to supplement the meager hospital meals. The situation usually was worse in smaller Soviet cities and towns.

*Cremation, Soviet Style.* Because there was virtually no private sector and therefore virtually no competition, state-provided services involving such intimate issues as personal health, marriage, death, and burial could seem remarkably insensitive. For example, I had to witness the cremation in Moscow of an American tourist—a young child—who had died from an accidental overdose of prescription drugs. I took an embassy car and driver to the crematorium, located in the industrial suburbs of Moscow. The building looked like some sort of small manufacturing facility. It was a square, two-story brick structure with a tall smokestack at the center of the roof. There were trees nearby but no landscaping around the crematorium building. Buses and trucks, which had transported caskets and mourners to the site, were parked randomly around the building. About thirty people were gathered at the entrance.

The embassy driver, who had been to the facility on other occasions, said that this was the only operating crematorium in Moscow and was always busy. Each cremation was assigned a number, and the people at the entrance were waiting for their number to be called. I walked over to the doorkeeper, was given a number (Intourist had arranged for the casket containing the American child to be delivered separately), and stood around for a few minutes until our number was announced. Upon entering, I encountered a cavernous, barren room with an elevated, square platform in the center. The platform looked like an oversized boxing ring, except that it had a wooden railing in place of ropes along the four sides and an oblong metal stand at its center.

From a second-story loft, an elderly man dressed in a black suit began

to play a funeral dirge on a small piano. Two workmen in worn coveralls unceremoniously carried a small wooden coffin to the platform and placed it on the metal stand. An imposing woman, dressed in black and standing, like a boxing referee, in one corner of the platform, asked loudly if anyone wished to view the body. When I answered with a firm “nyet,” the woman picked up a hammer and nails and decisively nailed the coffin shut. In a loud voice, she ordered the pianist to stop playing, and then threw a switch at one end of the stand. Thick metal panels opened along each side, revealing flames underneath. The coffin slowly descended into the fire, the panels closed, and the pathetic ceremony was over. As I walked out the side exit, another wooden coffin was on its way to the platform and the next group of mourners was filing in.

*Criminal Justice in the Ukraine.* The most revealing insights to the workings of the Soviet system unfortunately often involved Americans in serious trouble. One such incident involved an American man of Ukrainian descent who was charged with smuggling gold into the Soviet Union—a crime punishable by five to ten years in prison. The Soviet Foreign Ministry informed us that this individual had been placed under house arrest in the southern Ukrainian city of Zhdanov, where he had been visiting relatives. Zhdanov was a closed city of about three hundred thousand, located on the Sea of Azov, to the north of the Black Sea. It was known for its huge steel plant, Azovstal, and for its fabricating plant for Red Navy submarines.

We cabled the arrested American, through his Ukrainian relatives, that embassy consular officers would come to Zhdanov to assist him as soon as travel arrangements could be made. The section chief and I flew to Zhdanov a few days later, after receiving the mandatory permission of the Foreign Ministry, which it was obligated to provide according to the terms of a U.S.-Soviet Consular Convention that had been agreed to a few years earlier.

Zhdanov appeared to be a typical Soviet industrial center, dominated by the Azovstal complex, which sprawled along the western shore of the Sea of Azov, not far from the city center. Huge clouds of orange and yellow smoke billowed from the numerous tall stacks at the steel plant. Day and night one could hear the piercing sound of red-hot metal being quenched in water. The American’s relatives lived in a neighborhood of single family dwellings with large, fenced yards that had probably been part of an agricultural village before Zhdanov became industrialized and started to spread outward. We were surprised to discover that none of the houses in that neighborhood were equipped with indoor plumbing, except for one cold water pipe that ran to

the kitchen sink. There was a primitive outhouse in each backyard. The relatives told us that all of the older Zhdanov neighborhoods, which accounted for about half of the city's residents, lacked indoor plumbing.

The detained American looked to be in his forties and appeared sturdy in body and in spirit. He told us he suspected that neighbors, or perhaps distant relatives, envious of all the good things he had brought from the United States for his close relatives, had reported him to local authorities. Yes, he had brought in a small quantity of dental gold that a U.S. relative who was a dentist had supplied. And yes, in the excitement of arriving in Kiev, he had failed to declare the gold. But it was ridiculous to think that this harmless oversight, even if a technical violation of Soviet law, merited five to ten years in a Soviet prison as stipulated in the Ukrainian Criminal Code. So far, he had been placed under arrest but was free to move about so long as he did not go beyond the city limits. One thing was certain, he said with quiet determination: he was not going to spend time in a Communist prison. His meaning seemed clear—he would take his own life before submitting to imprisonment in the Soviet Union.

My colleague and I, together with the arrested American, then visited the Ukrainian lawyer his relatives had hired to defend him. The lawyer was an intellectual-looking fellow in his late thirties or early forties, professional and polite but apparently nervous about playing a role in an international case involving an American citizen and officials from the American Embassy. After a general discussion of the case, he suggested we all go for a stroll in a nearby park—obviously implying that he suspected his office was bugged. Once outdoors, the lawyer told us quietly that he was pretty sure the charges in this case were politically motivated. The party boss of the district in which the arrested American's relatives lived was well known to be ambitious. Unfortunately, the family had bragged openly about their well-to-do American relatives and all the precious items the family had received from the United States. Worse, the family had sold on the local black market many of the items they received, items otherwise unobtainable in Zhdanov and therefore commanding very high prices. Someone must have informed the party boss about the gold, and he decided to pounce.

Almost certainly, the lawyer continued, the Zhdanov city and regional party organizations would support their colleague, and the local people's court would return a guilty finding. This would be decided on political grounds, not on the legal merits of the case. His intention was to plead guilty but argue for a suspended sentence and speedy expulsion from the Soviet



Union, even though he had little hope the Zhdanov court would agree. Assuming it did not, we should then appeal its finding to the Supreme Court of Ukraine, hoping that the considerable political distance between Zhdanov and the Ukrainian capital of Kiev would bring a less harsh sentence. A guilty finding was unlikely to be overturned. But there was a reasonable chance that after checking with Moscow, high authorities in Kiev would mandate prompt expulsion from the Soviet Union in lieu of imprisonment.

There was something useful the U.S. side could do, the lawyer volunteered. The American Embassy should contact the Zhdanov prosecutor's office on behalf of the accused, and, if the outcome of the local trial was adverse, the embassy should then make a similar appeal to the Office of the Ukrainian Prosecutor General in Kiev. This would create some countervailing political pressure and thus increase the odds of an eventually favorable outcome. The lawyer gave us the name, address, and telephone number of the city prosecutor. When we called his office from our hotel that afternoon, his secretary said he would receive us the next morning.

The prosecutor's office was typical for lower-level Soviet officials. It contained a large wooden desk, with a side table on which several telephones were arrayed. A rectangular conference table extended from the front center of the desk toward the center of the room. A large portrait of Communist Party General Secretary Brezhnev adorned the wall behind the desk. The prosecutor was a beefy, energetic young man, probably in his mid-thirties. He was polite but thoroughly businesslike. We explained our obligation as U.S. Consular Officers to assist American citizens. We said that our extensive discussions with the arrested American citizen made it clear that he was not a professional criminal, was neither involved in anti-Soviet activities nor engaged in illegal actions for personal profit. He did neglect to declare a modest amount of dental gold leaf he had brought, along with many other gifts, to his relatives in Zhdanov. We hoped the prosecutor would agree with us that this technical infraction of Ukrainian law did not warrant imprisonment.

He heard us out impassively, and then responded that he could assure us the American would be given a fair trial, in accordance with the relevant provisions of Ukrainian law. The illegal import of precious metal was a serious offense under the Ukrainian Criminal Code. As for his personal role in this matter, he said solemnly and deliberately, it was his duty to follow the orders of his party, and he would do so faithfully. (So much for the rule of law in the Soviet Union, I thought to myself.)

We asked him to inform us of the trial date as soon as it was set. He said

he would do so through the Foreign Ministry in Moscow. We departed, hoping the fact of our intervention on behalf of the accused American citizen would be reported up the line and have a positive effect on the final outcome of his case.

The trial was held about two weeks later, and my colleague and I returned to Zhdanov for the occasion. We were seated in the front row of the small courtroom, which was filled with spectators. The accused American was seated in the box, to one side of the room, reserved for the defendant. His attorney was seated at a nearby table but was not allowed to confer with his client during the proceedings. At the front were the usual three judges who would hear and decide the case: one professional judge, who conducted the trial, and two lay judges.

The proceedings were brief, unemotional, and nonideological. The prosecutor laid out the facts, emphasized that gold-smuggling was a serious offense, and called for a sentence of five years in prison. The defense attorney admitted that his client might be technically guilty of smuggling as defined in the Ukrainian criminal code but had in fact inadvertently failed to declare the small amount of dental gold he had brought for his relatives. Imprisonment under these circumstances would be unduly severe. Confiscation of the gold, a modest fine, and expulsion from the USSR would be more appropriate.

After a short recess, the chief judge announced a unanimous decision: he and his two colleagues found the accused guilty as charged and sentenced him to five years in prison. The judge added that the finding and sentence could be appealed to the Ukrainian Supreme Court, and the guilty party would be restricted to the Zhdanov city limits pending appeal. The defense attorney announced that an appeal would be filed, and the trial was adjourned.

As my colleague and I gathered our notes and other belongings, one of the lay judges—a well-groomed young woman who looked agitated—approached us on her way to the exit at the back of the room. She leaned over toward me and whispered, in a forceful tone, “Appeal, by all means, appeal.” Before I could respond, she hurried on toward the exit. This encounter strengthened my confidence in the defense lawyer’s earlier analysis to the effect that the American probably would never have been brought to trial had it not been for an ambitious local party official who insisted on formal legal proceedings and the maximum sentence.

Once back at the embassy, we briefed our superiors on the case and received the ambassador’s permission to send a diplomatic note to the presi-

dent of the Ukraine on behalf of the U.S. citizen along the lines his lawyer had recommended.

The case came before the Ukrainian Supreme Court in Kiev about three weeks later, and of course my colleague and I were present. The courtroom was larger and more ornate than the one in Zhdanov, but the set-up of the room and the organization of the proceedings were about the same as they had been in Zhdanov. The Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of Ukraine argued matter-of-factly that a serious crime had been committed and the sentence handed down in Zhdanov was appropriate. The defense lawyer from Zhdanov argued that there had been no criminal intent, and the sentence was not justified by the facts. The accused made a brief statement, pointing out that he had made an innocent mistake for which he apologized to the government and people of the Ukraine. After a short recess, the chief judge announced that the court upheld the guilty verdict but changed the sentence from imprisonment to forfeiture of the illegally imported gold and expulsion from the Ukraine within one week.

We congratulated the defense lawyer for his evidently correct analysis of the case and his absolutely correct prediction of the outcome. He rolled his eyes and said he would be very happy to get back to the routine of his law practice in Zhdanov.

This episode illustrated one of the frustrating aspects of Cold War diplomacy at the working level in the Soviet Union. One never knew whether there was more than met the eye—or less—in a given situation. In this case, had the defense lawyer been told by senior authorities how the matter would be resolved in Zhdanov and in Kiev? Had he been instructed to clue us in, pretending he was doing so on his own? Did the lay judge in Zhdanov act on her own in urging us to appeal, or was she instructed to do so to ensure that we would not overreact to the initial sentence? It was my strong impression, and I believe my embassy colleague agreed, that there was less than met the eye in this instance—that the attorney and the lay judge were acting on their own. But we had no way to know for sure.

*Sorry, Wrong Country.* A second major case of Americans in trouble unfolded during the summer of 1970, when the embassy received formal notice from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that a U.S. military aircraft had violated Soviet airspace. According to the Foreign Ministry, the plane had landed illegally at a Soviet military airfield and the crew and passengers had been placed under detention pending a full investigation. Consular access

to the detained Americans would, however, be arranged upon the embassy's request.

We learned from Washington that indeed a U.S. military plane had been reported missing in the vicinity of the border between Turkey and the USSR, near the Soviet Republic of Armenia. On board had been the U.S. Army major general commanding American forces in Turkey; his deputy, a U.S. Army brigadier general; a Turkish liaison officer, a colonel; and the pilot, a U.S. Army warrant officer.

The Consular Section chief and I promptly arranged to fly from Moscow to the Armenian capital of Yerevan. A Soviet military car was to meet us there and drive us to the southern Armenian city of Leninakan, where the plane and its occupants were located. The Foreign Ministry explained to us in Moscow that since the border zone and the city of Leninakan were sensitive military areas and closed to all foreign travel, we would be driven to Leninakan only after dark and would have to return to Yerevan the same night.

The flight to Yerevan was uneventful—once we were airborne. On a broiling hot summer afternoon, our fully loaded Aeroflot jet had taxied away from the terminal and then, for reasons unexplained, stopped. The plane was not equipped with on-the-ground air conditioning, so with each passing minute the temperature in the sealed cabin became more uncomfortable. No one complained, even after some thirty minutes. The plane then took off, and, as we climbed, the cabin began to cool down. A minor incident, but typical of Aeroflot's attitude toward passenger comfort.

In those days Aeroflot was the only Soviet airline. The consumer choice therefore was to fly Aeroflot, take the train, or stay home. Airfare was subsidized, and the planes were almost always overbooked. As a rule, Aeroflot personnel were indifferent about the quality of a flight from the passengers' point of view. The food (usually rice, peas, and boiled chicken) was edible but unappetizing. Cabin safety was a bad joke, featuring broken seat belts, passengers sitting on the floor next to exits, smoking during takeoff and landing, aisles blocked with carry-on luggage. On one memorable flight during our Garmisch institute tour, an elderly farmer was seated in the front row with a large string bag of melons at his feet. During an unusually steep takeoff, one of the melons came loose and rolled down the center aisle like a bowling ball, finally smashing against a rear seat stanchion. Large hunks of ripe melon were strewn about the carpet at the rear of the cabin. The stewardesses just left them there, and they gradually were ground into the carpet as passengers walked to and from the restrooms at the back of the plane.

Our drive from Yerevan to Leninakan was surreal. The car was a standard four-passenger Soviet Volga sedan. An Armenian military protocol officer sat next to the driver in front; my embassy colleague and I were in the back. It was dark by the time we neared the border, yet the driver somehow kept driving at close to normal speed, navigating by the faint illumination of small, military-style running lights. As I looked through the windshield from the back seat, I could detect no light coming from our car, nor could I make out anything of the road immediately ahead of us.

Suddenly the entire landscape to the immediate south of us was illuminated by brilliant white light. The protocol officer quickly explained that the border was patrolled throughout the night by mobile floodlight units to deter illegal border crossings. This sudden illumination occurred four or five more times at uneven intervals during the trip, and the contrast between pitch black and blinding white was startling each time. We were witnessing a Cold War light show along the border between Turkey and the Soviet Union, which was also the border between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

The trip to Leninakan ended when we pulled into a walled, guarded compound evidently on the outskirts of the city. We stopped in front of a modern-looking building, with large picture windows along the front façade looking out on what seemed in the gloom to be nicely landscaped grounds. We were met at the door by an elderly Soviet two-star general in dress uniform. Soft-spoken and courteous, he welcomed us and escorted us inside to meet the American officers and their Turkish colleague.

The interior of the building was, by normal Soviet standards, unbelievable. The large reception area was beautifully wood-paneled, with polished hardwood flooring, colorful Armenian rugs, and a large stone fireplace. The room was tastefully decorated with wall hangings and large murals and was furnished with overstuffed chairs and couches. At the rear of the room was a massive, curved wooden staircase leading to second-floor bedrooms. A recreation room was adjoining, outfitted with several pool tables. A large, wood-paneled dining room lay beyond that.

Dressed in their military uniforms, the American and Turkish officers walked up and introduced themselves. We all sat down in a corner of the room. White-coated waiters brought trays of wine, juice, and soft drinks. After confirming that our officers had been well treated—which by that time was pretty obvious—we asked what had happened during their flight to cause them to land at the Leninakan military airfield in Soviet Armenia.

They explained that they had been on an inspection trip to the Turkish

military airfield at Kars, about forty kilometers to the south of Leninakan. Neither the pilot nor the passengers had previously flown in the region. The weather featured high clouds and gusty winds, although the ground visibility was good. The pilot picked up what he thought was the Kars radio beacon, and then looked for terrain features to verify his position. The brigadier general, who was sitting in the co-pilot's seat, had a topographical map of the region open on his lap. As he looked down from the plane, he saw railroad tracks in the right relationship to what he assumed was the Kars airfield, and the pilot brought the plane down.

As they taxied toward the terminal building, they noticed several military helicopters marked with large red stars parked on the tarmac and assumed these aircraft must be part of a realistic war game scenario. They then saw two jeeps—also with red stars and large-caliber manned machine guns mounted in the rear—drawing alongside their plane. The machine gunners were aiming directly at the plane. This was no war game: they had landed at a Soviet airbase.

The pilot said he was sure he had set his radio compass on the correct frequency. He said he believed the Soviets had detected his plane on their radar and had boosted the output of their radio beacon to lure the U.S. plane across the border into Leninakan. (I subsequently heard that the Pentagon conducted an investigation of the incident, but the embassy—or at least I—was not informed of the outcome.)

The pilot and passengers had been brought directly to the facility in which we were sitting, a Soviet military VIP guesthouse. They had explained their mission and apologized for their error. The senior U.S. general had pointed out that the plane was unarmed and carried no photographic equipment, and that no one on board was carrying a weapon or even a hand-held camera. It was clear that the Soviet military nonetheless would conduct a formal investigation of the incident. Otherwise, our officers and their Turkish colleague said they had been treated courteously, been well fed, and had played billiards with their Soviet military hosts after dinner. Their only request, other than a speedy return home, was to be given a tour of Leninakan. The Soviet general said he thought that could be arranged, if his guests would agree to dress in civilian clothes to avoid creating “confusion or misunderstanding” on the part of city dwellers.

We then moved into the dining room for a late evening, multicourse dinner accompanied by generous amounts of wine, vodka, and cognac and the inevitable toasts to peace, mutual understanding, cooperation during World

War II, fallen military comrades, wives and children, parents, and so forth. My colleague and I then departed for the return trip to Yerevan, after assuring the American officers and their Turkish colleague that we would arrange a second visit as soon as possible.

Our second trip to Yerevan and Leninakan about ten days later was a carbon copy of the first, except that our flight from Moscow departed on schedule, before the cabin became superheated by the afternoon sun. The atmosphere at the guesthouse in Leninakan was also cooler, however, due to the arrival from Moscow, within a few days of our first visit, of an interrogation team. We were greeted by the Soviet general who had previously been our host. At his side was a trim, middle-aged man wearing a well-tailored business suit, which was a rarity and usually an indicator either of assignments in the West or considerable personal stature. He was introduced as an army colonel from Moscow in charge of the official investigating group. The colonel then took full charge of the meeting.

It would not be possible for us to meet with the detainees in a group, the colonel announced firmly. Official interrogations of the pilot and each passenger were still under way. We could all dine together, but talk of the incident would not be permitted. In that case, my consular colleague responded, we would not stay for dinner. The colonel shrugged and said that was up to us.

Our conversations with each detainee revealed that they had been kept apart from one another, except for meals, since the arrival of the Moscow interrogation unit. They had not been physically abused or mistreated. They had been asked to recount the circumstances of the incident over and over again, with the Soviet side obviously trying to find some telling discrepancy among the individual accounts. Just prior to the arrival of the interrogation group, however, the detainees had been treated to a tour of Leninakan, as they had requested.

After we had spoken with each officer, we urged the Soviet colonel to accept the fact that this unauthorized intrusion into Soviet airspace resulted from an innocent navigational error. The U.S. officers and their Turkish escort had been on an inspection trip and intended to land at Kars, Turkey. That was the whole story. The colonel replied that the Soviet side had to satisfy itself about all aspects of this incident and still had not done so. After all, Soviet airspace had been crudely violated by a United States military aircraft. Would the American side be dismissive of this incident if the Soviet side had shot the U.S. intruder out of the sky, as it had every right to do? If the

incident represented a simple mistake, the plane and its occupants would be released in due course. But the Soviet side would determine the facts for itself.

By the time we got back to our Yerevan hotel late that night, the hotel restaurant and all other downtown restaurants were closed and room service was unavailable. Fortunately, my experience in traveling around Bulgaria and the USSR had taught me to carry a small survival kit. Among other necessities, I had brought along four Pop-Tarts, several tea bags, and an electric immersion coil. So dinner consisted of hot tea and cold tarts (which tasted pretty good, even if not popped).

We put in a third request to travel to Leninakan shortly after our return to Moscow, but this proved unnecessary. About one week after our second visit, the embassy was notified that the officers and their plane had been returned to Turkey. With a stern written admonition to the embassy from the Soviet Foreign Ministry to take whatever steps necessary to avoid further encroachment into Soviet airspace, the matter was closed.

This incident served to illustrate the fact that the official Soviet attitude toward the United States was one of hostility and mistrust, and that innocent mistakes could have serious consequences, even though this particular incident ended well. It also indicated the considerable difference between official attitudes in Moscow and in the provinces—in this instance, Moscow's officiousness obviously trumped Armenian hospitality. It also was pertinent, in a small way, to the debate then under way in the West about the Soviet military establishment: was it as shoddy and crude as the observable parts of the Soviet civilian sector, or was the civilian sector in such bad shape because the best resources went to the military establishment? The tiny slice of military life we experienced in Leninakan suggested that the latter was true, at least with respect to creature comforts for senior officers. Leninakan was literally in a far corner of the USSR, yet the VIP quarters in which our officers were housed compared favorably with the best such facilities in the United States.

## Fathoming the Soviet Economy

At the beginning of my second year in Moscow, in the summer of 1970, a new set of RSOS reported for duty in the Consular Section, and I was transferred to the three-person Economic and Commercial Section. That work proved to be dull in comparison with my consular adventures. We studied the Soviet economic newspapers and journals and wrote reports on items of



interest. We tried, usually with little substantive payoff, to meet with mid-level Soviet officials and scholars to discuss economic matters. We conducted extensive surveys of the availability, quality, and prices of consumer goods by visiting retail stores and farmers markets in Moscow and around the Soviet Union. We also did what we could to assist the few Americans who were doing business in the Soviet Union or were in Moscow to explore the Soviet market.

There was the occasional happening that shed light on the nature of the Soviet economic system. One such moment was provided by a young Soviet economist, whom we invited over to our apartment for dinner and a movie one winter evening. After a few drinks, my acquaintance—who was well connected and worked at one of the most prestigious Moscow think-tanks—said he did not envy our task of trying to understand the operation of the Soviet domestic economy. Few Soviet insiders had a clear conception of how the system worked, he said, because of the many informal mechanisms and procedures that had developed during the postwar period. When I asked his recommendation as to the best Soviet book on the economy, he laughed and said there was no such book. An accurate description of the system could not be written because practice had deviated too far from official theory, and the authorities would never approve publication of a book that documented this situation.

Another such moment came during the visit to Moscow of IBM President Thomas Watson and his top technical and sales advisors. They had been invited by the State Committee for Science and Technology to assess firsthand the potential for a major IBM presence in the Soviet Union. After several days of formal and informal meetings with high-level Soviet officials, Watson and his team told our ambassador over lunch they were convinced there was no potential for IBM in the Soviet Union for the foreseeable future. The IBM team had concluded that the Soviets had no realistic notion of the effective use of computer technology in their economy, and that IBM would be ill-advised to get tangled up in this problem.

We saw corroboration of this assessment in numerous small ways. For example, at that time even the largest consumer outlets in Moscow were using the abacus to calculate transactions. A French computer firm brought a state-of-the-art computer to Moscow to demonstrate how the machine could control the flow of vehicular traffic in Moscow by measuring traffic flow and regulating key traffic lights. Our colleagues in the French Embassy told us that when the company representatives arrived at the demonstration site early one

morning, they found their computer partially disassembled on the floor. Soviet technicians obviously had taken the computer apart during the night to see how it worked and then could not get it back together. American firms that demonstrated electronic equipment in Moscow told us that anything loose and small enough to be pocketed, such as circuit boards and connection cables, quickly disappeared from display areas.

### Helsinki: Glorious Symbol of Western Civilization

An account of my first tour of duty in Moscow requires mention of the special significance of Helsinki, the capital of Finland. Even for those of us fascinated by the Soviet Union and engaged in substantive work, daily life in Moscow could be drab and—as when the hot water was turned off for several weeks each year—unpleasant. The best Moscow stores were unattractive, seldom offered anything worth purchasing, and lacked the spirit of consumer service we took for granted in the West. Moscow looked its best in a blanket of fresh white snow or on the eve of an official holiday, when lights were strung and red bunting and banners were everywhere. Otherwise, the lumpy, crumbling buildings, the lack of attractive landscaping, the uninteresting store windows, and unappealing, dim neon signs combined to create a heavy, dull atmosphere.

Some recreational facilities were available to us. The embassy leased a two-story “dacha” (country house) on a heavily wooded ten-acre lot located in the Russian countryside about an hour’s drive from the city. In addition, the Foreign Ministry maintained a modest resort for diplomats at the hunting preserve of Zavidovo on the Volga River, which featured small but serviceable individual cottages, a good (by Soviet standards) restaurant, and amenities such as rental bicycles and rowboats.

Several large parks—chief among them Gorky, Sokolniki, and Izmailovskiy—were located within the Moscow city limits and were open year-round. For those so inclined, it was easy and inexpensive to obtain through the embassy tickets to concerts, the ballet, opera, theater, the two indoor circuses, and movie houses. For those of us who knew Russian, it was fascinating to watch Soviet television; listen to Soviet radio; read Soviet newspapers, journals, and contemporary literature; and attend plays and public lectures. However, for the large embassy support staff—Marine guards, secretaries, communication technicians, administrative personnel—who knew little or no

Russian and had no particular career interest in Soviet affairs, daily life in Moscow could be seriously depressing.

To ease this problem, the embassy established a weekly “nonprofessional courier run” by train from Moscow to the U.S. Embassy in Helsinki, through which all routine incoming and outgoing embassy Moscow mail was processed. The most memorable part of the trip began when the train slowly pulled into the Soviet border checkpoint northwest of Leningrad at about 7:00 A.M. Passengers were not allowed to leave the train, but from the train windows one could see uniformed young soldiers of the KGB border forces, some with guard dogs and all armed with automatic weapons, on both sides of the train, on a large platform over the train, and in a long cement trench beneath the train. The entire area, and especially the exterior of the train, was brightly lit by floodlights.

Once the train came to a full stop, an armed, expressionless, and uncommunicative junior officer came through each car, collected passports and visas, and then left the train. Next, pairs of armed enlisted men methodically searched the interior of the train, looking under rugs, under beds, behind window curtains. Neither the compartments nor the personal luggage of diplomats was examined, and the diplomatic pouches were not touched. Then a Soviet customs inspector came through. Diplomats were not subject to customs inspection, but all other passengers were. It was not unusual for Soviet passengers to be ordered off the train for a thorough search of their belongings somewhere in the depths of the train station. Passports and visas were returned, after some forty-five minutes, by the same officer who had taken them.

Once these formalities were completed, usually in about an hour, the train slowly rolled through a cleared no-man’s-land, crossed the Soviet-Finnish border, and stopped at the Finnish checkpoint. No soldiers were to be seen. A pleasant young man or woman from the Finnish border service, in uniform but unarmed, came into each compartment, examined each passport briefly, stamped on the appropriate page, then handed the passport back to its owner with a smile. This official was followed by a Finnish customs inspector who politely asked if anything needed to be declared. One was then free to leave the train and head for a trackside diner, spotlessly clean and well supplied with freshly brewed, rich European coffee, delicious pastries, fruit, dairy products, and an assortment of open-faced sandwiches. On the way, one marveled

that the nearby buildings were well designed and nicely maintained, fence posts were in neat lines, and vehicles were washed and in good repair.

This was a spiritual as well as physical passage from the Soviet world to the Western world, from Soviet civilization to Western civilization, from Soviet culture to Western culture. The emotional impact of this transition was memorable—and certainly not new. The French travel writer Astolphe de Custine, upon leaving Russia in 1839, told a friend that he was now “beyond the empire of uniformity, minutiae, and difficulties”: “I hear the language of freedom, and I feel as if in a vortex of pleasure, a world carried away by new ideas towards inordinate liberty. And yet I am only in Prussia: but in leaving Russia, I have again found houses the plan of which has not been dictated to a slave by an inflexible master, but which are freely built: I see a lively country freely cultivated (it is of Prussia I am speaking), and the change warms and gladdens my heart.”<sup>1</sup>

A travel guide to Russia, published in England seventy-four years after Custine’s travels to the land of the tsars, describes a 1912 train trip from Russia into what was then Germany, west of St. Petersburg, as follows: “The most wonderful sight of all was the glaring difference between Russia and Germany. The transition from one country to the other was a revelation in itself. Probably no other two neighbouring countries in the world ever exhibited such a distinct contrast on their boundaries between different states of culture as that presented by Russia and Germany. . . . On the German side of the small stream forming the frontier line strict order, discipline, and neatness, well-tilled fields, tidy farms and homesteads, deer-stocked parks, and well-kept woods were the rule. The other side of the line is best described by saying that it exhibits just the reverse of all this.”<sup>2</sup>

The sense of contrast continued as the Soviet train rolled smoothly through the Finnish countryside and into Helsinki. When one arrived in the Finnish capital from Western Europe, as we did on our initial visit, the city seemed staid and provincial. When one arrived from the Soviet Union, Helsinki seemed a miracle of beauty, cleanliness, color, tasty food, attractive people, and advanced civilization. The remarkable thing was that after more than fifty years of Soviet rule, the starkness of this contrast between Russia and the West had, if anything, become even more dramatic than in 1839 or 1912. Soviet propaganda spoke relentlessly of the radiant future of socialism and communism in the USSR. This train trip made clear that the radiant future was represented just to the northwest of the Soviet Union, in Finland.

## An Evolving Conception of the Soviet Empire

My conception of the Soviet empire by the end of my first tour in Moscow is difficult to reconstruct, because at that time my thinking was still in flux. In the light of my earlier academic work, together with my experiences in Bulgaria, on the grand tour, and in Garmisch, I was struck above all by the psychological atmosphere I encountered in the Soviet Union. Nothing I had read or experienced prior to living in Moscow adequately predicted or foreshadowed this atmosphere. It was a different, often alien world, a sort of parallel psychological universe hard for most foreigners to penetrate and comprehend.

No single event or encounter could account for my understanding of the empire as of the end of my first Moscow tour. This understanding developed incrementally, as I gained familiarity with the nature of the regime and the society as well as with the factors that seemed to have shaped them. These factors included the physical setting and climate, as well as the popular customs, sense of history, and attitude toward authority among the Russian and non-Russian peoples of the USSR. I was determined to enter into, explore, and understand this different world—intriguing in its own right but also of vital interest to the national security of the United States—as fully as circumstances would allow.

The contrast among the psychological atmospheres and lifestyles in Sofia, Moscow, and Helsinki suggested the strong influence of geography, history, and tradition in each of the three locales. Overall, as symbolized by the train crossing from the Soviet Union to Finland, and of course contrary to Soviet propaganda, the USSR was unmistakably far behind the rest of Europe, the United States, and other industrialized countries in the quality of life it was able to provide its citizens. Average living standards without question were higher even in small, agricultural Bulgaria than in the Soviet Union. Yet Soviet officials seemed to exude a sense of exceptionalism and historic mission that one did not detect in Bulgaria (and certainly not in Finland). Unlike the sharp, vivid contrast between the Soviet Union and Finland, the automobile trip from Bulgaria to Austria, to West Germany, or to Greece was—while always welcome—less memorable because the contrast in attitudes, infrastructure, and living standards was considerably less pronounced. Bulgaria seemed to be an integral part of southern Europe, although a relatively isolated and underdeveloped part. The Soviet Union seemed to be a world unto

itself, physically and above all psychologically separate from the countries and peoples to its west.

Part of this sense of separation from Europe obviously stemmed from the determined effort by the Soviet regime to wall the country off from subversive Western influences. This attitude was evident in Bulgaria as well, but the Bulgarian regime and the Bulgarian people were well below the level of Soviet obsession with this "problem." In this sense, Bulgaria's reputation in the West as miniature version of the Soviet Union was undeserved. Bulgaria encouraged Western tourists to visit and, unlike the Soviet Union, allowed them to travel freely throughout the country. Bulgaria's Black Sea beaches provided a convenient, relaxing, inexpensive, and nonthreatening meeting place for large numbers of Eastern Europeans (particularly East Germans) and their friends and relatives from the West.

Another element in the distinctiveness of the Soviet Union seemed to have much deeper historical roots. This, I felt, was the fact that Russia, in contrast to Western Europe, had experienced almost no Renaissance or Reformation, evidently due to its Byzantine heritage, its distinctive religious tradition, its linguistic isolation from the West, and its general isolation from Europe during two hundred-odd years of Mongol domination. The historic psychological shift from a medieval sense of the individual as a passive actor in a grand, providential scheme, to a sense of individual sovereignty that one surrenders conditionally to higher authority, was hard to detect in the Soviet parallel universe I experienced. It was one thing to read about these differences between Russia and the West in history courses at Berkeley. It was quite another to realize from direct exposure to the Soviet regime and to Soviet society that the notion, taken for granted by most in the modern West, that fundamental rights and political sovereignty properly resided with the individual, seemed to have had relatively little enduring impact on Soviet political culture.

A question I had wrestled with while working on my dissertation was whether the senior Soviet leadership was itself captive to the mythology it had foisted on the rest of the empire, or was the Soviet leadership privately aware that most of its professed ideology was nonsense. I had concluded, based on the documentary evidence available at Berkeley, that the former was true. It seemed unlikely that young party functionaries, schooled from an early age in Soviet doctrine and the official party outlook, would reach some vantage point in their rise up the bureaucratic ladder from which they could see that Marxism-Leninism was mostly a sham. In addition, this was not the message

of the well-documented ideological controversy between Stalin and Trotsky or, several decades later, between Khrushchev's Soviet Union and Mao's China. Neither was it the message of memoirs by former Communist regime insiders like Milovan Djilas's *Conversations with Stalin*, Wolfgang Leonhard's *Child of the Revolution*, and Czeslaw Milosz's *The Captive Mind*. Nor was this the message conveyed in Garmisch by former Soviet Communist Party functionary Avtorkhanov or by Soviet spy Marin.

The psychological atmosphere I experienced inside the Soviet Union, plus the factual information available from direct observation, strengthened my impression that the leadership's outlook essentially was as advertised. This was the sense I got from dealing with mid-level regime functionaries and from observing closely the senior leadership in action (albeit for the most part via the Soviet media). Individuals like General Secretary Brezhnev, Prime Minister Aleksei Kosygin, senior ideologist Mikhail Suslov, and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko did not come across at close range as consummate actors only pretending to be Marxist-Leninists.

It seemed obvious that the "command economy," set up by Stalin to mobilize Soviet resources, was still in place primarily because his successors continued to construe the world from within Stalin's frame of reference. In attempting to motivate the Soviet people with its grandiose ideas, the leadership did its best to maintain a tight system of thought control to reinforce the official line while minimizing access to dissonant facts and concepts. This included an expensive array of radio jamming towers easily identifiable in urban centers throughout the country, censorship of all Soviet mass media as well as of literature and the arts, a firm grip on all formal education, careful border controls verging on paranoia (as we witnessed on our trips to Leninsk and to Helsinki), and use of coercion whenever deemed necessary to enforce conformity.

Many Soviet citizens seemed to accept passively the regime's basic outlook, but as of the early 1970s the public clearly was not inspired by it. The popular strength of the regime lay in part in its capability to provide for the basic needs of most of the population, including some manner of employment, plain but generally adequate food (i.e., cheap bread, cabbage, potatoes, some fresh and canned fruit and vegetables, dairy products, and occasional meat and fish), along with low-cost but rudimentary housing, primitive but free health services, free but regimented education, and restricted access to the best academic institutions.

In addition, the average individual my embassy colleagues and I encoun-

tered seemed genuinely proud of two Soviet accomplishments. First, at enormous sacrifice, they had “defeated Hitler.” Second, they had recovered from the incredible devastation Hitler’s invasion had brought upon them and had become a superpower of the magnitude of the United States of America, whose homeland had been untouched by military attack. Of course the Soviet propaganda machine did its utmost to glorify these accomplishments. Yet both had an undeniable basis in fact, and, as best we could judge, most Soviet citizens accepted these attainments as meaningful and as bestowing upon the regime—for all of its backwardness and authoritarianism—a significant measure of legitimacy.

The arbitrary, widespread use of coercion and terror that had been a tragic hallmark of the Stalinist period both before and after World War II had abated greatly under Brezhnev. The zone of tolerated behavior had grown since Stalin’s death, and had become relatively well defined. At the same time, the Brezhnev regime in practice recognized no inalienable human rights and no guarantees of individual freedom. If a Soviet citizen dared step over the boundary dividing tolerated behavior from proscribed behavior, he or she was essentially defenseless. As the prosecutor in Zhdanov had reminded us, it was the rule of the Communist Party and not the rule of law that was supreme.

Yuri Marin had been right in Garmisch to insist that most Soviet citizens as of the late 1960s lived their lives in a predictable, nonthreatening psychological environment featuring essentially normal interpersonal relations and human emotions. Abdurrahman Avtorkhanov had been right to characterize the regime as a “partocracy,” in which the Communist Party and its official mind-set dominated all aspects of the system. Indeed, as Avtorkhanov had implied, the “regime,” the “Soviet system,” was in essence a psychological abstraction representing patterns of behavior that in turn were given their distinctive shape by the Marxist-Leninist convictions and the resultant outlook and motivations of the party leadership.

This was not a unique view of the Soviet empire as of the early 1970s, but it was not the conventional wisdom among Western Soviet Sovietologists. As John Lewis Gaddis has noted, the standard view was that Stalin and his successors were brutally realistic and manipulated ideology to justify their true objectives. In this perspective, Soviet objectives determined ideology, not the other way around.<sup>3</sup>

It was clear to all of us at Embassy Moscow that despite its military might and outward bluster, the Soviet system could not flourish. Yet, as best we



could determine, the Soviet population did not seem unduly restive, either in the Russian Republic or in the non-Russian republics to which we traveled frequently. The picture painted by some in the West, in which the average individual in the USSR yearned for democracy and for greatly expanded personal freedoms, while the regime stayed in power only by thought control and threat of coercion, was much too simplistic. The mentality of the rulers as well as the ruled did not fit neatly into Western categories of political thought. The challenge, daunting to the outsider, was to understand the psychology of the regime and the society in terms of its own concepts and categories.

As of the early 1970s, my embassy colleagues and I could not judge how long the Soviet regime might continue to limp along, falling further and further behind the West in most social and economic areas, before it finally stumbled and fell. From what we could observe, most of us concluded that the Soviet Union would be able to muddle through—or, more accurately, “muddle down”—for years to come. (My first tour in Moscow ended in the summer of 1971; the regime collapsed in late 1991, just over twenty years later.)

Above all, it was a thoroughly chilling thought that the Soviet leadership—self-selected, free from meaningful political restraint from below, largely ignorant of the West, and captive of a seriously distorted worldview—controlled thousands of strategic nuclear weapons targeted at the United States, a country that the Kremlin viewed as a highly dangerous, mortal enemy.

# 3

## Stagnation and Disaffection

### Internal Affairs

I returned to Moscow four years later, after two assignments in the United States: at the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, and in the State Department's Office of Soviet Union Affairs. My new Moscow assignment was head of the embassy's Political/Internal Section, or POL/INT. I held that job for four fascinating years, from the summer of 1975 to the summer of 1979.

POL/INT was responsible for observing, analyzing, and reporting to Washington all aspects of Soviet domestic political affairs, including Kremlinology, human rights and dissent, religion, Russian and non-Russian nationalism, and the political aspects of cultural affairs. The unit consisted of four Russian-speaking FSOS, one analyst from the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, one foreign service secretary, and an embassy spouse who was fluent in Russian and served as librarian and research assistant. I had an able staff, broad discretion to set the section's work agenda, and an avid, working-level readership in Washington. Given my keen interest in understanding the Soviet regime and its psychology, this was an ideal assignment.

The position involved a special risk, however. Several prior incumbents had been expelled from the Soviet Union for what Soviet authorities claimed was unacceptable behavior. In fact, these POL/INT section heads had been doing their job of following the growing human rights movement in the Soviet Union—made up of Soviet Jews, artists and writers, liberal scientists, representatives of minority ethnic groups, and others—who were openly fed up with the Soviet regime. Soviet authorities did not want such “dissidents” to maintain contact with the U.S. and other Western embassies and receive support, even if only moral support, from the West. The American Embassy was by far the most active in following the dissident movement, so from time to time the KGB would, acting through the Foreign Ministry, have the head of

POL/INT declared persona non grata (we referred to it as being “PNG-ed,” which meant revocation of diplomatic status, prompt expulsion from the USSR, and in most cases a permanent prohibition against returning.

FSOs hoping to specialize in Soviet affairs therefore had to think carefully about accepting an assignment as POL/INT chief. I certainly did. I decided the rewards would be worth the risk, and this proved to be the case. I was not declared persona non grata, although I am pretty sure it was a close call. I was twice warned, informally but pointedly, by Soviet colleagues with clear connections to the KGB that my activities did not look good “from the inside.” I later learned, through an unusual coincidence, that my coverage of the human rights movement had come to the attention of the highest levels of the KGB and the Soviet leadership.

In the early 1990s, shortly after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the Library of Congress opened an exhibit of Soviet Communist Party Central Committee archival material at one of its Capitol Hill buildings. I had by that time retired from the foreign service and was working in the Senate, so I dropped by the Library of Congress to view this unusual exhibit. There were many fascinating documents, all of course in Russian. I started at the beginning of the exhibit, which was arranged chronologically, but had to get back to my office before I could make it to the end. The next day I received a telephone call from a *Washington Post* journalist, Kevin Klose, who had also been stationed in Moscow in the mid-1970s. Had I seen the exhibit and the letter from Andropov to Brezhnev? he asked. When I explained that I had not gotten that far, Kevin urged me to go back and check out a letter, written in the 1970s by KGB chairman Yuri Andropov to General Secretary Brezhnev, in which I was mentioned by name. I went back and found the letter. It was a typed, one-page report on dissident activities in Moscow. It included a sentence to the effect that “the activist Combs” was continuing to pursue his contacts within the dissident community. Given that I was officially declared an activist in Soviet dissident affairs by the chairman of the KGB in a written report to the party general secretary, it seemed odd that I was not PNG-ed and expelled.

## Human Rights Heroes

*The Helsinki Monitoring Group.* The most rewarding aspect of my job was, as Andropov had indicated to Brezhnev, my extensive personal contact with

leaders of the unofficial Soviet human rights movement. When Brezhnev signed the Helsinki Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in the summer of 1975, just as I began my second tour in Moscow, he pledged that the Soviet Union would observe internationally agreed upon guidelines on human rights, as well as on security and economic matters. Soon thereafter, a courageous group of human rights activists in Moscow announced the creation of an unofficial organization in the USSR to monitor Soviet adherence to the Helsinki human rights standards. The Helsinki Monitoring Group, as it came to be known, was headed by Yuri Orlov, a distinguished nuclear physicist. It included Jewish activist Anatoli Shcharansky; Yelena Bonner (wife of the nuclear physicist Andrei Sakharov); human rights advocates Alexander Ginzburg and Ludmila Alekseeva; and about six other Moscow intellectuals. It was strongly supported by Sakharov, biologist Valentin Turchin (who headed the Moscow chapter of Amnesty International), dissident historian Andrei Amalrik, and numerous other critics of the Soviet regime's human rights performance.

These brave individuals hoped to moderate official Soviet behavior by exposing human rights abuses to international public opinion. They did not seek to confront the regime, much less to weaken or overthrow it. They hoped that Soviet adherence to the human rights provisions of the Helsinki Final Act, even though the document was not legally binding, would legitimize their unofficial monitoring activities within the Soviet Union. They calculated that given the current Soviet and U.S. policies aimed at relaxing bilateral tension, Soviet authorities, not wanting to complicate relations with the United States, would be restrained from cracking down on a domestic human rights activity that was in keeping with the Helsinki Final Act. The activists held frequent press conferences and issued periodic, factual reports on the human rights situation in the USSR. They counted on close contact with the Western press corps and Western embassies in Moscow to disclose their findings to the world community, as well as to expose any official harassment of their monitoring activities.

It was a huge personal gamble for the Soviet activists. These individuals had no illusions about their vulnerability: they knew that as Soviet citizens they were subject to the whim of the regime and had no legal protection from government harassment or from harsher measures that could include arrest, imprisonment, exile to the far reaches of Siberia, or forced emigration. They also were well aware of the conservatism of General Secretary Brezhnev and his Politburo colleagues, including KGB chairman Andropov. The Helsinki

monitors had literally everything to lose and nothing to gain but the personal satisfaction of doing what they could to improve Soviet human rights performance. The risk was far from hypothetical. Several members of the monitoring group and its immediate circle of supporters had earlier been harassed and arrested for daring to voice criticism of the regime, and virtually all members of the group and its supporters had been threatened at one time or another for their ongoing human rights activities.

They were an embarrassment to the Soviet regime and a challenge to the KGB from the outset. The monitoring group rapidly grew in influence and in size, attracting the participation of human rights activists in Ukraine, Armenia, Georgia, and Lithuania. The Western press corps, particularly the U.S. and British journalists based in Moscow, reported extensively on the group's activities. Western embassies, with the U.S. Embassy at the forefront, were sympathetic and generally supportive. Western shortwave radio services—Voice of America, Radio Liberty, the BBC, and others—carried frequent accounts of the group and its findings in their broadcasting to the Soviet Union. (Many Soviets were able to listen and to tape such broadcasts, despite extensive Soviet electronic jamming: inexpensive, Soviet-made shortwave radios were available on the retail market; programs in non-Soviet languages, including English, French, and German, were not jammed, and the extensive effort to blot out Russian-language programs in urban areas often could be defeated by a short trip into the countryside.)

The monitoring group and its expanding circle of Soviet supporters provided my colleagues in POL/INT and me with valuable information about Soviet human rights practices, as well as about life in the Soviet Union generally. Members of the group in Moscow and its supporters were as a rule intelligent, thoughtful, and perceptive individuals, interesting for their earlier careers and experiences as well as for their human rights activities. To their credit, they were for the most part not blinded by their dislike of the Soviet regime. Rather, they saw and seized an opportunity to pressure the regime to reform through what they considered to be legitimate means.

As U.S. Embassy officials, my colleagues and I had to be cautious in our relations with the group, so as not to give the KGB an excuse for claiming that we or members of the group were engaging in subversive activities or espionage on behalf of the United States. We knew, of course, that the KGB was watching (and listening to) them and us as closely as it could. All of our meetings with group members and supporters were overt. We often had the members over to our apartments—which we and they knew were closely sur-

veiled as well as ridden with concealed listening devices—for meals, appropriately guarded conversation, and American movies and documentaries. We often visited their apartments, many of which were luxurious by Soviet standards, thanks to the occupants' earlier scientific status. My embassy colleagues and I did not provide the group with material support, nor did we probe for sensitive information that the KGB might claim was classified.

With the concurrence of our embassy superiors and the Department of State, we did accept, cautiously but not covertly, the group's written reports and other material, but only on the clear understanding that we could not guarantee any specific disposition—such as transmission via the embassy's secure diplomatic pouch to an American publishing house or to a specific human rights organization. We also made available, discretely but openly, a variety of "samizdat" (self-published) books and periodicals written privately in the Soviet Union, then smuggled out and published abroad in the Russian language. Our standard technique was to have such material prominently displayed on our living room bookshelves and to loan items to interested Soviet guests, official as well as unofficial.

My embassy colleagues and I paid a relatively small personal price for our contacts with the human rights community. This included flat tires and broken windshield wipers on our personal cars, as well as late-night harassing phone calls (heavy breathing, women offering to meet downtown, etc.). On one occasion, a KGB video crew ostentatiously filmed me as I met a group of human rights activists and their wives at a bus stop near our apartment to escort them into our guarded building for a dinner party. On another occasion, a KGB photographer shot flashbulbs in the face of one of my POL/INT colleagues while he and his wife were attending a concert performance. Damage to our personal cars became so routine that we persuaded the ambassador to let us use embassy sedans, which we drove (on all other occasions, the embassy's Soviet chauffeurs did the driving), for our evening contact work. Still, in marked contrast to the defenseless Soviet citizens we were seeing, we had full diplomatic immunity and at worst were subject to permanent banishment from the country.

Members of the monitoring group could be clever tacticians. For example, in the early summer of 1976 Orlov and Amalrik approached an embassy colleague and me about the upcoming bicentennial Fourth of July party to be held at Spaso House (the U.S. ambassador's palatial residence). Orlov and Amalrik knew from earlier Soviet media accounts that the American ambassador traditionally invited the Soviet leadership to each Fourth of July celebra-

tion in Moscow and then, during the event, held an informal private meeting with the senior Soviet official who showed up—usually, in those days, Foreign Minister Gromyko.

Politely, but firmly, Orlov and Amalrik said they felt it would be appropriate for the American ambassador to invite, as well, the head of the newly formed Helsinki Monitoring Group and to have a private chat with him. After all, the United States had been the leading champion of human rights during the lengthy negotiations on the substance of the Helsinki Final Act. Thanks to U.S. presidential candidate Jimmy Carter, the question of the proper role of human rights in foreign policy had become an issue in the presidential campaign that year. Should the embassy refuse their request, they would feel obligated to announce this to Western news media in Moscow.

We conveyed this message promptly to our ambassador, Walter Stoessel, hoping he would not shoot the messengers. Ambassador Stoessel was an experienced career FSO and an old Soviet hand. He also had a good sense of humor. He told us to arrange for invitations to be issued to Orlov and Amalrik and their wives and said he would have a brief, private word with Orlov after his traditional private meeting with the senior Soviet official in attendance (who, as expected, was Gromyko). Both meetings took place without incident, and Ambassador Stoessel later told us he found them to be of equal interest.

*Encounters with Andrei Sakharov.* As one might guess, the most impressive human rights activist I met was Andrei Sakharov, a saintly man of high intelligence, quiet but steely determination, and remarkable personal courage. I first met him and his wife, Yelena, in the fall of 1975 at a dinner party given by an American journalist. I saw him regularly after that at the embassy, in connection with the emigration to the United States of his stepdaughter and her husband. The embassy, in consultation with the State Department, had agreed to allow the stepdaughter to send mail to the Sakharovs in Moscow via our diplomatic pouch. We did not let the Sakharovs send mail out of Moscow via the pouch, however, as the Soviet authorities could have claimed this to be a gross violation of the diplomatic pouch privilege. While Sakharov complained to us about this restriction, it was clear that he was able to find other means to get letters to his family in the United States.

When we received mail for Sakharov, I would telephone him at his Moscow apartment and invite him to come to the embassy's Consular Section. At the agreed time, he would arrive in front of the embassy in a chauffeur-driven car provided by the Soviet Academy of Sciences, thanks to his high official

scientific status, which at that time had not been revoked. We always had a Russian-speaking consular officer waiting at curbside to ensure that Sakharov was not prevented from entering or otherwise harassed by the militia guards. Fortunately, he never was. I would be waiting in the section chief's office with the mail and refreshments. We would chat about his situation and about current events, and he would be on his way.

Jumping ahead, I last saw Sakharov in 1987, toward the end of my third tour in Moscow, following his return to Moscow from exile in Gorky (a city then closed to foreign travel, to which Sakharov was banished in January 1980, shortly after his public criticism of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan). The occasion was the visit to Moscow of a high-level delegation from the U.S. Council on Foreign Relations, led by Council President Peter Tarnoff, which included former Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and Cyrus Vance. The delegation was anxious to meet with Sakharov, particularly because this would be the first meeting between him and Kissinger, both Nobel Peace Prize laureates. When I telephoned Sakharov's apartment to arrange the meeting, his wife readily agreed on his behalf and kindly asked me to come along as interpreter.

While I don't recall all of the conversation, I remember clearly Sakharov's reply to a question about the eventual demise of the Soviet system. Sakharov said he could not predict how or when the system would go under, although its vitality had long since ebbed away and could not be restored. He was certain about one thing, however. The most dangerous aspect of the Soviet Union's breakup would be posed by the system's huge military-industrial complex. He had worked on nuclear weaponry with many of the leaders of this complex and knew these people well, he said. When the Soviet system began to come apart, the military-industrial complex would remain lethal because it was the strongest and most durable part of the system. Genuine danger to world peace would be generated by the tensions between a still-viable Soviet military-industrial complex surrounded by an unstable, degenerating Soviet polity and society. This struck me as a valuable, well-informed insight, and I believe subsequent developments validated Sakharov's prediction.

*Zviad Gamsakhurdia—No Saint.* The most unsaintly human rights activist I encountered was a passionate young Georgian nationalist, Zviad Gamsakhurdia, who was a founding member of the Helsinki Monitoring Group in the Republic of Georgia. I met him one evening at a gathering at Yuri Orlov's apartment, and, at the Georgian's request, I agreed to see him at my apart-



ment the next evening. I also invited an embassy colleague, a female consular officer who followed Georgian affairs as an additional, volunteer assignment. While consuming large amounts of wine, Gamsakhurdia conveyed to us—writing what he considered to be sensitive information on a pad of paper—that the Party First Secretary of Georgia, Eduard Shevardnadze, was an evil and widely despised individual. Gamsakhurdia claimed that if the United States could provide him with financial support, he and his followers could overthrow Shevardnadze. The conversation came to an abrupt end when we made clear that the embassy did not engage in such activities.

My embassy colleague offered to give our guest a ride to his hotel, which was on her way home. This kindness resulted in an unfortunate indicator of Gamsakhurdia's high opinion of himself. As my colleague pulled over to let the Georgian out of her car, he made a crude attempt to embrace her. When she resisted, he struck her in the face with enough force to give her a black eye that was very visible the next day. Showing no remorse and offering no apology, he then left her car.

A second episode involving Gamsakhurdia and a U.S. Embassy officer revealed further disquieting aspects of the man's character. A colleague who worked in my section encountered Gamsakhurdia in Moscow roughly a year later and agreed—contrary to embassy policy, and without informing me—to meet with Gamsakhurdia in a park near the embassy to give him a box of samizdat material. Gamsakhurdia and my colleague bearing books showed up at the agreed time and were quickly surrounded by a squad of KGB plainclothesmen, who appeared from behind bushes and trees as the books exchanged hands. Gamsakhurdia was arrested and taken away. The embassy officer was released when he produced proof of his diplomatic status (we all carried Russian language identity cards issued by the Foreign Ministry).

Shortly after this incident, a filmed interview with Gamsakhurdia appeared on Soviet national television in which he confessed, looking crestfallen and miserable, to attempted subversion of the Soviet Union. He had fallen under the influence of the Central Intelligence Agency, he said, and in fact had met with a CIA officer in Moscow. He named my embassy colleague, who in fact was a State Department political analyst on loan to the embassy and had absolutely nothing to do with CIA operations.

This episode obviously was part of the ongoing KGB effort to destroy the unofficial human rights movement and in particular to sever its ties to Western embassies. The only question was when Gamsakhurdia commenced his cooperation with the KGB—before or after his meeting in the park with my

colleague. Either way, his false public accusations against my colleague were revoltingly self-serving.<sup>1</sup>

*The Orlov Trial and Its Aftermath.* The KGB evidently received Politburo authority to launch a frontal attack against the Helsinki Group membership in early 1977. The group had continued to flourish and was succeeding in getting its message out to the world community. In addition, Sakharov had been awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976. In the United States, President Jimmy Carter was talking about making human rights a central focus of U.S. foreign policy. Alexander Ginzburg was arrested in January 1977; Yuri Orlov in February; and Anatoli Shcharansky in March of that year. Andrei Amalrik had been coerced into emigrating in mid-1976. Valentin Turchin and others were forced to leave the Soviet Union during 1977 and 1978.

The May 1978 trial of Orlov was a major event for the Soviet human rights community and for the Western press corps in Moscow. It was a two-day proceeding, held in an out-of-the-way courthouse on the edge of Moscow and totally orchestrated by the KGB. While Soviet authorities did not want to admit it, the trial was effectively closed to the public. Orlov's wife and adult children were allowed to attend, but his many friends and supporters who tried to observe the trial were told that the courtroom was full. This was objectively true. Early each morning, before the building was opened to the public, the KGB bused in a "rent-a-crowd" that in fact filled the courtroom (as we learned from Orlov's wife) before any genuine spectators could request admission.

Even though the trial was closed, several hundred sympathizers stood vigil in an open area behind the courthouse while the trial was in session. With the approval of my embassy superiors, I arrived at the courthouse early each morning, went through the motions of requesting admission to the courtroom as a representative of the American Embassy, and then, having been informed that the courtroom was full, joined the orderly vigil behind the court building.

The vigil was an interesting phenomenon in its own right. It allowed dissidents of various types—artists, writers, scientists, philosophers, historians, lawyers, religious activists—to catch up on one another's activities. It brought out a "second circle" of individuals concerned about human rights but not active in dissident organizations and groupings. KGB video and still photographers openly filmed the event. And a number of individuals, whose human rights credentials were suspect or unknown, circulated through the crowd and tried to engage Orlov supporters in conversation.

I was the sole representative of a Western embassy during the vigil's first day. This was noted in Western media coverage of the event that evening, which prompted two or three other Western embassies to send representatives to the courthouse the next day.

In addition to KGB photographers and plainclothesmen, uniformed militia guarded all entrances to the courthouse and reportedly had a sizeable reserve force stationed in the building. Thanks to the peaceful nature of the vigil, and the presence of Western media representatives, Soviet authorities did not attempt to break up the event. There were isolated incidents, however. I happened to be conversing with Sakharov, for instance, when he mistakenly thought his wife had been rudely shoved by a militiaman. Sakharov became emotional and commenced to shout and wave his fists. For some reason, his wife did nothing to calm him. Several militiamen quietly escorted Sakharov and his wife to a nearby militia van and drove them away. We later learned from the Sakharovs that they had been taken to the district militia headquarters, warned about disorderly conduct, and then released.

The vigil unfortunately had no mitigating effect on the KGB's plans for Orlov. He was sentenced to five years in prison, to be followed by seven years of exile in Siberia.<sup>2</sup>

During the course of the vigil, I met and subsequently became well acquainted with two individuals who were not dissidents but who came to the courthouse out of sympathy for Orlov's cause. The first was Sergei Polikanov, a senior physicist at the Dubna nuclear research center near Moscow. He said he had heard about the trial on a Western shortwave broadcast and felt he had to demonstrate his personal support for Orlov, a fellow physicist. He also said, over lunch at our Moscow apartment several weeks later, that while most of his scientific colleagues at Dubna knew about the Orlov trial and about their colleague Polikanov's presence at the courthouse, not one of them subsequently had asked him about the experience, for fear of arousing the local KGB and jeopardizing their privileged lives. This physicist, a man of impressive intelligence and integrity, soon thereafter became a formal member of the Helsinki Monitoring Group and later emigrated to Sweden (as I recall) to continue his scientific career in the West.

The other individual was an intense, self-assured young man who approached me during the vigil to ask if I was from the U.S. Embassy. When I acknowledged that I was, he said he had never met an American and would welcome a later opportunity to exchange views. The usual warning flag went

up in my mind: was this an innocent contact, or a KGB agent trying to lure me into some sort of compromising situation? None of my Soviet acquaintances at the vigil could identify the fellow, and several warned me not to risk further contact with him during this period of KGB crackdown. I decided to take his name, telephone number, and address, and gave him my embassy business card, which included my home phone.

I thought hard about the wisdom of pursuing this contact in the days following the Orlov trial but decided that since the KGB undoubtedly already had a thick file on me, I had little to lose and perhaps a lot to gain in terms of knowledge of the Soviet domestic scene. With some apprehension, I arranged (calling from a pay phone) to meet the man, whose name was Mark Masarsky, at his apartment in central Moscow one Saturday afternoon.

Mark lived in a typical communal apartment, meaning that his family shared the kitchen and bathroom with another family. I relaxed a bit when he introduced me to his wife and teenage daughter. As his wife served refreshments, Mark said he had not been active in dissident affairs and doubted that his apartment was bugged. Still, he wanted to make clear at the outset that if the KGB questioned him about his contact with me, he would discontinue the contact immediately. I said I understood and for my part certainly would take due care not to complicate his relationship with the Soviet authorities.

Mark told me that he was a journalist for a Komsomol monthly magazine and traveled widely in Russia gathering material for stories on agricultural issues. He had no illusions about the Soviet regime and Marxist-Leninist ideology: he realized that the regime was unjust and the ideology unrealistic. He considered himself a pragmatic liberal but was not prepared to jeopardize his future, or that of his family, by opposing the regime openly.

Mark proved to be bright, energetic, and well informed about daily life in the Russian Republic and particularly about intellectual life in Moscow. He seemed pleased to share his knowledge and to be able to probe me about the United States and the American perspective on current affairs. We developed a friendship based on mutual respect that lasted throughout the remainder of my second tour in Moscow and beyond. (Shortly after I arrived in Moscow in 1985 as deputy chief of mission, I received a telephone call in my office from a Russian-speaking man who identified himself only as "the person I had taught to play Frisbee." It was Mark, still cautious about the KGB. By that time, he had become a prosperous semiprivate businessman specializing in construction and road-building.)

## Unofficial and Semi-Official Artists

*The Unofficials.* My POL/INT colleagues and I monitored closely another form of dissent, that manifested by unofficial Soviet artists. These artists were defined by their refusal to conform to Socialist Realism, the Soviet Union's official artistic credo that called for art to support the regime's goals—as expressed, for example, by heroic portraits of Lenin, happy collective farm workers, patriotic soldiers and sailors, dedicated factory workers. Unofficial artists had flourished during the political “thaw” of the early 1960s under Khrushchev, but tended to retreat into the privacy of their studios under the more orthodox Brezhnev regime of the late 1960s and early '70s. They welcomed contact with Western diplomats, largely because a significant part of their income came from the unauthorized but usually unimpeded sale of their artwork to the Western and Third-World diplomatic community. They were skilled at living and working near the line separating tolerated from proscribed behavior. Many of them were willing to share with us their experiences and insights regarding everyday life as well as their encounters on the cultural front with the Brezhnev regime.

Several months before my arrival in Moscow in mid-1975, a large group of unofficial artists had attempted to stage an outdoor exhibit of their work on the outskirts of the city. The exhibit was covered extensively by the Western press corps before being broken up by the KGB with bulldozers and brute force—an ugly operation that was also covered thoroughly by the Western correspondents. Perhaps to improve their public image, the Moscow authorities responded to continuing pressure from unofficial artists by allowing an exhibit of their work to be held in mid-July in a nondescript two-story building located at the back of Sokolniki, the Park of National Economic Achievements, a sort of permanent national fairgrounds on the northeastern edge of Moscow.

The artists agreed to let an official commission screen the exhibition prior to its public opening, and a few works judged to be over the line politically or morally were removed. What remained added up to a significant departure from Socialist Realism. At one side of the entrance was a “living sculpture,” entitled *The Nest*, consisting of several young people sitting quietly in a large circular nest constructed from brush and fresh flowers. Religious themes, abstract motifs, sensuous seminudity, and unflattering depictions of urban and rural life in the USSR were common among the many paintings and pieces of sculpture on display.

No official publicity was given to this show. But the artists made sure that the Western press corps knew well in advance about plans for the event, aware that Western media accounts would be broadcast back into the Soviet Union by Voice of America and other Western shortwave stations. Thanks to this convoluted method of publicity, and to general word-of-mouth, the exhibit was well attended throughout its several-day run. Uniformed militiamen were on hand to maintain order, but we heard of no attempts by the regime to prevent or discourage attendance. In fact, the park in which the exhibit was held was intended as a regime showpiece and therefore was easily accessible by public transportation. The exhibition was useful to my embassy colleagues and me as an indicator of the current limits of the regime's tolerance of unofficial art and artists, as well as a convenient way to broaden our circle of unofficial Soviet contacts. For their part, the artists enjoyed showing off their work and welcomed the opportunity to meet potential foreign clients.

Unfortunately for the future of art in Russia and other post-Soviet states, many of the leaders of the unofficial art movement were pressured to emigrate from the Soviet Union in 1977 and 1978, as part of the overall KGB campaign to suppress dissent.

*Semi-official Artist Ilya Glazunov.* One controversial Moscow artist was in a category by himself, a committed Russian nationalist, a portraitist of international reputation, highly regarded by some senior regime officials yet no slave to Socialist Realism. This was Ilya Glazunov, to whom I was introduced by an extreme Russian nationalist I had met on the fringes of the human rights movement. This man spoke of Glazunov with great respect, bordering on reverence. He felt it important that I meet the artist but said the meeting would have to be scheduled well in advance, because Glazunov was a leading figure among an influential but somewhat conspiratorial group of Russian patriots that included senior party officials. The clear implication was that it could be awkward if I, an official of the American embassy, showed up unannounced while Glazunov was entertaining "special" guests from the upper reaches of Soviet officialdom. Several days later my acquaintance called to propose that my wife and I come to dinner at Glazunov's studio in a week or so, and we agreed.

Glazunov's studio, together with his family's living quarters, took up most of the two top floors of a small apartment building in a quiet neighborhood near the center of Moscow. Upon entering his apartment, one encountered a set of stairs leading to a sitting area, with a small dining table off to the right and a kitchen beyond that. Through an archway to the left was a large studio

with a high ceiling and skylights. Straight ahead was a corridor, lined with wooden racks containing finished canvases, leading to an unusually decorated, high-ceilinged dining room. The wood-paneled walls of this room were literally covered with icons and other artifacts of the Russian Orthodox Church. Candles were burning in colored glass candleholders suspended from the ceiling by long gold and silver chains. Orthodox choral music was playing softly from hidden, imported hi-fi equipment. A large, rectangular, wooden dining table, with two long wooden benches along the sides and a throne-like chair at one end, was set in an elevated alcove that took up most of one of the room's walls.

My acquaintance introduced us to Glazunov, who in turn introduced his wife and other guests—three or four of his colleagues (who were not senior party officials), plus several others who seemed to be volunteer helpers in preparing and serving refreshments and later in serving an elaborate dinner catered by a nearby restaurant. Another helper presided over a 16-millimeter motion picture projector; Glazunov explained that he wanted us to view a professionally produced color film that had been made about his life and work. The film was of high quality and documented Glazunov's career: talented young art student in Leningrad; illustrator of Russian classic literature; painter of historical Russian themes; portraitist for several world leaders (including the president of Finland, the king of Sweden, and Indian prime minister Indira Gandhi) and numerous Soviet intellectuals and creative artists; restorer of Russian historical sites and monuments; successful exhibitor in Moscow as well as in several Western European capitals.

When the movie ended, Glazunov pulled out and described the originals of several paintings that had been depicted in the film. He then escorted us into his studio to show us one of his latest works, a huge canvas entitled *Mystery of the 20th Century*. It was a dense montage, depicting Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin, and Khrushchev, along with the Beatles, Dwight Eisenhower and John F. Kennedy, the Pope and other religious figures, and various slices of twentieth-century life. An ascending diagonal line ran from left to right across the painting, representing the progress of humanity during the century. Soviet-style socialism and communism were not near the top of the line. Glazunov explained that Moscow authorities wanted him to mount a major exhibit of his work, as he had done in 1964, but they refused to allow public display of *Mystery of the 20th Century*. Negotiations were under way, he added, although he was inclined not to give in. (In the end, however, he did,

holding a large, well-publicized and well-attended exhibit in the Manezh Hall, next to the Kremlin, but without *Mystery of the 20th Century*.)

We were then ushered into the candle-lit, icon-lined dining room for dinner. The topics Glazunov and his colleagues discussed over dinner included the existence and functioning of a “World Zionist Conspiracy”; a recent case of murder on the outskirts of Moscow in which a young Orthodox boy supposedly was killed by rabbis so that his blood could be used in secret Jewish rituals (so they seemed to believe); and a conspiracy allegedly undertaken by the chief architect of Moscow, whom they said was Jewish, whereby the corners of the roofs of the large skyscrapers along one of Moscow’s main streets (Kalininsky Prospect) formed the Star of David.

The entire experience, and particularly the dinner conversation, was unsettling. I went back to Glazunov’s studio on only one other occasion, to serve as interpreter for several U.S. senators and their wives, who had heard about the controversial artist and insisted on meeting him in person.

Glazunov obviously was an admired figure among Russian nationalists, including those obsessed with conspiracy theories about sinister acts against Mother Russia. The success of his public exhibitions in Moscow and Leningrad indicated that his works were broadly admired. It was anyone’s guess, however, how much of this was due to the novelty of Glazunov’s paintings, as opposed to their appeal to deeply rooted personal emotion. In any case, Glazunov definitely was connected to senior Soviet officials. I accompanied Ambassador Stoessel on an official call on Soviet interior minister Nikolai Shchelokov a few months after my initial Glazunov experience. The minister had several Glazunov paintings on the walls of his office and remarked to us that Glazunov was the only contemporary Soviet artist possessing genuine talent. Conservative Politburo member Yegor Ligachev some years later noted in his memoir that he had assisted Glazunov in creating a Russian Academy of Art in Moscow.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, Glazunov evidently was a favorite of Mikhail Gorbachev, or perhaps of Gorbachev’s wife, Raisa. Gorbachev’s close associate Alexander Yakovlev reports in his 2003 memoir that the strongest rebuke he ever received from Gorbachev concerned Glazunov. In the mid-1980s, Yakovlev had decided on his own not to grant Glazunov’s personal request to extend one of the artist’s exhibits in Moscow. During a subsequent automobile ride with Gorbachev and Raisa, Gorbachev heatedly criticized Yakovlev for this decision. Yakovlev quotes Gorbachev as saying: “Glazunov is a great artist . . . I know him personally. The people love him. The exhibit must be extended.



And you correct your conduct; otherwise we will no longer be able to understand one another.”<sup>4</sup> Given Raisa Gorbacheva’s keen interest in cultural affairs, her reported antipathy toward Yakovlev, and her presence during this incident, one wonders whether she had been the family’s main admirer of Glazunov and had urged her husband to scold Yakovlev for his decision to shut down the controversial artist’s exhibition.<sup>5</sup>

## The Practice of Kremlinology

My responsibilities as the embassy’s chief Kremlinologist—Kremlinology being the art of trying to find and interpret clues to what was going on within the secretive senior leadership group—were not particularly taxing in the mid-1970s, during the period of “stagnation,” as it was later termed, in Brezhnev’s eighteen-year rule as general secretary. Brezhnev and his colleagues clearly wanted no fundamental change in the Soviet regime. Since they selected all new members of the leadership group, the conservative nature of the group appeared to be self-perpetuating.

By the mid-1970s Brezhnev himself was not physically well, as was painfully obvious from his televised speeches and other ceremonial activities. On some occasions, the TV camera had to cut away as Brezhnev fumbled awkwardly while trying to pin medals on award recipients. We had it on good authority that Brezhnev’s performance in closed meetings had become uneven due to his poor health. A Western participant in a Kremlin meeting on arms control, at which Brezhnev nominally headed the Soviet delegation, told me of an incident that took place during a formal meeting in the Kremlin. While lower-ranking specialists debated the fine points, Brezhnev tuned out of the conversation and began to fiddle with a felt-tip pen. In the process, he smeared his palm with ink. When he noticed this, he turned in his seat and summoned an assistant. Brezhnev whispered instructions to the assistant, who then hurried out of the room. A short while later, the assistant returned with several “Wipe and Dry” packets, which he set in front of the general secretary. Brezhnev methodically opened one and slowly used it to clean his hand. Perhaps aware that everyone on the Western side of the table was by now focused on this performance, Brezhnev turned his newly cleansed palm toward them and said, in a loud voice, “ho-kus po-kus.”

A few interesting leadership changes took place during this four-year period (1975–79). Long-time Brezhnev protégé and assistant Konstantin Cher-

nenko swiftly rose to the top of the Politburo pecking order. Following the unexpected death of the Politburo member responsible for agriculture, Fyodor Kulakov, a comparatively young, little-known party boss from southern Russia, Mikhail Gorbachev, was brought to Moscow to take over this difficult portfolio. When the full party leadership group turned out for public meetings, such as the semi-annual sessions of the nominal parliament, the Supreme Soviet, this newcomer looked out of place—as if one of the senior leaders had invited his son to sit in.

Meetings of the Supreme Soviet provided us with a rare direct look at the regime's leaders, who turned out in force for these ritualized and largely meaningless sessions. Foreign ambassadors or their representatives were allowed to view the proceedings from a side balcony. Our ambassador attended the opening session, then turned his pass over to me. In contrast to the carefully edited Soviet television coverage of the party leadership at such meetings, one could observe the group directly and continuously. The leaders sat together in a bank of seats on the stage of the meeting hall to one side of the dais, facing the hall. Full Politburo members sat in front, then candidate Politburo members, then party secretaries. The Supreme Soviet deputies, who had no significant political power by virtue of their Supreme Soviet membership, sat at wooden desks similar to those in the U.S. House of Representatives.

For an American Kremlinologist in the mid-1970s, it didn't get much better than this. I took careful note of the order in which the leadership came on and off the stage, who deferred to whom, who sat where, and who talked with whom. Since the Politburo and Secretariat ran the entire country, its members could ill afford to sit passively during the Supreme Soviet sessions, each of which lasted several days. Once the group had settled into place, messengers began to bring stacks of colored file folders to Chernenko, who was then in charge of Politburo administration. He would glance at the routing slips on the folders, then direct the messenger to distribute the folders. Some went to all members of the leadership; some had more restricted distribution. Every now and then Chernenko would rise from his seat and scan his colleagues to ensure that the folders were circulating properly. The process sometimes seemed awkward for the junior party secretaries like Gorbachev, who would find themselves with no folders, while their more senior colleagues had a steady supply to read and comment upon.

Kremlinology may seem trivial in hindsight, but we never lost sight of the fact that the Kremlin leadership under Leonid Brezhnev held the fate of the

Soviet and Eastern European peoples in its hands, thought it was on the winning side of the Cold War, and controlled a vast arsenal of weapons of mass destruction as well as a huge conventional military force. For these reasons, Washington was eager for any information we could provide about the men in the Kremlin.

## Covering the Think Tanks

My POL/INT portfolio included following developments in the social science institutes, particularly the Institute of the United States and Canada. It was in our interest to help that think tank understand the United States and its policies as clearly as possible, since its founding director, Georgy Arbatov, had direct ties to General Secretary Brezhnev and his Kremlin advisors. Arbatov and his staff probably tolerated my frequent visits because I was able to provide them with selected, publicly available U.S. documents, periodicals, and books they otherwise would have had great difficulty obtaining.<sup>6</sup> In addition, I would carefully read the articles on the United States in the institute's monthly journal and then arrange to meet with the authors for constructive criticism of their work.

I was surprised to find that Director Arbatov—who at the time was widely disliked in official circles in Washington for his propagandistic attacks against U.S. policy during his visits to the United States and frequent media appearances there—was respected among liberal intellectuals in Moscow for using his political connections to protect relatively open-minded scholars from the wrath of regime conservatives.<sup>7</sup> For example, one of the institute's brightest section chiefs, Yuri Zamoshkin, had been fired from another social science institute for his refusal to adhere to Marxist-Leninist dogma in his research and writing. In addition, Arbatov rapidly promoted two capable, nondoctriinaire young scholars whom I came to know well. One, Andrei Kokoshin, was later appointed as the first civilian deputy defense minister in the Boris Yeltsin government, shortly after the Russian Republic became an independent country. The other, Sergei Rogov, became an influential foreign affairs advisor to the Russian parliament and government, and eventually succeeded Arbatov as institute director.

Two personal contacts with Soviet philosophers were particularly rewarding. The first was with Zamoshkin, who headed the Ideology Department at the institute. Zamoshkin was perceptive, widely read, and cautiously but

unmistakably critical of the dogmatic, mechanical approach to Marxism-Leninism that was characteristic of the Brezhnev years. For example, when I asked him in his office which textbook on Marxism-Leninism he would recommend, he said he did not believe in using textbooks and felt that serious students should read the original works of Marx and Lenin and understand them in their proper historical context. Since his specialty at the institute was U.S. rather than Soviet ideology, we spent most of our time together discussing American political and social thought. In the course of such discussions, however, I became convinced that he agreed with my view about the dysfunctional impact of official Soviet ideology on regime decision making—although of course he could not say so openly, at least not in his institute office or in my embassy apartment.

Corroboration of my sense of Zamoshkin's low regard for official party doctrine came shortly after my second Moscow tour ended. I unexpectedly encountered Zamoshkin at an international social science conference in Mexico City in the early 1980s. He led a large Soviet delegation to the meeting, and I (then the Principal Deputy Director of the Office of Soviet Union Affairs) had been invited to deliver a paper on Kremlin decision making. Zamoshkin and several of his Soviet colleagues attended my presentation, which made me somewhat uneasy. My remarks were critical of what I considered the distorting influence of ideology on Soviet political behavior, and I feared that Zamoshkin, even though he might share my views privately, would have to respond publicly as spokesperson for the official Soviet viewpoint. In the event, Zamoshkin and his colleagues were silent during the lively question and answer period that followed my talk. The session I addressed was followed by a conference luncheon, at which Zamoshkin and I were seated on opposite sides of a large banquet table. The conversation was table-wide, and someone asked Zamoshkin what he thought of my presentation. Zamoshkin smiled in my direction, said that we had known one another for some years, and that he considered me to have been his best student. Relieved, I responded that I considered him to have been an excellent teacher.

The other noteworthy contact was dissident Soviet philosopher Alexander Zinoviev, who had been ousted from the Institute of Philosophy for writing and having published in Western Europe a mammoth satire of the Soviet system entitled *Ziyayushchie Vysoty* (The Yawning Heights). The book was a sharply critical analysis of Soviet reality, presented in a series of ruminations and discussions among allegorical characters (e.g., "Artist," "Philosopher," "Windbag," "Sociologist," "Slanderer") that represented composites of actual

individuals. It took me most of a long vacation in the United States, with frequent reference to a Russian-English dictionary, to get through the book (the paperback version I had consisted of over five hundred pages of small Russian print), which was laced with contemporary Soviet slang, clever plays on words, convoluted historical references, and satirical poetry.

Shortly after my return to Moscow, I invited Zinoviev and his wife to my apartment for dinner and a long, relaxed discussion of his view of the Soviet system. It became plain that he was bitter and cynical about all things Soviet. He stressed that to be understood correctly, Soviet society had to be seen as a matrix of relationships and behaviors shaped by regime ideology. Ideology's influence was not due to faith, he emphasized, but rather to acceptance, inculcated by education and propaganda, enforced by the need to appear to subscribe to ideology in order to advance within the system, and fostered by censorship and sanctions against foreign and domestic critics.

Thus, in Zinoviev's view, Soviet ideology was not analogous to religion, contrary to many western interpretations. It was more analogous to algebra and geometry, taught in all schools and unquestioningly accepted throughout society as the best approach to mathematical problem solving. While ideology certainly affected the thinking of the leadership—for example, it led them to assume automatically that dissidents were criminals or psychotics rather than seekers of truth—Zinoviev was more concerned with the way ideology affected Soviet society as a whole. In his view, Soviet ideology was a “sorry monstrosity” that deformed consciousness so that Soviet citizens in effect were transformed from individuals into production units in the building of an unattainable, ideologically defined utopia.

## Cooperating with the Regime

One reason I survived the crackdown against the human rights movement without being expelled may have been the fact that some of my embassy duties involved direct cooperation with Soviet officials in areas where their interests and ours overlapped. One example was my involvement with the Arbatov Institute. Another was the interest in hosting official U.S. visitors to the Soviet Union that was shared by both the U.S. and Soviet sides. During my 1975–79 tour of duty, these included two visits by the secretary of state (first Henry Kissinger, then Cyrus Vance) and accompanying staff, several large congressional delegations, and other exchange activities such as the

biannual visit of the American Committee of Young Political Leaders (ACYPL), which was hosted by the international arm of the Komsomol, the Committee of Youth Organizations (CYO). I was the embassy's "control officer" for many of these visits, meaning that I represented the United States in planning a delegation's in-country program with the Soviet host organization and then in accompanying and assisting that delegation throughout its stay in the USSR.

These visits provided rare glimpses into the inner workings of the Soviet system at its upper levels. For instance, a senior member of Secretary Kissinger's party, Helmut Sonnenfeldt, lost a dental filling in Moscow and required emergency dental care. The Soviets took him to the Kremlin dental clinic, and I was asked to go along as interpreter. I expected to see a state-of-the-art facility but found instead a rudimentary dental office with outmoded equipment. The dental chair appeared to be of 1930s vintage. The drill was attached to a small electric motor by a long system of arms, belts, and pulleys—at a time when high-speed, air-driven drills were common in American dental offices. Fortunately for Sonnenfeldt, the procedure did not require painkillers, so he did not have to experience, and I did not have to witness, the Soviet approach to dental anesthesia.

I saw numerous instances of extraordinary exercise of power at the working level, where party functionaries accountable only to their superiors within the regime hierarchy threw their weight around with local officials. For example, a large U.S. Congressional delegation was scheduled to fly from Leningrad to the Black Sea resort of Sochi, stay in a just-completed tourist complex there, and have a formal meeting the next day with General Secretary Brezhnev, who was vacationing nearby. The evening before we departed for Sochi, I met in Leningrad with my Soviet counterparts—midlevel Kremlin functionaries assigned to make the visit go smoothly—to discuss hotel room assignments in Sochi (how many singles, how many doubles, how many suites). No one in Leningrad knew the layout of the brand-new Sochi hotel, and my Soviet colleagues were unable to obtain the needed information by telephone that evening. The last thing they wanted, however, was disarray on the Soviet side during check-in at Sochi—God forbid one of the congressmen might later voice displeasure to the general secretary. So one of the Kremlin expeditors was instructed to fly that night from Leningrad to Sochi. As this individual later told me, when he arrived at the hotel in the wee hours of the next morning, he and the manager went from room to room on two floors with flashlights, rudely awakening the occupants to verify room layout and establish which rooms had adjoining doors.

During a visit to Baku, the capital of the Republic of Azerbaijan, another American group I was with had some free time before dinner one evening and expressed interest in visiting a downtown department store. No problem, said our local hosts, we can make the necessary arrangements in thirty minutes. When we reached the store, in the middle of the city, we saw the nature of the arrangements. At the peak shopping period, our hosts had ordered the city militia to empty the large store of all customers. Uniformed militiamen were posted at all entries and exits. Plainclothesmen patrolled the interior of the store. The Americans were mortified over the disruption they had caused but had no choice other than to wander the empty aisles for a respectable period of time before getting out and allowing the store to reopen.

Visits to non-Russian republics sometimes revealed tension between the locally predominant ethnic group and the Russians. In almost all republics, Russian was the official working language. In the Ukraine, the Central Asian republics, and those of the Caucasus, for instance, senior local officials as a rule used Russian when receiving visiting Americans. However, when an official U.S. delegation I was accompanying visited the Baltic Republic of Lithuania, all local officials pointedly spoke only in Lithuanian. They provided interpreters who translated from Lithuanian directly into English for their American guests. The Russian officials accompanying our group were forced to use their own interpreters, who did not know Lithuanian but were able to translate from English to Russian.

Even small gestures, like serving refreshments at coffee break, provided our Lithuanian hosts with opportunities to demonstrate national pride. In Moscow and most of the rest of the USSR, the standard fare during official meetings consisted of factory-produced cookies, small candy bars, and instant coffee or Russian tea, accompanied by large rectangular blocks of slowly dissolving sugar, served at the meeting table by expressionless waiters in dark suits. In Lithuania, the local host invited our group to continue the discussion over coffee in an adjoining room. There we found a series of round tables set with spotless white linen and fine china. Each table contained plates of cookies and pastries that looked and smelled as if they had just come out of the oven. Freshly brewed European coffee, with cream and finely granulated sugar, was served by smiling, attractive Lithuanian women dressed in colorful folk costumes. I cannot speak for the other Americans present, but I have remembered vividly the sights and smells of this happening long after forgetting the substance of the meeting.

During one U.S. Congressional visit to Leningrad, the powerful regional

Party First Secretary and Politburo member Grigory Romanov hosted a gala dinner for our group at a beautiful VIP facility on the bank of the Neva River. An impressive cross-section of Leningrad officialdom and society showed up for the event—senior party officials, senior military officers, intellectuals and artists, and probably senior KGB officials as well. This was a surprise, as Romanov was reputed to be a hard-liner in foreign affairs and a short-tempered authoritarian in dealing with subordinates. Romanov was polite and hospitable for most of the evening, during which a fair amount of alcohol was consumed.

Romanov's true colors emerged during the thank-you toast offered toward the end of the evening by the ranking American politician, Senator Abe Ribicoff of Connecticut. In the course of his gracious remarks, Senator Ribicoff noted that he and his colleagues had been deeply moved by their visit to the main Leningrad cemetery, where the buried coffins of thousands of Leningraders recalled the bravery and suffering of the city's people during the Nazi blockade. Upon hearing the Russian interpretation of these remarks, Romanov turned red in the face and slammed his fist on the table. "You don't understand anything," he shouted angrily in Russian. "There was no wood for coffins during the siege of Leningrad. It was winter; people were freezing. Every scrap of wood was burned for warmth. The dead were put into mass graves. There were no coffins. You understand nothing."

Senator Ribicoff and the members of his delegation had no idea what Romanov was ranting about, and listened in uncomprehending, stunned silence to his emotional outburst. When the Soviet interpreter finally was able to render Romanov's remarks into English, Ribicoff quietly apologized for using the word "coffin," and Romanov calmed down. The body language of many of the Soviet guests indicated embarrassment over Romanov's boorishness but—like the Soviets sitting around Khrushchev when he began banging his shoe on his desk at the United Nations General Assembly—they had to pretend to approve of Romanov's outrageous behavior.

Visiting congressional delegations, referred to in State Department jargon as CODELS, took up a considerable amount of the embassy's time and energy, but they usually were well worth the effort. Given the politicized nature of U.S.-Soviet relations, plus the stereotypes that sometimes shaped the thinking in Congress about the Soviet Union, members of Congress benefited from gaining a firsthand impression of Soviet reality. By the same token, Soviet leaders developed a somewhat clearer understanding of American realities by exchanging views with American legislators. And the embassy profited from



meetings with the Soviet leadership and access to normally closed areas and aspects of the Soviet system that visiting CODELS provided.

Most CODELS to the Soviet Union of more than one or two members flew on special military aircraft based at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, D.C., and configured for VIP travel. As trip planning got under way, the U.S. military escort officer and his staff would obtain the needed foreign visas for all travelers (a cumbersome, time-consuming process in the case of the Soviet Union) and, in consultation with the staff of the senior member of the delegation, work out seating on the aircraft, order food for freshly cooked in-flight meals, and purchase beverages and other consumables for use in-country. At each overseas stop, one hotel room would be used as a CODEL “control room,” where the delegation could gather and where continental breakfasts, brewed coffee, alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages, and snacks were readily available, courtesy of the Department of Defense (which of course used funds appropriated for this general purpose by Congress).

The easy availability of alcohol in the “control room,” taken together with the alcoholic nature of official lunches and dinners in the Soviet Union, sometimes posed problems. I recall vividly one large CODEL in which the senior member, Speaker of the House of Representatives Carl Albert, tended to over-indulge. In the middle of our first night in Leningrad’s Astoria Hotel, I was awakened by a phone call from one of the Soviet officials accompanying our large delegation. He asked that I join him in the hallway near the room of Speaker Albert, who needed assistance. When I arrived at the desk of the *dezurnaya*, the woman who had the graveyard shift as floor monitor (in those days, Soviet hotels had such a person on twenty-four-hour duty on each floor), I found our delegation leader in his pajamas in the *dezurnaya*’s cane chair, his arms and legs locked around its arms and legs. The *dezurnaya*, along with four or five Soviet staffers—all dressed in dark suits and ties—had formed a semicircle around the chair. They could see that Speaker Albert was agitated, but they did not know English and could not comprehend what he wanted.

Speaker Albert appeared to be in a mean mood and seemed semicoherent. When he saw me, he said that all he wanted was a sandwich, but the floor monitor and the other Russians could not understand this simple request. He would not leave her chair, he added belligerently, until someone produced a sandwich. By this time, the American doctor accompanying the delegation (probably summoned by Albert’s wife, who was along for the trip together with numerous other congressmen’s wives) arrived on the scene. The two of

us calmed the Speaker down and got him back into his suite and into bed. When I explained the problem to the senior Soviet staffer, he smiled sympathetically and said that this situation was common within the Soviet leadership as well.

My hope for a good night's sleep after our second day in Leningrad was dashed by a late-night phone call from Speaker Albert himself. Slurring his words, he asked me to come to his suite immediately for an emergency staff meeting: his wife had disappeared. When I got to his suite, his accompanying staff of four was assembled in the sitting room that adjoined the bedroom. He was in an angry mood. He said he was firing his entire staff for allowing his wife, whom they knew had a drinking problem, to wander out of the hotel and onto the streets of Leningrad in the middle of the night dressed only in her nightgown. He then turned to me, said I was doing my work well and could not have known about his wife, and therefore he would commend me highly to his good friend Secretary of State Kissinger.

While this was going on, one of Albert's aides quietly slipped into the adjoining bedroom and discovered the congressman's wife asleep on the floor. Evidently she had fallen out of bed, unnoticed by her husband. The aide came back into the sitting room, announced his discovery, and suggested that the rest of us go back to bed while he calmed the boss. (Needless to say, Speaker Albert did not dismiss his staff, nor, to my knowledge, did he commend me to Secretary Kissinger.)

An unusual CODEL of an entirely different sort consisted of one senator, George McGovern, and two of his personal Senate staffers. The three members of CODEL McGovern arrived in Moscow during the summer of 1978 as guests of the U.S. Embassy rather than as guests of the Soviet government. The senator naturally requested a meeting with Brezhnev, but when we relayed this to the Foreign Ministry we were informed that the general secretary was resting by the Black Sea and could not be disturbed. McGovern nonetheless was determined to see Brezhnev and decided to travel to the Crimean resort city of Yalta and stay there until a meeting was arranged. The senator, his two assistants, and I spent three or four days in Yalta, until it became clear that a meeting with Brezhnev was not going to materialize.

Upon our return to Moscow, a lengthy meeting was arranged between CODEL McGovern and Foreign Minister Gromyko. Our ambassador was included, and I went along as note-taker for the American side. It was fascinating for me to see firsthand how Gromyko spoke and evidently thought completely within the confines of the official Soviet worldview. McGovern

was well informed, articulate, and an able debater. Yet Gromyko managed for the most part to keep the discussion inside the Kremlin's universe of discourse. One could readily understand why he had been the Soviet Union's chief diplomat for so many years: although he was willing to listen to opposing views, he hewed to the Soviet line tenaciously and with impressive conviction.

Because Senator McGovern was not an official guest of the Soviet parliament, he was spared the usually obligatory Kremlin meeting between official U.S. CODELS and their ostensible Soviet counterparts, members of the Supreme Soviet. Such meetings were held in an ornate Kremlin hall and amounted to carefully staged propaganda exercises. They featured, on the Soviet side, experts on the United States and on other aspects of Soviet foreign and domestic affairs who also happened to be members of the meaningless Supreme Soviet or were billed as consultants to it. USA Institute Director Arbatov invariably played a leading role on the Soviet team, as did senior officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, along with several prominent Soviet journalists and several token workers and collective farmers who had been rewarded with Supreme Soviet membership. We of course briefed our CODELS in advance about the carefully scripted nature of these meetings. Even without our advance warning, it would have been obvious to virtually all members of Congress that such gatherings were not intended to facilitate a serious exchange of views. Still, these meetings enabled our congressmen and women to see the inside of the Kremlin, to size up some of the Moscow foreign policy elite, and to appreciate how the regime was trying, however ineffectively, to shape congressional attitudes toward the Soviet Union and its policies.

### Perspective on the Soviet Regime

By the time I left Moscow in the summer of 1979, I had yet to find evidence of impending, major modifications in the Soviet regime I had first encountered some ten years earlier. With a few exceptions, most notably young Gorbachev's move to Moscow, the leadership was resisting generational change. Its senior members tended to regard their tenure in office as lifetime appointments: they remained in place until incapacitated—or, as in Brezhnev's pathetic case, until well after becoming incapacitated. Brezhnev and the other leaders of the nomenklatura seemed unwilling to confront the fact that the

badly needed shift from extensive to intensive economic growth had not occurred.<sup>8</sup> Yet until that happened, the Soviet Union would remain stuck somewhere in the middle of the industrial age while the United States and other advanced countries were moving to postindustrial development based on innovation and technology. The conservatism of the Brezhnev leadership group also meant that the Kremlin tended to revert to traditional repression when faced with a challenge, such as liberalism within the Czechoslovak leadership, or the domestic threat the Kremlin perceived from the rapid rise of the unofficial Helsinki Monitoring Group. By the end of 1979, this would also be the leadership's response to the external challenge it perceived to Soviet interests in Afghanistan.

Immersion in Soviet society and extensive interaction with various components of the regime during the period 1975–79 served to deepen my understanding of the Soviet conception of governance. As I came to view it, the system had been constructed by Stalin to achieve the goals embedded in his understanding of Marxism-Leninism and its application to analysis of the contemporary domestic and foreign environment. The essence of the Stalinist system was coercive mobilization of human and material resources to attain the ends mandated by doctrine: constructing “socialism” and eventually full communism in the USSR; promoting world revolution by gradually pulling developing countries away from the “capitalist system”; plus countering the subversion and deterring aggression toward the Soviet Union and its allies by the “world system of capitalism.”

By the late 1970s, one could discern several different attitudes toward the Stalinist conception of governance that continued to define the structure and most of the function of the Soviet regime. I remained convinced that the ruling elite was captive to the official conception. Some senior nomenklaturists, such as Gromyko, Suslov, and Andropov, seemed to have internalized the Soviet worldview and appeared to operate within its frame of reference. Others, like Brezhnev and Kosygin, were well aware of the importance of doctrine in their roles as Soviet leaders, generally construed the world in accepted ideological categories, but were relatively pragmatic in personal outlook and seemed inclined to let specialists handle the doctrinal details. A more junior group of regime functionaries and advisors were of necessity well versed in the official worldview but, apparently due largely to their exposure to the West and to Westerners, they appeared capable of distancing themselves psychologically from regime orthodoxy and of thinking outside of its frame of reference. Representative of this group, among the Soviet officials I knew

personally, were Georgy Arbatov and many of his staff at the USA Institute, along with several middle-ranking Foreign Ministry officials specializing in U.S. affairs.

A third group consisted of perceptive, thoughtful individuals such as my friend Mark Masarsky, who gave little credence to the official outlook but tended to keep their doubts to themselves so as not to attract the attention of the regime as a potential troublemakers. Finally, at farthest remove from the official conception, were the so-called dissidents, who in differing degrees and for differing reasons had broken with regime orthodoxy. Some, like the unofficial artists, wanted to express their talent as they saw fit. Others, like the satirist Vladimir Voinovich, the composer of satirical ballads Bulat Akuzhava, and the philosopher Alexander Zinoviev, were determined to express the truth about Soviet reality as they saw it and to make their views known through their creative work. Still others were motivated by nationalist sentiments or by religious conviction. Then came the human rights activists, typified by Andrei Sakharov, who recognized the warped nature of official Soviet thinking and were dedicated to making regime behavior more humane.

One could not be certain about the attitudes of the great mass of average Soviet citizens. From what we could observe in Moscow and around the Soviet Union, the majority of the Soviet people seemed largely indifferent to regime orthodoxy although accustomed, because of regime-controlled education and media censorship, to thinking in terms of its broad categories. They continued to take pride in major Soviet accomplishments, but increasingly sought to pursue a personal life free of interference by Soviet authorities. One could easily detect popular disaffection with aspects of regime behavior that impinged unpleasantly on daily life—shortages of fresh food, inadequate housing, shoddy infrastructure, poor consumer services, incompetent and uncaring local officials. These problems were, for instance, routinely caricatured in the officially sanctioned satirical magazine *Krokodil* and portrayed on stage and on television by popular comedian Arkady Raikin, among others.

Popular disaffection did not, however seem close to the tipping point that led to widespread alienation and opposition. The Soviet regime had been established and was being maintained because of a conception, originated by Stalin, in the minds of the ruling elite. That elite also controlled all levers of decision making, all mass media, and all mechanisms of coercion. As of the late 1970s the Soviet leadership clearly was not under popular pressure to modify any significant aspect of its conception of governance, or to give up any significant part of its total monopoly of power.

In short, I felt certain that Zinoviev's view, together with Avtorkhanov's analysis, was essentially correct: one could not understand Soviet reality, including Kremlin decision making, without understanding how ideology had permeated the entire system.<sup>9</sup> One certainly could not discount the importance of individual differences among leaders, or the importance of their respective perceptions of individual, group, and national interests. The popularity of artist Ilya Glazunov at high regime levels, for instance, indicated the salience of Russian nationalism for some top decision makers. But I was convinced that these factors had to be evaluated as they were seen and acted upon by the Soviet leadership—in the context of their distinctive worldview.

My close acquaintance with Soviet intellectuals who had broken psychologically with the system, as well as with others who remained formally a part of the system but had become privately disillusioned with it, helped me to appreciate the all-encompassing pretensions and psychological demands of the official conception of governance. It became apparent that to break out of that frame of reference—or, to use one of Zinoviev's metaphors, that "force field"—required considerable intellectual strength and toughness. To act contrary to the system's norms required remarkable personal courage. Unless the regime's leadership was somehow overthrown, which did not appear at all likely, or unless the leadership's conception of governance underwent basic change, also hard to envision in the late 1970s, the regime seemed fundamentally durable in its current manifestation.

# 4

## The Beginning of the End

### Deputy Chief of Mission

Three assignments in Washington followed my second Moscow tour of duty and provided new perspectives on Soviet and Eastern European affairs. As one of two FSOS on the staff of Marshall Shulman, Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's personal advisor on Soviet affairs, I was able to take part in the handling of U.S.-Soviet relations from the department's seventh floor, occupied by the secretary and his senior staff. As principal deputy director of the Office of Soviet Union Affairs, which was my next assignment, I was active in the transition from the Carter to the Reagan administration and responsible for interagency coordination of Soviet affairs at the working level as well as for daily liaison with Embassy Moscow. Then, as director of the Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs, my staff and I closely monitored and analyzed for our State Department superiors the growing trend throughout Eastern Europe toward national assertiveness and sovereignty.

*Perspective on Embassy Moscow Reporting and Analysis.* I found these assignments fascinating for the light they shed on the making and execution of U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union and the countries of Eastern Europe, particularly when the Carter administration was replaced by the Reagan administration, which came into office with a more assertive, activist approach toward the Soviet empire. In addition, having originated analysis of Soviet and Eastern European affairs from the field, I was able to observe the impact of such reporting on the relevant parts of the U.S. foreign affairs bureaucracy—the White House and its National Security Council, the Departments of State and Defense, and the CIA. Thanks to the dominant role of the Cold War and U.S.-Soviet relations in U.S. foreign policy, Embassy Moscow's output was widely circulated and read throughout the executive branch. On the other hand, given the importance of the issues to the United

States, senior officials—and particularly political appointees dealing with foreign affairs—often had strong personal views about Soviet affairs and were not always swayed by, or even much interested in, what the embassy had to say. It was also the case that reporting and analysis on Soviet matters by the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other Western news media represented in Moscow had a steady, major influence on Washington's thinking.

As a rule, the embassy's most sympathetic and interested Washington audience was at the working levels of the Department of State and the analytical directorate of the CIA. As one would expect, the degree of attention paid to embassy views elsewhere in the executive branch depended largely upon individual personalities, personal convictions, and personal standings—primarily those of the secretary of state, the secretary of defense, the NSC advisor, the CIA director, and their respective senior advisors.

I observed this changing picture as closely as circumstances allowed and learned several lessons that proved useful when I returned to Moscow as deputy chief of mission, or "DCM." First, it was vital for the embassy to stay in close touch with the Office of Soviet Union Affairs (sov) in State and to rely on sov to convey a sense of the administration's current mood. We did our best to accomplish this by means of daily secure telephone conversations, usually between sov's deputy director and the embassy's DCM.

Second, it was mutually beneficial to maintain good relations between sov and Embassy Moscow on the one hand, and CIA analysts on the other. We were helped in this by having CIA analysts come to Moscow for temporary tours of duty, then keeping in touch with them after they returned to Washington.

Third, because of the influence of news media, it was important for sov and the embassy to maintain cooperative working relations with reporters and commentators working on Soviet affairs in Washington, along with the American and Western correspondents based in Moscow. We did this by providing background briefings and off-the-record exchanges of views in Washington and in Moscow. We knew, of course, that while senior administration officials might not read the daily message traffic from Embassy Moscow, they almost certainly would be familiar with the daily coverage of Soviet affairs in the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and other news media.

*Warm-up for Moscow.* Meanwhile, the Soviet leadership was in flux. Brezhnev had died in 1982. He was succeeded by Andropov, who fell ill and died after only about fourteen months as general secretary. Andropov was replaced



by Brezhnev protégé Konstantin Chernenko, who as of early 1985 appeared to be in failing health himself. I was anxious to get back to Moscow and happily accepted the invitation of career foreign service officer Arthur Hartman, who had been our ambassador in Moscow since 1981, to serve as his deputy, commencing in the summer of 1985.

As it turned out, this new assignment to Moscow involved a fair bit of frustration. At a time when meaningful changes in the thinking of the Soviet leadership were at last under way, and the Cold War appeared to be winding down, a series of incidents typical of the Cold War required me to concentrate more on immediate problem solving rather than on pondering the significance of current trends within the Soviet regime.

A high-level Soviet delegation was scheduled to visit the United States in March 1985, in return for an earlier, comparable U.S. visit to the Soviet Union, and the State Department arranged for me to escort the Soviet group during its stay in the United States as something of a warm-up for my third tour of duty in Moscow. The Soviet delegation was headed by full Politburo member and Party First Secretary of the Ukrainian Republic Vladimir Shcherbitsky. The delegation included several energetic young men from Shcherbitsky's personal staff in Kiev, plus an interesting group of policy specialists from Moscow, including USA Institute Director Arbatov. I focused my attention on delegation members who were not well known to the United States, did not know English, and who might later prove to be useful contacts for me in Moscow.

One of these was gruff, plainspoken Colonel General Nikolai Chervov, who headed the general staff's Arms Control Directorate. What seemed to impress General Chervov most about the United States was the prominent display of the American flag. I rode with him and the Soviet Embassy's DCM, Alexander Bessmertnykh, as the delegation traveled in stretch limousines from Dallas to Fort Worth to attend a Texas rodeo. The general could not get over the fact that almost every gasoline station and many retail stores were flying huge American flags. When Bessmertnykh and I explained that this was not mandatory but up to each proprietor, and that most sporting events across American began with the national anthem, Chervov vigorously slapped his leg, saying this was truly wonderful and something the Soviet Union should emulate.

Another interesting member of the Shcherbitsky group was one of the Soviet Union's best-known authors, Vladimir Karpov (also a highly decorated veteran of World War II), whom I had met in Moscow in the 1970s but had

not gotten to know well. In several interesting, candid conversations on the edges of the delegation's activities in the United States, Karpov quietly made clear to me that he did not think much of the conservatism of Brezhnev and his successors but saw no realistic option other than to try to improve things from within the system.

The delegation's last stop in the United States was San Francisco. When our special U.S. Air Force flight arrived at the airport, the Soviet consul general in San Francisco informed the delegation at planeside that General Secretary Chernenko was gravely ill and not expected to survive. After a lengthy private meeting at the consul general's residence, the delegation informed us that it would have to cancel its program in San Francisco and return promptly to the Soviet Union. Karpov had confided to me, during a tour of the Neiman Marcus department store in Dallas, that he and the other delegation members had each been given several hundred dollars to spend in the United States. It was therefore not surprising that the delegation wanted to use the rest of its last full day in San Francisco for shopping and sightseeing, assisted by the staff of the Soviet Consulate.

Early the next morning, we flew from San Francisco to New York's Kennedy Airport, where the delegation had arranged to connect with a special Aeroflot flight for the trip home. Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin met our flight in New York with the news that Chernenko had died and that Mikhail Gorbachev had been elected Communist Party general secretary to replace Chernenko. While we milled around on the tarmac at JFK as luggage and boxes containing the personal purchases made in San Francisco were being transferred, Karpov, clearly stirred by the news of Chernenko's death and Gorbachev's promotion, took me by the arm and led me away from the other Soviets. "This is a wonderful day," he said in an emotion-filled voice. "At last the dead hand of the Communist Party can be lifted from Soviet society."

*Embassy Moscow as of Mid-1985.* Upon arriving in Moscow in mid-July, I found that the embassy had grown much larger, in terms of personnel and physical space, in the six years since my last assignment there. An entire new embassy complex was nearing completion behind the old compound, about one large city block down the hill toward the Moscow River. The official American community now included construction supervisors, building contractors, thirty-five resident Seabees, and a thirty-five-man Marine guard force. Embassy staffing had increased across the board, including foreign service personnel as well as personnel from the United States Information

Agency, the Departments of Agriculture and Commerce, the CIA, the army, navy, and air force. In addition, the embassy now employed over two hundred Soviet support staff.

Just prior to leaving for Moscow, I had dinner with Warren Zimmermann, a career FSO who had been Ambassador Hartman's first DCM in Moscow. When I asked Warren to characterize the job, he responded without missing a beat, "Mayor of Sin City." Soon after arriving in Moscow, I discovered that Warren had not been exaggerating. Given my background and deep personal interest in Soviet domestic and foreign affairs, it was difficult for me to be in Moscow for the first two years of the Gorbachev era and have to deal with endless management and personnel issues. The bulk of these were routine. Several, however, mushroomed into significant, time-consuming Cold War episodes. One could never be sure whether a given issue would stay routine or go critical.

The regular work of the embassy—political, economic, and agricultural reporting; consular and commercial work; observation and analysis of military developments; facilitation of cultural exchanges—was conducted with distinction throughout my tour as DCM, thanks to the dedication and skill of our American staff. But the Cold War took its toll on embassy morale and embassy operations. A brief review of these major Cold War episodes should be of some historical value and in any case will serve to convey the flavor of those times as we in the U.S. Embassy experienced them.

## Cold War Distractions

"*Spy Dust.*" A few days after my arrival, Ambassador Hartman departed Moscow for long-deferred leave, and I became acting chief of mission. Shortly thereafter, the embassy received a classified cable from the Department of State informing us that the CIA had obtained solid evidence that the KGB was deliberately exposing U.S. Embassy personnel—presumably staff members the KGB suspected were intelligence operatives—to a chemical tracking agent that initial laboratory tests indicated was carcinogenic. According to subsequently published accounts, the CIA found out from two covert Soviet sources that the KGB had developed a chemical powder, known as NPPD, for use against suspected foreign intelligence operatives in Moscow. In small quantities, the stuff was invisible. The KGB reportedly sprayed it on car steering wheels, doorknobs, doormats, and other objects with which suspected enemy

spies would come into direct contact. NPPD adhered tenaciously to skin but came off in minute yet chemically detectable quantities onto objects touched, such as writing paper and envelopes.

It was unclear, at least to me, how long NPPD had been in use against Americans in Moscow.<sup>1</sup> In 1984 the CIA managed to obtain a small sample of the powder, which it was able to assess reliably in the United States. When laboratory tests indicated that NPPD could cause cancer in humans, the CIA agreed that the U.S. Embassy community in Moscow should be informed. A small team of Washington technical experts came to Moscow to assist me in the briefing effort. Backed up by the expert team, I went out of my way to be forthcoming, within the bounds of my instructions from Washington, and to answer all questions in an unclassified setting as frankly as possible. Still, some individuals, such as parents of infants or small children, felt we were holding back the full story unreasonably. Why, for instance, couldn't we disclose exactly how we found out about NPPD? Why couldn't we say exactly where we had discovered traces of the powder? We could only assure the concerned individuals that we would provide further information about the health implications of NPPD as soon as we received it.

This episode had a bittersweet aftermath. Several months after the initial briefings in Moscow, we were able to inform the American community that further laboratory testing had established that unless one were exposed to huge amounts of the compound over a prolonged period of time, NPPD would not cause cancer. The bitter aspect came to light some eight years later, when CIA officer Aldrich Ames was discovered to be a spy for the KGB. Ames confessed that he had betrayed a number of Soviet citizens who had clandestinely provided the CIA with intelligence information. Among them, according to published reports, was a young KGB officer who risked his life to provide the CIA with a sample of NPPD in the 1980s. Because of Ames, this brave man reportedly was sentenced to death as a traitor and executed.

*The Bugging of the "NOB."* Another major security problem came to a head shortly after my arrival in Moscow. This was the sophisticated but totally predictable Soviet effort to install listening devices in the new embassy office building (known as the "NOB"). When I arrived in mid-July, the basic construction of the new embassy compound had been completed. The outer perimeter of the compound was lined on three sides by a high brick wall. The main entrance was through a gate in a tall, sturdy wrought-iron fence that ran across the front of the compound. About a hundred feet inside the fence was the NOB, a square, eight-story structure of reinforced concrete and brick

facing that, according to plan, would house the main part of the embassy, including its classified operations. Behind this building was a large grass-covered field, beneath which was an underground concourse containing a spacious cafeteria, a bar, a fireplace lounge, a large swimming pool, a full-sized gymnasium, a bowling alley, a squash court, a beauty shop, and a nicely equipped grocery store. Townhouses and apartments extended along the two sides of the compound, with a grade school, maintenance facilities, and quarters for the Marine detachment occupying the back end of the property.

The bulk of the work had been done by Soviet personnel who were trained and supervised by American contractors and subcontractors. The overall quality of the work was surprisingly good—roughly what one would expect to find in a comparable facility in the United States. The security aspects of the project were overseen by an interagency group in Washington that was formed when the project got under way in the early 1980s. I was briefed on the general security plan at that time, when I was deputy director of the Office of Soviet Union Affairs. The security group set up a high-tech headquarters in Northern Virginia, featuring state-of-the-art computer hardware and software that allowed security specialists from concerned U.S. government agencies to view plans and diagrams of all aspects of the project. On-site inspections at the Moscow construction location, conducted throughout each work day and once all Soviet workers had departed the site at the end of each work day, were carefully planned. Information gained from these inspections was sent to Northern Virginia for processing and analysis.

The underlying premise of this expensive effort was that our security specialists could, through painstaking planning and the use of advanced technology, detect and neutralize any KGB attempt to bug the office building. No major effort was made to prevent electronic penetration of the housing and common facilities, such as the cafeteria, since once the project was completed these areas would be vulnerable to installation of new listening devices even if originally implanted devices were detected and neutralized. In any case, all the embassy's American employees were instructed not to discuss sensitive matters outside of designated secure areas.

In retrospect, the underlying premise of our counterintelligence effort seriously underestimated the resources and energy the KGB would devote to bugging the NOB. In large part because of this hubris, two basic errors—from the viewpoint of security—were committed by the U.S. side during the early stages of the project. First, I was told that during the design phase, the American architectural firm selected to create the basic plan brought a Soviet archi-

tect from Moscow to its offices in the United States as a consultant on such matters as Moscow infrastructure, soil characteristics, and construction capabilities. By the time this individual returned to Moscow, he reportedly was well informed about many of the planned design features of the NOB. This, in effect, gave the KGB months of lead time to design a bugging scheme before construction of the new office building commenced.

Second, the U.S., with the agreement of the interagency security team in Washington, agreed to let the Soviets fabricate the building's reinforced concrete pillars and floor panels at a Soviet facility near Moscow without American supervision. We insisted on trucking into the Soviet Union literally each individual brick used in the NOB, yet we allowed the Soviets to build, transport, and erect the basic support structure for the building. It should not have been surprising to discover, as we eventually did, that a sophisticated bugging system had been ingeniously concealed deep in the Soviet-manufactured load-bearing components.

As of July 1985, all of the support columns and reinforced concrete floor panels had been welded into place and all of the exterior brick facing was also installed. Soviet crews were doing concrete and brick work on the interior of the upper floors—where the KGB could be confident that the most sensitive embassy activities would be conducted. The American construction supervisor, who did not have a security clearance and therefore had not been briefed on specific plans for eventual utilization of the NOB's upper floors, told Ambassador Hartman and me that the Soviet workers were brazenly and persistently deviating from our specifications in building some of the interior walls. The supervisor, an old hand in the building trades, agreed with us that Soviet construction activity in defiance of our specifications and clear instructions should be grounds for terminating our contract with the Soviet government and barring all Soviet personnel from the NOB. He said he had raised this through his channels with the State Department's building office and had been informed that for legal reasons we should not break the construction contract with the Soviet government. This reportedly was because the Soviets could then invoke a binding arbitration clause in the contract and probably win a large penalty payment from us.

The ambassador and I knew that, given the general attitude of the Reagan administration toward the Soviet Union, this legalistic approach was not sustainable. So we sent a classified but nonetheless widely distributed cable to Washington recommending that for security reasons the Soviet workers be removed immediately and permanently from the NOB. Within a short time

our recommendation was approved, the Soviet workers were locked out, and the NOB was put under twenty-four-hour Marine guard. To the best of my knowledge, the Soviet side did not undertake a serious arbitration effort.

About seven years later, after the end of the Cold War, a newly appointed KGB chief was reported to have handed over to the American ambassador in Moscow, Robert Strauss, the complete NOB bugging scheme. Until that time, and for several subsequent years, the NOB remained an empty shell, as the executive branch and the Congress debated its fate and teams of U.S. security technicians poked and probed to uncover and understand the workings of the electronic systems embedded in the structure.

*Chernobyl.* Then came the nuclear disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear reactor complex in the Ukraine, several hundred miles south of Moscow. Most unsettling was the initial uncertainty about what exactly had happened. This fed rumors and generated fears about possible health implications for residents of Moscow. As we later learned, on April 26, 1986, operator error caused one of four nuclear reactors at the Chernobyl nuclear facility in northern Ukraine to melt down and explode. A large hole was blasted through the roof of the reactor building, and a huge plume of highly radioactive material shot high into the sky. It took Soviet authorities two weeks to seal off the destroyed reactor core and stabilize the situation in the immediate vicinity of the reactor complex.

First indications of a nuclear disaster came from Sweden, where sensitive radiation detectors began to register abnormally high levels of radioactivity, and immediate checks of all local nuclear facilities showed that the source of the problem was somewhere to the south of Scandinavia. Urgent Swedish and Finnish inquiries of the Soviet government produced no substantive response. Scandinavian news media picked up the story, followed quickly by international wire services, and the news was broadcast into the Soviet Union via Voice of America, BBC, and other shortwave radio stations. In the absence of hard information from Soviet authorities, rumors began to circulate in Moscow of a huge nuclear disaster involving thousands of deaths.

Although Gorbachev had recently proclaimed his new policy of glasnost (openness to media publicity), it was two days before Moscow said anything publicly about the accident. A brief announcement on the official television news program the evening of April 28 confirmed only that an accident had occurred and was being investigated. A similarly terse announcement was printed in Soviet newspapers April 30. The Soviet news blackout finally ended

two weeks later, on May 14, when Gorbachev personally delivered an informative, televised address concerning the disaster.

It became clear soon thereafter that the prevailing winds had carried the radioactive plume well to the west of Moscow, over the Soviet republic of Byelorussia and into Poland and Scandinavia. The heaviest and most radioactive particles fell out first, creating a deadly radioactive zone extending from the damaged reactor through northwestern Ukraine and across the eastern portion of Byelorussia.

Still, there was understandable concern within the American Embassy community, and the Department of State wisely arranged for a team of U.S. radiation experts to come to Moscow to brief our people and answer their questions. The team's basic message was easy to understand: one would absorb considerably more radiation during an airline flight from Moscow to the United States than one would encounter by remaining in Moscow in the aftermath of the Chernobyl explosion. The team noted that care should be exercised in buying fresh food products, especially dairy products, that might have originated in contaminated areas. The team left behind radiation detection equipment suitable for testing fresh food, and we, along with most other Western embassies, routinely tested fresh produce, meat, and dairy products purchased in Moscow. Apart from one piece of slightly radioactive veal discovered by the French Embassy, no significantly high levels of radiation were registered from the fresh food that we and our colleagues tested. This was not a frivolous concern, however: farmers from all over the Soviet Union, including the Ukraine and Byelorussia, routinely brought fresh food to Moscow for sale in minimally supervised farmers markets that were patronized by the diplomatic community and other foreigners living in Moscow.

*The Daniloff Affair.* The next unusual event unfolded in the late summer of 1986, when Ambassador Hartman was in the United States for consultations and home leave. *U.S. News and World Report* Moscow bureau chief Nick Daniloff was, in effect, taken hostage by the KGB in response to the arrest in New York of a Soviet KGB agent employed as a United Nations employee. Unwritten rules of the espionage game between the United States and the Soviet Union had evolved over the years so that in most cases where a Soviet or American diplomat was caught engaging in improper activities he or she was promptly declared persona non grata and expelled with little or no publicity. The other side would deny any wrongdoing but would not engage in tit-for-tat responses.

Unfortunately for Nick Daniloff, the circumstances of the arrest in New



York did not conform to these informal understandings. The Soviet spy was caught red-handed in an FBI sting operation. As a UN official, the Russian did not enjoy full diplomatic immunity and was subject to U.S. law for all activities other than his official UN duties. When he was apprehended by the FBI, he was put in jail, and the New York judge refused to grant bail. To gain leverage for protecting their man, the KGB needed an American hostage. They picked Daniloff, who, as a journalist living in Moscow, enjoyed no immunity whatsoever from Soviet law.

Daniloff, whom I knew well and respected as a dedicated and thoughtful journalist, had become acquainted with a young Soviet man who, at Daniloff's request, had agreed to provide photographs from the ongoing Soviet war in Afghanistan. On the day of his arrest, Daniloff had arranged to meet this individual in a Moscow park near Daniloff's apartment building. The man handed Daniloff a packet of material and hurried off, whereupon Daniloff was apprehended by KGB plainclothesmen and taken directly to a Moscow prison. Unknown to Nick, the packet contained photographs of Soviet military maps clearly stamped "Secret."<sup>2</sup>

I would guess that in the eyes of the KGB, Daniloff's first vulnerability was his willingness to accept material directly from a Soviet citizen under their control. This made it easy for the KGB to apprehend Daniloff with "sensitive" Soviet documents in his possession. Certainly, with its vast assets, the KGB could have set up and arrested virtually any American who lacked diplomatic status. Journalists willing to chance open meetings with unofficial Soviet sources were particularly vulnerable. Nick and most of his colleagues in the Western press corps were keenly aware of this danger and accepted it as an inevitable aspect of dealing with such sources.

Unfortunately, Daniloff had a second strike against him, which most likely was the major reason that the KGB selected him as its hostage. Months earlier, prior to my arrival in Moscow as DCM, he had unwittingly become entangled in a real espionage incident. Another of his unofficial Soviet contacts, a young Russian Orthodox priest, evidently had put in the *U.S. News and World Report* mailbox a large envelope that Daniloff assumed contained information on church affairs. But when he opened it, he discovered a smaller envelope addressed to the American ambassador. Suspicious that this might be a KGB provocation, Daniloff decided to deliver the letter immediately to the U.S. embassy's senior press officer, Ray Benson. In Daniloff's presence, Benson opened the envelope to find yet a third envelope containing several pages of handwritten Russian that neither he nor Daniloff could decipher. Nick

explained the circumstances surrounding his receipt of the documents and then left the embassy, relieved that he had gotten rid of them without incident.<sup>3</sup>

Following Daniloff's arrest and imprisonment in the summer of 1986, I learned that the CIA had concluded that the mysterious handwritten letter Nick delivered to the embassy appeared to have been penned by a valuable clandestine source, a Soviet scientist with whom the CIA had lost contact. Without Daniloff's knowledge, the CIA station at the embassy then attempted to use Daniloff's religious acquaintance as a link to their erstwhile source and in the process twice identified Nick as their intermediary. Daniloff's KGB interrogator in prison knew all about this, which suggested that the whole affair involving the Orthodox priest and the handwritten letter may have been a KGB sting operation from the outset.<sup>4</sup>

Still, none of this meant that Nick Daniloff was guilty of espionage. He was not. In selecting a hostage for their man in New York, the KGB evidently looked for an American residing in Moscow without diplomatic immunity whom the KGB could claim with some credibility had engaged in espionage. The fact that Nick was just ending his Moscow assignment (in fact, his replacement, Jeff Trimble, had already arrived in Moscow) probably also influenced the KGB's decision to use Daniloff as its hostage.

During the two weeks that Daniloff and his Soviet "counterpart" in New York were in prison, Washington and Moscow danced around the issue, with Washington attempting to find a way to secure Daniloff's release without equating him with the Soviet agent in New York. At all diplomatic levels, including the highest (a letter from President Reagan to General Secretary Gorbachev), we insisted that Daniloff was innocent. Our Soviet interlocutors, from Gorbachev on down the line, were just as insistent that he was guilty as charged.

As an interim step, it was agreed that each man would be released to the personal custody of his respective ambassador. Since Ambassador Hartman was in the United States at the time, Nick was released to my personal custody. At the agreed time of his release from prison, I rolled out the ambassador's official black Cadillac, put the largest suitable American flag I could find in the flag holder on the right front fender, and, together with Nick's wife, Ruth, our Consular Section Chief Roger Daley, and an embassy chauffeur, drove to the front entrance of Lefortovo Prison, where Nick was being held. We were quickly escorted into a reception room, where Nick and the KGB

officer in charge of his case were waiting. After brief formalities, we escorted Nick out of Lefortovo and into the waiting car.

With the active involvement of U.S. secretary of state George Shultz and Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze (in the United States for the fall opening of the UN General Assembly), along with Ambassador Hartman, Massachusetts senator Ted Kennedy, oil tycoon Armand Hammer, former Soviet Ambassador to Washington Anatoly Dobrynin, and probably other individuals, a mutually agreeable deal finally was hammered out. All charges would be dropped against Daniloff, and he would be allowed to leave the Soviet Union. Shortly after Nick's departure, the arrested KGB agent in New York would plead *nolo contendere*, be found guilty, and be allowed to depart the United States. In addition, the Soviets agreed to release my old friend Yuri Orlov from his exile in Siberia and allow him and his wife to emigrate to the United States.<sup>5</sup>

*Withdrawal of Our Soviet Workforce.* Daniloff's arrest and imprisonment had an unanticipated, delayed impact on Embassy Moscow: it set in motion a chain of events leading to the abrupt withdrawal of all of our over two hundred Soviet employees. Shortly after Reagan took office, pressure began to mount to reduce the number of Soviet officials in the United States, particularly those with the Soviet mission to the United Nations, on the reasonable assumption that a large percentage of these individuals were intelligence operatives. Urged on by the FBI, Congress in 1986 mandated that the number of Soviet UN mission employees be reduced. In March 1986, the State Department informed the Soviet government that its UN mission staff would have to be cut from the current level of 275 to 170. The reduction would have to be accomplished over a two-year period, by April 1988, with no fewer than twenty-five employees leaving every six months. Predictably, the Soviets responded that this demand was contrary to U.S. obligations under the UN Headquarters Agreement and the Soviet side therefore would not comply.

The unjustified arrest and detention of Nick Daniloff was the last straw for those in the Reagan administration who felt that tough measures had to be taken to prevent the Soviets from abusing their large official presence in the United States. As Secretary Shultz recalls in his memoirs, about two weeks after Daniloff's arrest, National Security Advisor John Poindexter obtained President Reagan's approval to expel twenty-five named Soviet officials from the United States by October 1, 1986.<sup>6</sup> This set in motion an escalating game of tit-for-tat that culminated with the Soviet side suddenly withdrawing all

260 Soviet employees of our embassy and our Leningrad consulate and capping the total number of embassy and consulate American employees at 225.

The task of operating our large embassy in Moscow without our usual workforce of over two hundred Soviets was daunting, but our American staff rose to the challenge. The immediate problem was coping with routine but essential daily chores, which included handling incoming and outgoing freight at the train station; providing various embassy components with needed supplies; driving and maintaining school buses, cars, vans, and trucks; making essential plumbing and electrical repairs; issuing routine visas; cleaning the common areas of the embassy. To get the daily chores done, we put everyone except the ambassador and me on a work roster divided between those capable of heavy lifting and those better suited to lighter work. Each embassy employee, including the ambassador and me, was made responsible for cleaning his or her own office space.

For the longer term, we quickly drew up an all-American staffing plan, premised on the Soviet-imposed 225-person ceiling, got the plan approved by the Department of State, and then gave a private-sector American contractor—fortunately already selected to replace some Soviet employees with Americans—a prioritized list of maintenance and support jobs to be filled as quickly as possible.

Still, the next six months put a strain on all of us. The Consular Section, which, as earlier described, had employed experienced, bilingual Soviet locals to handle the routine aspects of processing visas, was particularly hard hit. We had to give our newly arrived American teachers of Russian (intended, for security reasons, to replace our Soviet language teachers) a crash course in visa processing and put them to work in the Consular Section. The winter of 1986–87 was one of the coldest in Moscow's recorded history. Our Seabee crew was kept on the run by repeated breakdowns in the decrepit heating system in the old embassy compound, by the continuing need to clear snow and ice, and by the challenge of keeping our official vehicles running in severe weather conditions.

It could have been worse. By mid-November, housing available to us in Moscow had more than doubled when the furnished and fully equipped townhouses and apartments in the new embassy complex opened (and we held on to all of the apartments under lease from the Soviet Foreign Ministry). As the American workers provided by the U.S. contractor began to arrive, we could put them into decent living quarters. At about the same time, the spacious, well-designed community facilities in the new compound were com-

pleted. This was a dramatic improvement over the makeshift, minimal facilities at the old compound.

*The Marine Spy Scandal.* The sudden withdrawal of all of our Soviet workers, just ahead of an unusually severe Moscow winter, was bad enough. But an even more painful blow to embassy morale and embassy operations came a couple of months later. In early January 1987, just after Ambassador Hartman departed from Moscow to retire from the foreign service, we were informed by the State Department that one of our former Marine guards, Sergeant Clayton Lonetree, had confessed to cooperating with the KGB during his assignment in Moscow; Lonetree had served in Moscow from the fall of 1984 to March 1986. While we all knew that KGB recruitment efforts against us posed a continuing threat, it was a major shock to be informed that the KGB had succeeded in persuading a trusted former member of our embassy community to betray us and our country.

Two months after the news of Lonetree's confession, we received a second major shock. The Department of State informed us that another recently departed marine, Sergeant Arnold Bracy, had confessed to conspiring with Lonetree to let KGB operatives into the most sensitive areas of the embassy during the wee hours of the morning when no one else was around. The obvious implication was that embassy security had been totally compromised by Lonetree, Bracy, and the KGB.

Upon my July 1985 arrival in Moscow, the CIA station chief had informed me that his operations were mysteriously but effectively being shut down by the KGB. The September 1985 defection to Moscow of former CIA employee Edward Lee Howard, who had been in training to work at Moscow Station, provided a partial explanation. Subsequent arrests of individuals unknown to Howard showed, however that a grave problem still existed. As details of the Lonetree-Bracy episode became known, CIA counterintelligence specialists concluded that this episode must be the explanation for the agency's continuing frustrations in Moscow. Much of official Washington readily agreed with this view, and the Lonetree-Bracy affair took on enormous gravity. It became the conventional wisdom in Washington that treason committed by these two Embassy Moscow marines had revealed highly sensitive CIA operations to the KGB and led to the arrest and execution of numerous Soviet citizens secretly working for the United States.

As the conviction grew in Washington that Lonetree and Bracy had let KGB technicians roam freely around classified embassy offices, literally all of our electronic equipment, from sophisticated communications gear to copying

machines and electric typewriters, was disconnected, crated up, and shipped back to Washington for damage assessment. At a pivotal moment in Gorbachev's attempt to reform the Soviet system and modify Soviet foreign policy, American embassy officers in Moscow were reduced to using nineteenth-century technology—essentially pen and ink—for communication with Washington and the rest of the world. We wrote all of our classified reports and analyses in longhand. U.S. diplomatic couriers made frequent flights between Moscow and Frankfurt, carrying out our handwritten messages for typing and secure electronic transmission at our large consulate in Frankfurt, and bringing in our classified cable traffic and other sensitive communications to Moscow from the Frankfurt consulate.

Our entire marine detachment was suddenly withdrawn and replaced with a new set of handpicked marines. A series of investigators from Washington came to Moscow to see how our "Great Security Disaster" could have happened. These included security specialists from the Department of State and the intelligence community, a special envoy appointed by Secretary Shultz who reported directly to the secretary, two congressional delegations, and the inevitable blue-ribbon commission—this one headed by former secretary of defense Melvin Laird—which included former CIA director Richard Helms and former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff John Vessey. (It did not include, as I felt it should have a FSO who had served in Moscow.)

At about the same time, Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger publicly announced that Soviet espionage operations inside the embassy had been "massive" and amounted to "the worst spy case of the century." Secretary of the Navy James Webb asserted publicly that Ambassador Hartman bore responsibility for the marine security "scandal." Florida congressman Dan Mica and Maine congresswoman Olympia Snowe made a highly publicized, whirlwind investigative trip to Moscow and held a late-evening press conference there to announce dramatically—but on the basis of no significantly new evidence—that security at the embassy had been "totally compromised."

For the final six months of my third and last Moscow tour, the embassy seemed to be embroiled in a major espionage case that had put lives at risk, strained U.S.-Soviet relations, compromised highly sensitive secrets, and placed reputations and careers (including mine) in question. However, as Secretary Shultz recorded in his 1993 memoir, by the end of 1987 the great Moscow espionage affair had begun to evaporate. In his words: "The marine spy scandal had been whipped up and fueled by investigative zealots interact-

ing with a media and Congress all too ready to believe, even relish, wrongdoing.” It was, he concluded, “a massive false alarm.”<sup>7</sup>

Bracy recanted his confession as having been coerced, and all charges against him were dropped. Lonetree, who had confessed to passing classified information to the KGB in Moscow, was found guilty of espionage and sentenced to several decades in prison. Soon thereafter, in return for reduction of his sentence, Lonetree agreed to extensive polygraph testing and further interrogation that indicated he had not allowed KGB operatives into the embassy and in fact had not given the KGB seriously damaging classified information. Painsstaking examination of all embassy electronic devices revealed no sign of KGB tampering.<sup>8</sup>

Only some eight years later did the true cause of the CIA’s Moscow troubles come to light, when a joint CIA-FBI counterintelligence team discovered that CIA officer Aldrich Ames had been a KGB mole, beginning in mid-1985. Ames was then working in CIA’s Soviet Division and had access to virtually all its secrets. Following his arrest, Ames agreed to disclose to U.S. officials all the details of his spying for the Soviet Union in return for leniency for his wife, who had been indicted as a co-conspirator. Moreover, during interviews at his prison, Ames told two sets of biographers that the KGB had used the Lonetree and Bracy cases to distract the attention of U.S. intelligence agencies away from Ames and the devastating impact of his espionage on the CIA station in Moscow in 1985 and 1986.<sup>9</sup>

## Initial Observations of Mikhail Gorbachev

*Encounters with the General Secretary.* Despite this unusual string of distractions, my embassy colleagues and I did our best to follow and make sense of the changes taking place in the Soviet regime under the leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev. During my initial stint as acting ambassador, for example, I served as host to a large delegation of U.S. senators led by Majority Leader Robert Byrd of West Virginia, and accompanied them on the first meeting of members of the U.S. Senate with General Secretary Gorbachev (a similar delegation from the House of Representatives had met with Gorbachev several months earlier, prior to my arrival in Moscow). Unfortunately, our side decided to include a stern lecture on human rights in its opening statement. Predictably, Gorbachev delivered a heated, lengthy rejoinder, and little time was left for discussion of other issues. Still, after years of observing an aging

and increasingly infirm Leonid Brezhnev, I was struck by the new general secretary's dynamism and intelligence. Gorbachev revealed no personal doubt about the underlying correctness of Soviet-style socialism. Yet even in this formal and contentious setting, it was apparent that he possessed a quick, inquiring, and relatively open mind.

I met Gorbachev in person later in 1985, when he departed Moscow for Geneva for his first summit meeting with President Reagan. I was again acting chief of mission, as Ambassador Hartman had earlier left Moscow to assist in briefing the president for his initial encounter with the new general secretary. According to Soviet protocol, when the general secretary left Moscow for an official meeting abroad, he was seen off at Vnukovo I, the VIP airport, by the senior party leadership and by the ambassador (or his designee) of the country to be visited. In this case, since the meeting would be held in neutral Switzerland, both the Swiss ambassador and I were invited to take part in the departure ceremony. The arrival and departure building at Vnukovo I was specially built for this purpose. Most of the ground floor was taken up by a palatial hall, with large glass windows and doors looking out on the runway and tarmac area where arrival and departure ceremonies were staged.

I was instructed by my colleagues in the USA Division of the Foreign Ministry to arrive at the airport thirty minutes prior to Gorbachev's scheduled departure. When I got there, about half of the party leadership, the most junior members, were already on hand, clumped together on one side of the arrival/departure hall. On the other side, waiting for me, was a representative of the Foreign Ministry's Protocol Department and several members of the USA Division. A comparable team was on hand from the European Division to assist the Swiss ambassador. The job of these Foreign Ministry folks evidently was to keep us segregated from the party leadership and, once Gorbachev arrived, to guide us through the brief departure formalities.

As a practicing Kremlinologist, it was intriguing for me to observe the senior leaders of the country milling around and interacting with each other. As one would expect, they arrived at the airport in reverse protocol order. Last to appear, just before Gorbachev drove up, was the putative number 2 man in the Politburo, Yegor Ligachev.

Gorbachev entered the hall without his wife, Raisa, who was accompanying him to Geneva but by tradition was not included in the departure ceremony and apparently had gone directly to the waiting plane, which was parked on the tarmac about twenty yards from the hall. As Gorbachev entered, I could see one of his aides turning the general secretary in our direction and explain-



ing who the Swiss ambassador and I were. I saw Gorbachev, who undoubtedly had other things on his mind, take a deep breath, square his shoulders, put on a fixed smile, and stride over. The protocol officer introduced us, and I reminded Gorbachev that we had met earlier that year, when he had received Senator Byrd and his colleagues. Gorbachev said he remembered that meeting well and had profited from it. He was now looking forward to meeting President Reagan and hoped the event would work to the benefit of both of our peoples. I said that was also our hope. He then made a slight bow in my direction, exchanged a few words with my Swiss colleague, then moved over to the other side of the hall to greet each member of the leadership, starting with Ligachev and working his way through the full Politburo members, then the candidate members, and finally the Central Committee secretaries.

We then all moved through the glass doors toward the waiting plane. The leadership group formed up in protocol order, senior members in the front, and the protocol officer placed me at one end of the back row, with the Swiss ambassador at the other end, for the official departure photograph. Gorbachev then went aboard, and the plane was pulled to the runway for takeoff. The leadership, the Swiss ambassador and I stayed in place on the tarmac, waving ritualistically—and, speaking for myself, feeling a little foolish—as the plane rolled down the runway.

Gorbachev arrived back in Moscow ahead of Ambassador Hartman, so I again joined the party leadership at Vnukovo I for the arrival ceremony. We assembled in the usual protocol order on the tarmac as the plane taxied toward the hall. Gorbachev came down the ramp, accompanied by Raisa, greeted me and then Ligachev, and while I was saying hello to Mrs. Gorbachev, whom I had not previously met, her husband and the entire leadership group disappeared into the hall. I later learned it was traditional for the Politburo to convene at the airport to hear the general secretary's initial report of his foreign trip. Only Raisa and I were left at the foot of the ramp, where we had a pleasant chat about her impressions of President and Mrs. Reagan, Geneva, and the Swiss people.

*Gorbachev's Reform Agenda.* While the embassy had limited access to senior party officials during the early Gorbachev years, we knew from the evidence available to us that Gorbachev was having trouble selling his new policies. Commencing in the fall of 1985, the public versions of Gorbachev's speeches at Party Central Committee meetings and related gatherings sharply criticized senior party professionals in the field as well as in Moscow, sometimes by name, for refusing to budge from traditional, outmoded patterns of behavior.

In addition, controversy surrounding the party's approach to foreign affairs had emerged—in a muted but unmistakable way—at the Twenty-Seventh Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) Congress held in February 1986. The issue was the basic relationship between what Moscow regarded as the world of socialism, led by the Soviet Union, and the world of capitalism, led by the United States. For many decades, party orthodoxy held that this relationship was fundamentally hostile because, as Marx, Engels, and Lenin had taught, capitalism was rife with class hatred toward “socialism.” However, Gorbachev argued at the Twenty-Seventh CPSU Congress that deep changes in world affairs required reappraisal of this key relationship. Thanks to a growing tendency toward global interdependence, Gorbachev asserted, a “conflict-ridden but interdependent and, to a large degree, integral world” was taking shape. In the official published version of Gorbachev's speech, the phrase “interdependent and, to a large degree, integral world” was printed in bold type.<sup>10</sup> The implication, later confirmed by public controversy over this pivotal matter, was that Gorbachev and his supporters were pushing the theme of global interdependence, while party conservatives insisted on maintaining the traditional view of irreconcilable global conflict between capitalism and socialism.

This indication of change in party orthodoxy had enormous potential significance for Soviet domestic and foreign policy. The orthodox view held that from its inception the Soviet Union found itself locked in a historically mandated death struggle with world capitalism. This article of faith had in essence justified the imposition and maintenance of Communist totalitarianism throughout the Soviet empire as essential for confronting and eventually defeating world capitalism. Gorbachev now seemed to be saying that benign forces of globalization were suppressing the capitalist threat, and that universal human values were displacing class antagonisms. This implied that the Stalinist conception of governance had become outmoded. The way Gorbachev evidently had to qualify this new formulation at the Twenty-Seventh CPSU Congress indicated that his revision of this article of party orthodoxy was being strongly resisted by conservatives.<sup>11</sup>

We knew that one of Gorbachev's key liberal advisors on these and related matters was Alexander Yakovlev, and we therefore regarded Yakovlev's observable status within the party leadership as an important indicator of the fate of Gorbachev's reforms and of Gorbachev's personal authority as general secretary. As I was preparing to leave Moscow in early July 1987, things appeared to be going well for Yakovlev. Gorbachev had been able to promote

him to candidate Politburo status in January of that year and to the top party rank of full Politburo membership just five months later.

*Concern About Opposition to Gorbachev.* At the same time, we were picking up indications of concern on the part of Gorbachev supporters over a growing conservative backlash against his reforms. For example, this theme emerged, with no prompting from me, during a June 1987 farewell call on my writer friend Vladimir Karpov. Since our mutual participation in the Shcherbitsky visit to the United States two years earlier, Karpov had become head of the Soviet Writers Union, which indicated that he was well regarded by Soviet officialdom. Karpov occupied a spacious corner office overlooking a nicely landscaped interior courtyard. He was alone when he received me, and we chatted about the contemporary Soviet literary scene over tea and cookies in his office. He then invited me to take a walk with him in the courtyard. Once we were outside and had moved away from the building, he said in a low tone of voice that he was very concerned about near-term future for reform in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev meant well, he said, but Gorbachev did not seem to appreciate the strength of the opposition he was stirring up. Anything could happen, Karpov said. Anything was possible.

There was no mistaking the depth of my friend's concern about the possibility of domestic political turmoil. I knew he was sympathetic to Gorbachev's reform effort. I also knew Karpov had extensive personal contacts in the party's top leadership group, particularly among those involved with ideology and propaganda. He therefore was in a good position to assess the strength of opposition to Gorbachev within those circles. That he did not want to discuss Gorbachev's situation in his office obviously indicated his suspicion that the KGB was monitoring his conversations.

*Overview as of Mid-1987.* Shortly after returning to the United States at the conclusion of my third Moscow assignment, I was invited to address the Commonwealth Club of California on U.S.-Soviet relations. My remarks, delivered in San Francisco on August 13, 1987, and later summarized in the club's weekly publication *The Commonwealth*, indicated my understanding of Soviet affairs as of the summer of 1987. I said "there is more potential for deep, significant change in today's Soviet Union than has been the case for the last 50 or 60 years." I pointed out that the Soviet system was still best thought of as "Stalin Incorporated," essentially the same system that Stalin created to mobilize the resources of a backward country. Gorbachev seemed determined to reform and modernize this system, but the chances of his success were uncertain. His main problem, I felt, was resistance from within the

enormous bureaucratic machine at the heart of Stalin Inc. I suggested that U.S. policy should be to test Gorbachev's claims of new political thinking about international affairs as rigorously as possible. At the same time, I felt it vital that we maintain our own strength, keeping in mind the possibility that Gorbachev, like Khrushchev before him, might go too far toward liberalization in the eyes of the *nomenklatura* and be pushed aside by them.<sup>12</sup>

### Further Perspectives on Gorbachev's Reforms

An unusual opportunity to test Gorbachev's reforms presented itself some twelve months later. Upon completing the State Department's nine-month "Senior Seminar" (intended to expose senior officers of the department and from other U.S. foreign affairs agencies to current domestic and foreign policy issues), I was detailed to the Congressional Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) Commission as director of its Soviet and Eastern European programs. The CSCE included virtually all the countries of Europe, East and West, plus the United States and Canada. As noted, the organization had succeeded in negotiating a consensus document outlining goals and norms of behavior in the fields of national security, economic relations, cultural affairs, and human rights. All of the participants, including the Soviet Union, signed this document, which purported to represent the intent of the signatories. The U.S. Congressional CSCE Commission was charged with following each aspect of the agreement, although as a practical matter the commission was most concerned with human rights practices in the Soviet Union. It consisted of six members from the House, six from the Senate, and two from the executive branch, plus some fifteen full-time staff members.

The commission was scheduled to visit the Soviet Union in the fall of 1988, and I saw the upcoming visit as a timely occasion to probe for the limits of Gorbachev's reform effort. Gorbachev's personal position seemed secure as of mid-1988. His reform credo had been spelled out in a book written in late 1987 and published internationally in early 1988.<sup>13</sup> As we in Embassy Moscow had suspected at the time of the Twenty-Seventh Party Congress, Gorbachev's personal conception of policy reform in the Soviet Union, as expressed in his book, was considerably more enlightened than the formulations set forth at the congress. In particular, it was sympathetic to many of the human rights issues of concern to the CSCE Commission.

Gorbachev underscored in this book that the world was "one whole," leav-

ing little doubt that he had abandoned the traditional Soviet conception of a world divided into two opposing socioeconomic systems, socialism and capitalism.<sup>14</sup> Gorbachev also stressed that peaceful coexistence was not a form of class struggle, claiming that Lenin repeatedly had argued that interests common to all humanity should be placed ahead of class interests.<sup>15</sup> Gorbachev called for constructive and wide-ranging dialogue between the Soviet Union and the United States and asserted that the Soviet Union encouraged contacts with exponents of different outlooks and political convictions.<sup>16</sup>

On the domestic side, Gorbachev advocated broad democratization of all aspects of Soviet society and reprinted a document on international security adopted by the Twenty-Seventh Congress that, among other things, called for “greater flow of general objective information and broader contact between peoples,” as well as the “solution in a humane and positive spirit to questions related to the reuniting of families, marriage, and the promotion of contacts between people and between organizations.”<sup>17</sup> This was sweet music to the ears of our CSCE Commission.

At the same time, Gorbachev did not abandon entirely the Marxist-Leninist worldview. He wrote, for example, that socialism and communism would eventually predominate globally through peaceful means, that the 1917 Russian revolution had been an essential part of this process, and that Stalin’s policies of forced collectivization of agriculture and forced industrialization were basically justified by the circumstances of the time.<sup>18</sup>

Internal democratization and “new political thinking” (as Gorbachev termed it) about foreign affairs had gone well beyond written declarations since my July 1987 departure from Moscow. By the end of 1987, most imprisoned or internally exiled human rights activists had been freed. Religious freedom had increased, as had the rate of Soviet Jewish emigration. The jamming of Voice of America Russian-language radio broadcasts had ceased. While prominent regime conservatives, including Ligachev and KGB chief Viktor Chebrikov, had begun to criticize publicly what they considered to be excesses of perestroika (restructuring), glasnost, and “new thinking,” Gorbachev appeared to have a solid majority in the Politburo behind him, as evidenced by his ability to promote rapidly his close advisor Alexander Yakovlev to full Politburo membership.

Movement by Gorbachev and his supporters away from Soviet traditionalism, in deed as well as in word, gave our CSCE Commission an opening to test the practical reach of Gorbachev’s reforms in the human rights field. We decided to ask our nominal Soviet hosts, the Foreign Affairs Department of

the Supreme Soviet, to take an unprecedented step and agree to face-to-face meetings between leading Soviet human rights activists and senior Soviet officials, chaired in Moscow by members of our commission, on the sensitive topics of emigration, religion, and the rule of law. Such direct encounters between leading Soviet “dissidents” and senior Soviet officials, conducted by members of the U.S. Congress, would have been hard to imagine by the time of my departure from Moscow in the summer of 1987. Yet a lot had happened in the Soviet Union during the intervening year, and the summer of 1988 seemed like a good time for the CSCE Commission to make bold proposals to its Soviet counterparts.

A commission consultant, former commission staff director Spencer Oliver, and I made a trip to Moscow in the summer of 1988 to set up the commission’s fall visit. Our initial meetings with Soviet human rights activists, arranged in advance by U.S. Embassy staff and held at the embassy, went well. We explained that we had in mind conducting simultaneously three seminars, each devoted to an aspect of the overall human rights situation. One would deal with religion, one with emigration, and one with rule of law. Each seminar would be chaired by a member of the U.S. Congress. We would ask our Soviet hosts to make available senior officials who dealt with each of these areas. Our hope was to have calm, reasoned discussion of both sides—the official and unofficial—of these sensitive issues. All of the activists with whom we met seemed enthusiastic and said they would be pleased to participate.

We then outlined our suggested program to the staff of the Supreme Soviet, the USA Division of the Foreign Ministry, and CPSU Central Committee consultant Georgy Shakhnazarov, one of Gorbachev’s personal advisors. Shakhnazarov was a specialist on CSCE affairs and also a known advocate of democratization and new political thinking. We told our official interlocutors how pleased the U.S. CSCE Commission had been over new political thinking, glasnost, democratization, and the practical results these policies had produced thus far. We also stressed that the Commission hoped its fall visit would foster these policies in a cooperative fashion. Our Soviet colleagues heard us out politely and indicated they had no objection in principle to our proposals but would have to see about the availability of appropriate Soviet officials in the three areas we had in mind (which undoubtedly meant that the matter had to be referred to a higher political level for final decision).

Following our meetings in Moscow, Spencer and I took a side trip to the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, to attend a U.S.-Soviet “people to people” conference sponsored by the Chautauqua Institution of New York. The conference

was a regularly scheduled affair rotating between the United States and the Soviet Union. It featured cultural events and sightseeing as well as public meetings and seminars devoted to issues of mutual concern. We observed mixed signals regarding the prospects for new political thinking, glasnost, and democratization at the meeting in Tbilisi.

On the positive side, our Georgian hosts provided me, as one of the few Russian speakers in the U.S. contingent, with the Russian-language text of Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's recently delivered remarks at a Foreign Ministry meeting on new thinking about foreign policy. In his remarks, Shevardnadze amplified many of the themes in Gorbachev's 1987 book, particularly the notion that shared human values must replace class struggle as the defining characteristic of international relations. He also asserted that the international image of a country was an important factor in that country's national security. Shevardnadze clearly was saying that the Soviet Union had weakened its global position by projecting an image of ideological closed-mindedness and disregard for international opinion on such matters as human rights.<sup>19</sup>

On the negative side, the delegation of Soviet officials to the Tbilisi conference conducted itself in the old style of scripted, propagandistic presentations and ritualized denials of any significant Soviet wrongdoings or shortcomings. The captain of the Soviet team was former cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, a doctrinaire woman who seemed determined to let no criticism of the Soviet Union go unanswered. I had seen this sort of performance many times when accompanying congressional delegations to meetings with Soviet officials. The new thinking advocated by Gorbachev and Shevardnadze evidently had not percolated from their high level down to the likes of Tereshkova and the team of Soviet propagandists fielded for this meeting.

Spencer and I returned to the United States unsure about the fate of our ambitious plans for the September 1988 visit of the CSCE Commission. What we could not know at the time was that we had caught the Soviet system during a momentous, although uneven, shift toward liberalization and pragmatism, a shift that would result, over the coming three years, in the end of Communist Party rule, the demise of the Soviet internal and external empires, and the emergence of Boris Yeltsin as the dominant political figure in Russia.

Toward the end of the summer, Embassy Moscow passed along the good news that our proposed program had been accepted by the Supreme Soviet and that senior Soviet officials in the fields we had specified would take part in informal roundtable discussions with Soviet human rights activists along the lines we had suggested. The Commission's two co-chairmen, Maryland

congressman Steny Hoyer and Arizona senator Dennis DeConcini, recruited ten commission members for the trip: two senators, six representatives, and two executive branch members (the head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency and an assistant secretary of commerce). Also included in our group were three congressional wives and several congressional staff members, plus several members of the CSCE Commission staff.

Given my past experience on the human rights front in the Soviet Union, I could think of many reasons why our program in Moscow might fall short or even fall apart at the last minute. To my great relief, it all came together almost exactly as we had planned. At least 150 Soviet human rights activists—including Soviet Jews who had been refused permission to emigrate, Soviet citizens refused permission to join their American spouses in the United States, Ukrainian nationalists, Crimean Tartars, Pentecostals, spouses of human rights activists in prison or in exile, members of the unofficial CSCE Monitoring Group—showed up for our initial reception in honor of the human rights activists in the spacious fireplace lounge of the new embassy compound.

The obligatory formal opening session with our official Soviet counterparts was held the next afternoon in one of the ornate Kremlin meeting halls. In contrast to the professional propagandists who had dominated the Soviet side of the Chautauqua meeting in Tbilisi, the Soviet participants in this meeting were the senior officials who dealt directly with human rights problems. They included the minister of interior and senior members of his staff, the chairman of the State Committee on Religion and Cults, the prosecutor general, the chairman of the Supreme Court, the editor in chief of the government newspaper *Izvestia*, and numerous others. The tone on both sides was characterized by candor, open-mindedness, and mutual accommodation.

The informal seminars were held at our hotel the next morning. The human rights activists were admitted into the building without incident. The Soviet officials showed up on schedule, as did the Soviet interpreters we had engaged for the occasion. The seminars were productive. Each side explained its position calmly, and the ensuing discussion, moderated by a U.S. member of Congress acting as chair, was as a rule low-key and informative. Heated disagreement was rare and erupted among the unofficial Soviet participants more frequently than between the unofficial and official Soviets. All who took part seemed pleased at the outcome. The only complaint I heard was that the consecutive translation from Russian to English and English to Russian took



too much time. Unlike the Chautauqua meeting, this unquestionably was Gorbachev-style glasnost, democratization, and new thinking in action.

The embassy officer responsible for compiling the guest list for the concluding reception at Spaso House was concerned that senior Soviet officials would not show up for the event, or would only put in a brief appearance, because of the presence of large numbers of what Soviet officialdom considered to be “dissidents.” In fact virtually all the invited officials came, stayed until the end, and seemed to enjoy conversing informally with the many human rights activists we had also invited. My Russian-speaking staff members and I circulated through the crowd, prepared to step in to defuse any personal confrontations that might take place between activists and officials. As far as we could determine, none did.

Toward the end of the reception I took aside a senior Soviet official I had known for some years to say that I hoped we had not placed him or his colleagues in a personally uncomfortable position by dealing with sensitive issues in the unprecedented way that we had. He admitted that some of his associates had had doubts about the wisdom of this undertaking, but in the end, he continued, most of them found it fascinating to meet and exchange ideas with individuals they had been dealing with only from a large bureaucratic distance.

The CSCE Commission members participating in the trip concluded, I believe with justification, that the Moscow visit had produced a “win-win-win” outcome. The human rights activists had been given a rare chance to make their case directly to high-level Soviet officials. The officials seemed to find the experience worthwhile. And our commission members learned a great deal about the current status of human rights issues in the Soviet Union. In addition, we may have provided at least a modest boost to the overall progress of reform in the Soviet Union.

The main discovery for me was how far senior Soviet officials involved in various aspects of human rights evidently had come toward a Western understanding of this sensitive field in the fourteen months since the end of my last tour of duty at Embassy Moscow. The Soviet side had passed with honors this test of the genuineness of Gorbachev’s reforms.

## Summing Up

*The View from Moscow, 1985 to 1988.* The CSCE Commission’s experiences reinforced my belief that Gorbachev was sincere about his reform effort and had

brought about real changes for the better in human rights, which had been a controversial, often contentious aspect of our bilateral relations throughout the Brezhnev years, during the brief reigns of Andropov and Chernenko, and into the initial phase of the Gorbachev period. At the same time, the Cold War episodes I had encountered as DCM in Moscow left no doubt that KGB aggressiveness and other traditional Soviet practices were still in play as of mid-1987, over two years after Gorbachev's emergence as general secretary. On balance, Gorbachev apparently was trying to reform the Stalinist conception of governance and modify the traditional Stalinist view of a bipolar world rife with hostility. An internal struggle obviously was under way within the nomenklatura elite over the substance and extent of these changes.

The spy dust experience demonstrated the continuing activities of the KGB's counterintelligence organization against us, as did the bugging of the new embassy office building and the recruitment and exploitation of Sergeant Lonetree. The unsettling official silence that followed the Chernobyl disaster disclosed tension between Gorbachev's insistence on glasnost and the traditional Soviet practice of covering up major domestic embarrassments. The unjustified arrest and detention of Nick Daniloff was true to KGB form and involved troubling, stubborn insistence on Daniloff's "guilt" by Gorbachev and all the other relevant players on the Soviet side. This was another clear sign of the continuing authority of the KGB.

The significance of the sudden withdrawal of all of our Soviet employees was less clear. While it had a negative impact on the substantive operations of the embassy and made life in Moscow more difficult for all of us, it also meant that KGB assets had less direct, day-to-day contact with American personnel at the embassy. In addition, withdrawal of Soviet employees was vastly preferable, from our point of view, to the expulsion of large numbers of our substantive American staff. I suspected—admittedly in the absence of any direct evidence one way or the other—that this asymmetrical retaliation for our expulsion of Soviet officials from the United States was influenced, in effect to our advantage, by Foreign Minister Shevardnadze and by Anatoly Dobrynin, who had just returned to Moscow from his long service as Soviet ambassador in Washington to head the Party Central Committee's International Department.

*The View from the U.S. Senate and from Academia.* I left the CSCE Commission and retired from the Foreign Service in the spring of 1989 to work for Senator Sam Nunn of Georgia, who was then Chairman of the Armed Services Committee and also a senior member of the Senate Select Committee on

Intelligence. I served as one of the Senator's advisors on the Armed Services Committee staff, specializing in Soviet and post-Soviet affairs as well as foreign affairs generally. I also represented Senator Nunn on the staff of the Intelligence Committee. I left the Senate at the end of 1995 to work as research professor at the Center for Nonproliferation Studies at the Monterey Institute of International Studies and to direct the Center's nonproliferation programs in the former Soviet Union.

My duties in the Senate and later at Monterey involved numerous trips to Moscow and other parts of the former Soviet Union, and many meetings with former Soviet officials, scientists, and researchers during the 1990s. For example, I accompanied Senator Nunn on frequent visits to the former Soviet Union and assisted him in receiving many visitors from Russia and the other newly independent countries that formerly were part of the USSR. While at the Monterey Institute, I arranged several meetings in Moscow between key U.S. Senate committee staff members and their Duma and Federation Council (the lower and upper houses of the Russian parliament) counterparts on such topics as legislative oversight of the executive branch and the mechanics of ratifying controversial bilateral arms control treaties. We also brought carefully selected individuals from the post-Soviet states to Monterey for intensive study of nonproliferation issues. The end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet regime finally had let the genie of intellectual curiosity and hunger for intellectual growth out of its bottle. It was hard to see how a successor Russian regime could restrain that genie without resorting to Soviet-style control and coercion.

The chief impression I gained from these encounters was that with the demise of the Soviet system many former regime functionaries welcomed new opportunities to interact with American counterparts and as a rule were prepared to discuss frankly their experiences under the Soviet regime. They, and the younger students from Russia and other post-Soviet countries studying in Monterey, were intrigued to learn of American experience and thinking in their respective fields of interest. In addition, most of them were keenly interested in Western perspectives on Russian and Soviet history and on the Cold War, given the one-sided interpretation of these matters they had been subjected to prior to the Soviet empire's fall.

My day-to-day responsibilities on the staff of the Armed Services Committee (1989–95) did not afford me the time to search for the underlying causes of the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet empire. I began to think systematically about these issues and their historical context only after

leaving the Senate, and particularly when I offered a graduate course at the Monterey Institute in 1997 on the demise of the Soviet Union. The research and analysis that I began at that time became a major preoccupation following my retirement from the institute in mid-1998 and led to further thought and study as I attempted to examine the Cold War's end and the empire's fall in the light of my experience with and resultant understanding of the Soviet regime. The results are reflected in the following two sections.



**PART TWO** Reflection:  
A Neglected Psychological Perspective



## Introduction

The four chapters in Part 1 sketched the evolution of my understanding of the Soviet regime. The four chapters in Part 2 distill from that understanding an analytical perspective for assessment of the causes of the end of the Cold War and collapse of the Soviet Union. My comprehension of Soviet reality has shaped my thinking about these causes in several ways. None of these insights is novel, but taken together they direct attention to a psychological dimension that in my view has been inadequately explored.

First, I found that the typical Soviet way of thinking about the individual, the regime, and the outside world was, as I have noted, markedly different from the American (as well as the Bulgarian and Finnish) outlook and needed to be understood on its own terms—to the extent it is possible for an outside observer to set aside preconceptions and enter empathetically into an alternative psychological universe. In this perspective, the “reality” of the Soviet Union came down to men and women—from powerful Kremlin rulers to humble collective farm workers—functioning in a unique historical, geographical, and cultural environment on the basis of a correspondingly distinctive psychological outlook. It followed that an attempt to analyze change in the Soviet system should undertake to understand how and why Soviet psychological outlooks had changed.

Second, given the pyramidal structure of Soviet political power, the conservatism of the *nomenklatura*, and the overall passivity of Soviet society during the Brezhnev period, fundamental shifts in regime policy—if they took place at all—most likely would have to be preceded by corresponding shifts in the thinking of decision makers at the apex of the pyramid: the senior members of the *nomenklatura* and above all the general secretary himself. Because of the authoritarian structure and apparent stability of the Soviet regime, in other words, any major reform almost surely would have to take place from the top down, with the general secretary as the leading agent of change.

Third, I was convinced that the Bolshevik belief system, broadly defined, had great salience for the general secretary and his colleagues. This, plus the



structured, interrelated nature of that belief system as I came to understand it, led me to believe that change in regime policy would be preceded by change in the leadership's conception of the regime and its governance. That is, the initial change would have to occur in the matrix of political assumptions and attitudes held by the general secretary and his associates in the senior leadership of the party.

Fourth, in light of the unique power and prestige of the general secretary, success or failure of reform would depend in large part upon his personal convictions, political skills, and personality traits. With the many demands on the general secretary's time and attention, the fate of reform would depend as well on the conceptions and personal qualities of his inner circle of assistants involved in the reform process.

Finally, because of *nomenklatura* inertia, together with popular apathy, the task of translating conceptual reform at the top into stimuli that would bring about significant modifications in behavior throughout the regime and society would, to say the least, pose a daunting challenge.

Thus my understanding of the Soviet system led me to the working hypothesis that the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet regime stemmed essentially from Gorbachev's attempt to reform the regime's official conception of governance, and that analysis of the war's end and the regime's fall therefore should focus on this aspect of Gorbachev's mind-set. Proceeding from this understanding, Part 2 examines the background, development, and nature of Gorbachev's political outlook. The chapters in this section consider Gorbachev's restructuring of Soviet foreign and domestic policy in terms of the concepts and categories, the basic framework, and habits of political thought characteristic of the top Soviet leadership.

As I shall explain in more detail in the following chapter, I have chosen to label this analytical approach "psychological" rather than "ideological" because of the controversy and negativity that the term "ideology" can arouse. In addition, I agree with my Garmisch institute teacher Abdurrahman Avtorkhanov that the Soviet leadership outlook extended beyond the usual meaning of ideology, which in the context of Western study of the Soviet system referred mainly to Marxist-Leninist doctrine. As Avtorkhanov properly insisted, the Soviet leadership's belief system also embraced the institutions, roles, and practices developed to carry out the dictates of doctrine. And since the Soviet regime functioned largely on the basis of one-man rule, psychology—in the sense of individual interpretation of official doctrine, along with individual personality traits—counted for a great deal. As will be reviewed in

the chapters that follow, Stalin's view of Marxism-Leninism and its relevance to governance was different from that of Lenin. Khrushchev of course differed from Stalin on these matters, as did Brezhnev from Khrushchev, and, most dramatically, Gorbachev from Brezhnev.

The outside observer cannot know all of the factors that determined the Soviet leadership's outlook and shaped its decisions. In particular, one can only speculate, mostly on the basis of indirect evidence, about the personality traits of key Soviet leaders. Hence, I believe that the outside analyst should focus primarily on the cognitive psychological dimension—on continuity and change in the leadership's frame of meaning, on the categories and concepts through which Soviet leaders construed their world and interacted with it. The critical question is whether the categories and concepts that the outside observer can identify and examine were over time sufficiently determinative of Kremlin decision making so that our understanding of them will advance our understanding of that decision making and the results it produced.

My strong affirmative answer to this question might be regarded as suspect, since, as I noted in the introduction to Part 1, my academic work in the early 1960s had persuaded me that the official Soviet outlook was an important determinant of Kremlin policy and therefore should be taken seriously. One purpose of the book's initial chapters was to suggest how my experience in the field tended to corroborate this conviction. Still, one might reasonably argue that given my academic prejudices, I was inclined to focus on aspects of Bulgarian and Soviet reality that appeared to fit my preconceptions, while ignoring or explaining away conflicting aspects.

There is no way to disprove such bias. The best one can do, it seems to me, is to consider alternative approaches with as much of an open mind as one can muster and then to document one's analysis as thoroughly as the available evidence allows. In this spirit, Chapter 5 contrasts my approach with several alternative analytical perspectives. It then suggests how the psychological perspective, as I have construed it, can assist us in understanding the Cold War's end and the empire's fall. Chapter 6 outlines the formation of the Soviet conception of governance during the early years of Stalin's rule, noting its relationship to the political culture of prerevolutionary Russia and its grounding in Leninist theory and practice. Chapter 7 reviews the evolution of that conception during the reigns of Khrushchev and Brezhnev. Chapter 8 examines Gorbachev's understanding of the official conception and his determined but only partially successful effort to correct what he understood to be its

basic deformations. Chapters 6–8 also highlight the well-documented personality traits of Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev.

How, it might be asked, can one assess the overall aptness of this approach? Political scientists have long grappled with such issues, and some have proposed the following criteria for assessing a given depiction of political reality. Is it coherent? Is it logical? Does it fit with the evidence? Is the evidence cited appropriate and reasonably full (recognizing that historical evidence can never be complete)? Does the given depiction reveal inadequacies in alternative depictions?<sup>1</sup> These criteria strike me as the right ones to apply.

# 5

## Comprehending Another Political World

### Competing Approaches to Making Sense of the Evidence

*Areas of Consensus.* One can easily construct in retrospect a chronology of events and see, with the advantage of 20/20 hindsight, a broad pattern to the end of the Cold War and the fall of the empire. While striving to revitalize the Soviet system, Gorbachev declared that the Soviet Union no longer regarded the United States and the West as its enemies, thus in essence bringing the Cold War to a close. At the same time, Gorbachev's domestic reforms weakened the traditional Soviet order, diminishing the centripetal forces that held the system together while allowing potentially destructive centrifugal forces to grow to the point at which they ruptured the Warsaw Pact and then broke apart the Soviet Union itself. As signs of impending systemic crisis became unmistakable, Gorbachev (with minor exceptions) opted not to use coercion to keep the empire from falling apart.

This essentially is what happened. But why? What caused Gorbachev to withdraw the Soviet Union from the Cold War, undermine the Soviet regime's traditional foundations, then refuse to apply force as the regime unmistakably commenced to wobble and crack?

There is little dispute regarding most of the evidence pertinent to these questions. Gorbachev was clearly a relatively young, energetic, and gifted leader, determined to reinvigorate the listless regime he inherited when he was selected by his Politburo colleagues to become general secretary of the Communist Party in March 1985. Most outside analysts, and many within the former Soviet Union, agree that the Soviet system was based on a flawed conception of historical development and by the mid-1980s was in failing health. Virtually all observers concur that the force of nationalism in Eastern Europe and throughout the Soviet Union was instrumental in causing the Soviet empire to rupture.

In addition, it is generally agreed that Boris Yeltsin became a courageous opponent of Communist Party rule well before Gorbachev was prepared to abandon the party. Upon Yeltsin's selection as chairman of the Russian parliament in mid-1990, and then his popular election as President of Russia about a year later, he served as a rallying point for those who felt Gorbachev was too accommodating to regime conservatives or was otherwise lacking as a reformer. Most observers concur that Yeltsin played a vital role in defeating the right-wing forces behind the August 1991 coup against Gorbachev, in pushing aside the party nomenklatura in Russia, and then in pushing aside Gorbachev himself. Most observers also believe that the Western policy of containment, asserted with relative vigor and augmented with economic warfare and other confrontational policies during Ronald Reagan's first term as president, must have figured to some extent in the thinking of Gorbachev and his colleagues as they struggled to restructure and revitalize the Soviet economy.

*Two Fundamentally Different Analytical Perspectives.* Basic differences of opinion have arisen, however, over how these factors should be weighted and how in fact they combined in a causal pattern that brought about the end of the Cold War and led to the demise of the USSR. A brief review of two differing schools of thought will illustrate the point. The first school holds that Gorbachev, a dedicated communist, was forced by pressure from the United States to undertake reform of an unreformable totalitarian system. The result was the regime's growing inability to compete in the Cold War, a weakness that led to the regime's collapse. In this view, the key issue was the interplay between an inflexible, declining Soviet system and inexorable, outside pressures for change. The focus is on what political scientist Robert Jervis has called the "operational milieu," the world in which policy was carried out, rather than on the "psychological milieu," the world as the key actors—in this case, Mikhail Gorbachev and his advisors—understood it.<sup>1</sup>

A second school rejects the idea that the West played the leading role in the empire's demise and argues instead that the life of the Soviet system could have been extended had Gorbachev taken decisive measures to do so. From this perspective, the key question is why Gorbachev chose not take such measures. Emphasis is placed on the psychological rather than the operational milieu.

An example of the first approach is provided by Robert Gates in his extensive and illuminating memoir *From the Shadows*. Gates began his career as a junior analyst of Soviet affairs at the CIA, served in increasingly senior posi-

tions at the agency and on the National Security Council staff under four presidents, from Nixon to Bush (senior), and wound up as deputy NSC advisor and then CIA director under the first President Bush (and subsequently was appointed secretary of defense by President George W. Bush shortly after the November 2006 congressional elections).<sup>2</sup>

Gates sums up his lengthy involvement with Soviet affairs by stating that America's valid and ultimately realized purpose in the Cold War was to contain a truly evil empire so that, denied new conquests, the inherent weaknesses of Soviet communism would ultimately bring that empire down. In Gates's opinion, Ronald Reagan's strategic defense initiative symbolized for the Kremlin a "broad resurgence of the West" and convinced even some conservative members of the Soviet leadership that major internal changes were needed. Soviet leaders thus were forced by SDI and other U.S. pressures to begin making changes at home that ultimately resulted in the collapse of the whole shaky structure.<sup>3</sup>

As for Gorbachev, Gates portrays him as a traditional though reform-minded Soviet leader, a sincere communist whose goal "was to restore the Soviet Union to good health politically and economically and thereby allow it to retain its place as a superpower with global interests and ambitions, a communist superpower in more dimensions than military strength."<sup>4</sup> In Gates's opinion, Gorbachev's role in the empire's collapse was important primarily because of the impact upon him, as general secretary and USSR president, of Reagan administration policies, not because of Gorbachev's unique personal outlook and motivations.<sup>5</sup>

*The Reagan Factor.* A related view focuses on President Reagan and his policies as the prime cause of the Cold War's end and the Soviet empire's fall. One advocate of this position is historian Peter Schweizer, whose two books—*Victory: The Reagan Administration's Secret Strategy That Hastened the Collapse of the Soviet Union*, published in 1994, and *Reagan's War: The Epic Story of His Forty-Year Struggle and Final Triumph over Communism*, published in 2002—undertake to demonstrate Reagan's leading role in bringing communism down. Schweizer traces the history of Reagan's lifelong opposition to communism, beginning with his efforts to combat the influence of alleged American communists in Hollywood in the 1940s. Schweizer describes the various policies and programs developed during the first Reagan administration to confront and roll back Soviet communism—many of which I was personally familiar with as deputy director of the State Department's Soviet Desk when the Reagan administration took office and for roughly two years

thereafter. Schweizer gives Gorbachev “enormous credit for choosing to allow the peaceful demise of the Soviet empire,” without trying to explain why Gorbachev made this choice. Schweizer concludes that Ronald Reagan won the Cold War and scored the final triumph over communism.<sup>6</sup>

Schweizer suggests that the examination of four questions will show that Reagan should be given most of the credit for these events: Why did the Kremlin feel the need for radical reform when it did? How did Gorbachev come to power? What are we to make of Gorbachev’s continued insistence that his goal was to reform communism and not terminate it? Why did the Cold War end on Reagan’s terms and not Gorbachev’s?<sup>7</sup> We shall return to these questions in Chapter 9, after assessing the respective parts played by Gorbachev and Reagan in ending the Cold War and causing the empire’s collapse.

*The Gorbachev Factor and the Importance of Ideas.* A prominent advocate of the second school, which regards the thinking of the Soviet leadership as the appropriate focus for analysis, is academic specialist in Soviet and Russian affairs Jerry Hough, professor of political science at Duke University and non-resident senior fellow in the Foreign Policy Studies Program at the Brookings Institution. In a lengthy, meticulous, and sometimes contrarian analysis of the period 1985–91, Hough asserts flatly that neither liberalization of Soviet foreign policy nor regime collapse was caused by policies of the Reagan administration. Instead, Hough argues that liberalization and collapse were caused ultimately by “changes in the attitudes and values of the Soviet elite and the rest of the population that were decades in the making by the greater attraction for an educated population of what are called ‘Western values’ and what Gorbachev called ‘universal human values.’”<sup>8</sup>

Hough explains that his study therefore concentrates “on the intellectual assumptions that led the leadership to take the steps it did in reform and that led it to fail to resist the evident disintegration that began in 1990.”<sup>9</sup> In the end, Hough professes to be mystified by Gorbachev’s thinking, noting that it probably will never be understood with complete confidence. Hough concludes, tentatively, that perhaps by 1986 or thereabouts Gorbachev and his close advisors had lost faith in communist ideology, in Lenin, and in the command-administrative system that characterized the Soviet regime, and for this reason refused to act to save the system.<sup>10</sup>

Other students of the Soviet period have stressed the importance of ideas in understanding the regime’s collapse. For example, Martin Malia’s interpretative history *The Soviet Tragedy* underscores the role of ideology in bring-

ing about the Soviet system's demise. However, Malia treats Gorbachev and the other key Soviet leaders largely as passive instruments of a historically doomed attempt to build socialism in Russia, while I think it essential to trace the evolution of leadership outlooks, culminating in Gorbachev's reform effort. Paul Hollander's *Political Will and Personal Belief: The Decline and Fall of Soviet Communism* uses case studies of personal disillusionment to demonstrate the importance of ideas in the Soviet system's failure. Hollander does not, however, undertake on this basis a comprehensive analysis of the termination of the Cold War or of the empire's collapse.

Two scholars who have paid careful attention to the evolution of Gorbachev's political thinking are Archie Brown, in his book *The Gorbachev Factor*, and Robert English, in his volume *Russia and the Idea of the West*. What is lacking in these and similar accounts is an analytical framework adequate to capture the overall structure and essential features of the Soviet outlook, to illuminate this outlook's historical evolution, and to explain the outlook's relationship to Soviet policy making and reform.

Four other studies of Soviet leadership thinking deserve mention. The first is Igor Klyamkin's essay "Why It Is Difficult to Speak in Truth," which characterizes the traditional Kremlin outlook from Stalin to Brezhnev as "War Communism," in which the present was tragically sacrificed to the future. The second is *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War* by Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, which considers the Kremlin outlook as a "revolutionary-imperial paradigm." The third, Vladislav Zubok's *A Failed Empire*, employs the revolutionary-imperial paradigm notion in a comprehensive review of the Cold War, including the Gorbachev period, from the Soviet perspective. The fourth is Melvyn Leffler's *For the Soul of Mankind*, which analyzes five Cold War turning points from the perspectives of the key U.S. and Soviet decision makers. These authors do not focus as specifically on the content of the Soviet worldview as I believe is necessary for understanding the Cold War's end and the empire's fall, but their respective approaches and findings are broadly consistent with my own. In particular, each of these studies emphasizes the importance throughout the Cold War of the psychology, and particularly the doctrinal aspect, of the Kremlin's mind-set.

### Focus on the Soviet Conception of Governance

As will be examined in some detail in Part 3, I believe the factors causing the end of the Cold War and of the Soviet empire, when viewed within the Soviet



leadership's frame of meaning, formed a constellation of causal forces at variance with the constellation suggested by Gates, Schweizer, and others who emphasize the operational rather than the psychological milieu and therefore give major weight to the forcefulness of Ronald Reagan's policies. I do not mean to imply that the context, domestic as well as international, of Gorbachev's decision making was inconsequential. I do think, however, that "outside" influences, including that of Reagan, should be weighted in the overall causal equation according to their actual impact—as best one can determine it—upon Soviet leadership thinking and resultant decisions.

More specifically, while I share Hough's belief that a key to understanding the events of 1985–91 is to understand why Gorbachev stopped short of using force to keep the empire together, I have a different sense of Gorbachev's motives. It does appear to be true, as Chapter 9 will discuss, that several of Gorbachev's advisors had pretty much given up on communist ideology. This was not the case, in my view, for Gorbachev himself. To the contrary, I believe he was thinking inside an ideological framework—inside the official Soviet conception of governance as he understood it—throughout his rule. It is true that the substance of his outlook was undergoing significant change. Toward the end of Gorbachev's reign, for example, it became clear that he was no longer a "dedicated communist" in the sense that Gates and Schweizer use the phrase. As will be explored in Chapter 8, while Gorbachev severely weakened the framework's cohesion, he himself was unable to break free from its confines.

*The Problem of Employing Appropriate Terminology.* The book's final chapter will contend that one of the lessons to be drawn from our difficulty in understanding the Cold War's end and the Soviet empire's demise is that many Americans, and most American policy makers, are disinclined to consider the psychological context, the mental universe in which others formulate domestic and foreign policy. We seem to have a national aversion to setting aside temporarily our personal convictions and suspending our skepticism about opposing beliefs, and trying to fathom the latter. One byproduct of this aversion is the difficulty of finding terminology in the contemporary American lexicon—apart from the specialized lexicons of cognitive psychology and neuroscience—that captures adequately what I believe was the holistic, structured, interlocking nature of the official Soviet outlook. Our limited vocabulary regarding this psychological realm, in other words, stems from the disinclination of our analytical and policy communities to think much about it.

Numerous former Soviet insiders, including Kremlin advisor Georgy Arbatov and Gorbachev assistant Anatoly Chernyaev, have used the term “system” to describe the Soviet reality they experienced. This notion is too general to be of much help in conveying to an outsider the nature of the official Soviet mind-set. What would be more helpful is a concept that encompasses the Kremlin’s worldview, contributes to an understanding of its origins and evolution, sheds light on its interconnected nature as well as on the significance of those components Gorbachev tried to restructure, and helps us to understand why his efforts failed.

The concept of “ideology” leaves much to be desired: it had a specific meaning in Soviet theory and practice, and its significance was argued over so heatedly by Western analysts of Soviet politics during the Cold War that it still tends to be value-loaded when applied to Soviet and Russian affairs.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, as used in social science generally, the term often carries negative connotations, conjuring up notions of psychological distortion, rigidity, and manipulation, and causing Clifford Geertz to ask “what such an egregiously loaded concept is doing among the analytical tools of a social science that, on the basis of a claim to cold-blooded objectivity, advances its theoretical interpretations as ‘undistorted.’”<sup>12</sup>

For these reasons, I prefer to use a neutral label, “conception of governance,” to refer to that part of the Soviet leadership’s frame of meaning that concerned political authority and decision making. Drawing upon his anthropological work, Geertz attempted to give “ideology” a specific meaning as a system of “interacting symbols, as patterns of interworking meanings.”<sup>13</sup> He suggests that in the political realm, the function of ideology “is to make an autonomous politics possible by providing the authoritative concepts that render it meaningful, the suasive images by means of which it can be sensibly grasped.” He thus finds that ideologies “are, most distinctively, maps of problematic social reality and matrices for the creation of collective conscience.” And “[w]hether, in any particular case, the map is accurate or the conscience creditable is a separate question.”<sup>14</sup> I believe these refinements capture well the realities of Soviet political thought as I came to understand it, and my usage of “conception of governance” will incorporate Geertz’s sense of ideology, although for the reasons cited I believe the term itself is best used sparingly.

*Thomas Kuhn’s Concept of Paradigm.* “Conception of governance” in my usage will also draw upon the thinking of another groundbreaking scholar, historian and philosopher of natural science Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn’s develop-

ment of the notion of “scientific paradigm,” as originally set forth in his classic book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, is directly relevant to analysis of Soviet leadership attitudes because this leadership—from Lenin to Gorbachev—was convinced that its official outlook was scientific. The men who ruled the Soviet Union—however outlandish it may now seem—regarded Soviet Marxism as a genuine science that applied to nature as well as to society. They viewed their political doctrine as having a scientific foundation that included one set of laws, values, and techniques obligatory for all members of the ruling group (more about the substance of Soviet political doctrine in the following chapter). They considered the Soviet regime’s key institutions—the political and propaganda apparatus, the economic and military production apparatus, and the coercive apparatus—as logical manifestations of their official worldview and therefore as integral parts of their conception of governance. In short, they regarded themselves as members of a scientific community, as scientific practitioners, essentially in the sense that Kuhn describes these concepts.

Admittedly, the idea of “paradigm” as Kuhn employed it is not ideal for our purposes. It has been used widely and often imprecisely since Kuhn’s book first appeared in the early 1960s. In fact, Kuhn later restricted his own use of the term, noting that he had totally lost control of it.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the word’s “pre-Kuhnian” meaning referred generally to a pattern or model and specifically to grammatical systems of noun and verb inflection—senses of the word different from the meaning Kuhn gave to it.

I recall vividly a meeting in Senator Nunn’s office, during which one of my colleagues on the staff of the Armed Services Committee casually used the word “paradigm.” The senator—one of the clearest thinkers I have encountered—abruptly interrupted the conversation to say he disliked that term because it was so vague and hoped none of us would use it again. Senator Nunn surely had a point. A check of the Internet in mid-2002, using Google, produced 44,900 hits for the words “Soviet paradigm.” A perusal of the first 800 items showed that the term “paradigm” had been used most frequently to refer in a general sense to a cluster of assumptions or a theory. It was rarely discussed with specific reference to Kuhn’s analysis of scientific revolutions. One found, for example, phrases like “Euro-Centric paradigm,” “rational actor paradigm,” “religio-moral paradigm of sex education,” “Soviet urban planning paradigm,” “mutually assured destruction paradigm,” “Soviet folk heritage paradigm,” and on and on. Kuhn’s related concept of “paradigm shift” also has been used frequently and imprecisely.

Senator Nunn's dislike of the term probably also reflected his awareness of another unfortunate tendency, beyond overuse and imprecision, connected with abstract concepts like "paradigm" in contemporary social science. Such notions tend to drift away from reality and take on a life of their own. As a graduate student in political science, a discipline that seemed to me overloaded with esoteric concepts and theories, I encountered a pithy criticism of this sort of thinking that has stayed with me ever since. The sociologist C. Wright Mills, I believe somewhere in his book *The Sociological Imagination*, criticized what he termed "Grand Theory" in social science along the following lines. Semantics, Mills noted, deals with the relationship between a word and reality. Syntax, on the other hand, deals with the relationship between a word and other words. The problem with Grand Theory, Mills concluded, is that it is drunk on syntax and blind to semantics.

Mindful of Mills's warning, I nonetheless have chosen to employ the concepts of paradigm and paradigm shift, largely as Kuhn defined and used them, because I believe they are useful tools—if cautiously utilized—for understanding how the evolution of thinking in the Soviet leadership led to the end of the Cold War and of the Soviet empire. Together with Kuhn's many admirers, I find that his analysis of scientific thinking captures important general features of the way we all tend to construe the world. These features include a structured mind-set that shapes the perceptions and the behavior of its adherents, and the notion of slow, evolutionary change within a worldview that eventually gives way to rapid, "revolutionary" change. If this sounds like Hegelian or Marxist dialectics, we should note that Kuhn made no claim to philosophical originality, pointing out that his aim was to apply the idea of periodization by revolutionary breaks, taken from other fields of history, to the study of scientific history.<sup>16</sup>

An additional advantage to this approach is that by focusing on cognition and decision making, one is able to utilize recent psychological research and theorizing regarding these matters, supplementary to but apart from Kuhn's work in the field.<sup>17</sup>

Kuhn describes a scientific paradigm as a "disciplinary matrix" that defines and structures one's overall understanding of a given field of science. "Disciplinary" refers to the idea that a paradigm is "the common possession of the practitioners of a particular discipline." "Matrix" refers to the notion that a paradigm "is composed of ordered elements of various sorts." As Kuhn explains the concept, "it stands for the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given scientific commu-

nity.” It is what a student studies to prepare for membership in a scientific community in which he or she will later practice. Among a given body of scientists, one seldom finds disagreement over fundamentals, because their paradigm involves a commitment to one set of rules and standards for scientific practice. It involves, in other words, a commitment to a body of conventional wisdom. Such a paradigm tells the scientist “about the entities that nature does and does not contain and about the ways in which those entities behave.” It provides a map that guides research and experimentation.<sup>18</sup>

*Similarities Between Kuhn’s Scientific Paradigm and the Soviet Conception of Governance.* As with Kuhn’s general conception of scientific paradigm, the Soviet conception of governance informed the regime’s leaders about the entities that their political world did and did not contain and described how the relevant entities behaved. Just as Kuhn’s theory of scientific paradigms illuminates the intellectual history of the natural sciences, so too does it shed light on the intellectual history of the Soviet quasi-science of governance. As Kuhn’s notion of paradigm captures the structure and the evolution of thought in the natural sciences, I believe it also captures the structure and evolution of official political thought in the Soviet Union.

Of course the Soviet leadership was engaged in formulating and implementing policy, not in the rigorous experimentation typical of physical science. Personal, group, and national interests obviously played an important role in Kremlin decision making, as did leadership perceptions of the domestic and international environment. Yet these interests and perceptions were expressed and acted upon within the confines of a conception of governance that amounted to a Kuhnian quasi-scientific paradigm—irrespective of how faulty the science was. The Soviet conception of governance was a single matrix of interconnected categories and values that created the virtual universe in which decisions were made. It involved a specific scientific community, in the sense that all senior Communist Party decision makers, headed by the general secretary, the Politburo, and the Secretariat, were expected to observe the laws, values, and techniques of the paradigm by virtue of their respective positions inside the system.

Like Kuhn’s model scientific community, the practitioners of the Soviet paradigm saw themselves and were seen by outsiders as “uniquely responsible for the pursuit of a set of shared goals, including the training of their successors.”<sup>19</sup> In Geertz’s terms, the Soviet conception of governance, as the men in the Kremlin had internalized it, represented a scientific map of problematic social reality and derivative matrices for creation of collective conscience and facilitation of change in reality.

In a 1969 postscript to the first edition of his book, Kuhn specifically addressed the issue of the applicability of his paradigm theory to fields other than natural science. While encouraging the use of his ideas in other realms, Kuhn warned that scientific development was strikingly different from that in other areas. To illustrate the point, he noted that there were few competing schools of thought in the developed sciences, that members of a scientific community were the only audience and only judges of that community's work, and that scientific education was a special qualification for membership in a scientific community. Kuhn concluded that while none of these features was necessarily unique to science, in their totality these and other features set the activity apart.<sup>20</sup>

The official Soviet worldview certainly was broader in scope and more rigid than the typical disciplinary matrix in natural science. At the same time, there soon were few competing schools of thought with which the Soviet outlook had to contend—for the obvious reason that as Stalin proceeded to construct and bring to life his conception of governance, he ruthlessly eliminated opposing views within the Bolshevik leadership and throughout the country. Under Stalin and his successors, the senior Soviet leadership group was the ultimate audience and judge of performance. In addition, ideological education was mandatory not only for members of the ruling class but for virtually all members of Soviet society.

While the Soviet disciplinary matrix obviously was not a valid science, its practitioners were required to consider it not only as genuine science but as the *only* genuine science—a body of knowledge uniquely relevant to all social phenomena as well as to all physical phenomena. The official Soviet worldview therefore can be regarded as a grossly exaggerated scientific paradigm, as Kuhn uses the term, rather than as an activity to which Kuhn's analysis should not be applied because the activity, as assessed from the outside, was not genuinely scientific. In other words, the relevance of Kuhn's analysis to the Soviet situation depends upon the conviction of the Soviet leadership that their efforts were scientifically based and that they were part of a like-minded professional community. Evidence regarding the existence of such a conviction will be reviewed later in this chapter.

*Kuhn's Concept of Paradigm Shift.* Kuhn's analysis of the shift from one scientific paradigm to another is particularly relevant to an exploration of how changes in Soviet leadership thinking contributed to the end of the Cold War and of the Soviet empire. On the basis of his study of the history of science, Kuhn suggests that paradigm change takes place when practitioners

within a given paradigm come across novel facts or events that violate paradigm-induced expectations. Confronted with serious anomalies, adherents may begin to lose faith in the value of the current paradigm and to consider alternatives. Defenders of the existing paradigm can be expected to devise modifications that eliminate the apparent conflict, convinced that reality somehow can be shoved into the categories that the existing paradigm provides.<sup>21</sup>

Kuhn suggests that a paradigm crisis in science tends to be resolved in one of three ways: the anomaly is considered too difficult and is essentially set aside and ignored; a solution is found within the existing paradigm; or a new paradigm emerges. When a scientific paradigm changes, Kuhn finds that the instigators of change usually are young or new to the crisis-ridden field, so that practice has committed them less deeply than most to the worldview and rules of the old paradigm.<sup>22</sup>

According to Kuhn's analysis, a scientific paradigm functions in one of two modes. In the "normal" mode, the adherents focus on those phenomena that the paradigm has shown to be particularly revealing of the nature of things, on confirming the paradigm's predictions, and on the incremental elaboration of paradigm theory. In its normal mode, a paradigm can insulate its community from important problems that cannot be stated in terms of the conceptual and instrumental tools the paradigm supplies; it can set boundaries beyond which solutions to problems become inadmissible. Thus it may have dysfunctional features that can bring the decisions of its practitioners into conflict with reality.<sup>23</sup>

In the "revolutionary" mode, the essence of the paradigm is challenged, and the entire disciplinary matrix may be replaced by a new conceptual network with which scientists view the world. Kuhn points out that, as a rule, the decision to reject one paradigm, one disciplinary matrix, is simultaneously a decision to accept another. That decision involves comparison of both paradigms with reality, plus comparison with each other. When the transition is complete, the practitioners will have changed their view of the field, its methods, and its goals. A paradigm shift will have produced what Kuhn terms a "scientific revolution."<sup>24</sup>

I have referred earlier to the historian of ideas Isaiah Berlin and his advocacy of understanding the past by understanding the outlooks of key historical figures. It should be noted here that in his 1960 essay "The Romantic Revolution: A Crisis in the History of Modern Thought," Berlin discusses the phenomenon of a fundamental shift in outlook in terms similar to those in

Kuhn's basic work on paradigm shifts, first published in 1962 (although Kuhn does not refer to Berlin and may not have been aware of Berlin's thinking on this topic, as this particular Berlin essay was not widely available as of 1962). Instead of "paradigm shift," Berlin uses the term "turning-point," which he defines as a "transformation of outlook," a process that goes deeper than the solving of even central questions. For Berlin, a "turning-point" involves "a radical change in the entire conceptual framework within which the questions have been posed; new ideas, new words, new relationships in terms of which the old problems are not so much solved as made to look remote, obsolete and, at times, unintelligible, so that the agonizing problems and doubts of the past seem queer ways of thought, or confusions that belong to a world which has gone."<sup>25</sup> It seems to me this definition nicely captures and helps to clarify the essential meaning of Kuhn's notion of paradigm shift.

I know of no comparable application of Kuhn's thinking to analysis of the official Soviet outlook. In his study of change in Soviet thinking about foreign affairs, Steven Kull briefly notes the usefulness of Kuhn's theories in understanding such change but does not elaborate the point.<sup>26</sup> Historian Sheila Fitzpatrick, in describing Soviet life in the 1930s, uses the term "Stalinism" in the sense of a Kuhnian paradigm, without specific reference to Kuhn's concept. She employs "Stalinism," much as I shall use the phrases "Stalinist paradigm" and "Stalinist conception of government," to connote "the complex of institutions, structures, and rituals," including Communist Party rule and Marxist-Leninist ideology, that made up the habitat of *Homo sovieticus*.<sup>27</sup> More broadly, political scientist Sheldon Wolin some years ago proposed applying Kuhn's theories to political systems in general, including their practices, institutions, and structures of authority.<sup>28</sup>

More broadly still, psychotherapist and specialist on genocide I. W. Charny has used the concept of paradigm—without reference to Kuhn—to describe the general way the human mind is organized. Charny defines a psychological paradigm as "a single sociobiological pattern of organizing thoughts, emotions, and experience," as establishing the way "we frame, define, interpret, and organize our life experiences."<sup>29</sup>

Charny's approach suggests the usefulness of the paradigm concept—for psychoanalysts and students of genocide as well as for historians of science and pseudo-science—in capturing the notion of a structure of interrelated mental categories and attitudes that define a specific psychological outlook. He points out, "The overall notion that mind is lawfully organized along certain lines of structure and dynamic principles is . . . a cornerstone of many



psychologists, as well as linguists (for example, Noam Chomsky), as well as philosophers.”<sup>30</sup> Charny’s work suggests, in short, that the paradigm concept goes beyond syntax to refer to actually existing, universal aspects of human thinking.

*Syntax and Semantics.* At this juncture, we should confront the demon of Grand Theory by moving from the syntax of Geertz’s and Kuhn’s approaches to considering the semantics of the argument to be developed in the following three chapters. The purpose of these chapters is to examine the Soviet conception of governance that existed in the minds of the ruling elite. The most senior among this group—including the party general secretary and his key advisors, Politburo and Secretariat members, and leading officials of the Central Committee apparatus—were the key “practitioners” of the conception. I believe their political mind-sets can be fairly said to have resembled Kuhn’s notion of a scientific paradigm, in that they involved a structured matrix of assumptions about the Soviet regime and its place in the world, as well as their own personal roles in that regime, that were regarded as scientific.

We shall consider three manifestations of this mind-set. The first is the somewhat disembodied authoritative conception as found in official interpretations of Marxism-Leninism, set forth in the major speeches and writings of the senior leadership, spelled out at party congresses and Central Committee meetings, articulated in authoritative textbooks and party publications, and overseen by the large cadre of nomenklatura specializing in ideology and propaganda. This was, in effect, the conception’s sacred scripture and its authorized interpretation.

The second manifestation consists of the personal conceptions of top party leaders and other key functionaries, including the advisors to the general secretary. The third manifestation is the conception of governance that existed in the minds of the nomenklatura below the elite level. This larger group, numbering in the tens of thousands, included the nationwide party apparatus, the economic apparatus, and the enforcement/defense apparatus (the uniformed military, the KGB, the Ministry of Interior).

Kuhn describes similar distinctions between the shared conceptual structure that holds a scientific community together, and the relevant conceptual structures of its individual members. He points out that the structure that characterizes the group is more abstract than—and different in form from—the conceptual matrices of its individual members. It is the architecture of the common structure that members of the community must share, not its specific contents.<sup>31</sup> These observations apply to the case of the Soviet regime;

their relevance will become more apparent as we examine the architecture of the Soviet conceptual structure in subsequent chapters.

The divergence between these three manifestations was minimal from the time Stalin consolidated his personal power in the late 1920s until his death in 1953, primarily because Stalin ruthlessly enforced political conformity. As we shall see, differences between the official and personal conceptions of Soviet governance began to surface during the relatively less coercive Khrushchev period, particularly following Khrushchev's "cult of personality" denunciation of Stalin in his 1956 "Secret Speech" to the Twentieth Party Congress. These differences continued, in muted form, during Brezhnev's eighteen-year reign (as was implied in my contacts with Yuri Zamoshkin and made clear in Alexander Zinoviev's satire of the Soviet regime). They were increasingly pronounced, and ultimately became destabilizing, during the Gorbachev period.

### Importance of the Psychological Milieu

But how, one might legitimately ask, can we know what was in the minds of the Soviet leadership? As noted, throughout the Soviet period and beyond, Western scholars strongly disagreed over the correlation between formal Soviet doctrine and the decision making of Soviet leaders. The predominant view was that doctrine and ideology were at best secondary factors in understanding Soviet behavior. In the words of Martin Malia: "Instead of taking the Soviet leadership at its ideological word—that their task was to 'build socialism'—Western Sovietology has by and large foisted on Soviet reality social science categories derived from Western reality, with the result that the extraordinary, indeed surreal, Soviet experience has been rendered banal to the point of triviality."<sup>32</sup>

Given what we now know about the psychology of the Soviet leadership, I believe we can be confident that the correlation between what Soviet leaders said they thought about their political roles, and what they actually thought, was as a rule high. The evidence pertinent to this issue includes biographies of Lenin and Stalin based on archival material unavailable to outsiders during much of the Soviet period, the dictated memoirs of Nikita Khrushchev and the subsequent biographical writings of his son, the extensive writings of Mikhail Gorbachev following his departure from office, and the memoirs, inter-

views, and articles of numerous other senior Soviet officials and aides. These and related works are extensively referenced in the pages that follow.

Unusual, telling evidence about the Kremlin's outlook came to light after the Soviet Union's collapse, when disaffected KGB archivist Vasili Mitrokhin managed, with the help of British intelligence, to smuggle a treasure trove of highly classified KGB materials from Russia to the United Kingdom. Two lengthy, detailed books based on the Mitrokhin archive have since appeared. They both disclose that KGB officers abroad, along with KGB analysts at Moscow Center, transmitted intelligence assessments to the Kremlin within the Soviet leadership's frame of meaning, often for fear of appearing politically incorrect if they provided dissonant facts and analysis. Mitrokhin and his co-author record, for example, that even long-time KGB chairman Andropov, who of course saw all significant KGB reporting and analysis, was captive of official mythology about domestic as well as foreign affairs. They conclude: "The intelligence reports received by the Soviet leadership thus tended to reinforce, rather than to correct, their misconceptions of the outside world."<sup>33</sup>

Obviously, leaders like Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev were not avid students of dialectical materialism and other obscure facets of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. At the same time, they and virtually all other senior Soviet leaders were well aware that the worldview within which they operated as political officials had a theoretical foundation consisting of Marxist-Leninist doctrine. They understood the overall structure and internal logic of the official conception, even if they were far from expert regarding all of its details.

Georgy Arbatov, who served as policy consultant and speechwriter in the Central Committee apparatus under Khrushchev, Brezhnev, and Andropov as well as Gorbachev (during Gorbachev's early years as general secretary), articulated this point in his 1993 memoir: "Soviet policy was deeply steeped in myths and ideology. . . . One must not think that these myths and ideologies were only a soup that we fed the masses, while the 'high priests' ate completely different food, and coldly and rationally calculated policy on the basis of some higher interests visible only to them. Maybe Stalin was like that, but not the leaders whom I knew."<sup>34</sup>

In his comparative study of the Soviet Union's top leaders, Dmitri Volkogonov asserts that all of Lenin's successors, including Stalin, "had lost all sense of reality, living as they did in an illusory world created by the ideological myths of Leninism."<sup>35</sup> In his 1988 biography of Stalin, based in part on restricted Soviet archival material, Volkogonov wrote that Stalin, for all of his life, "believed in postulates, at first Christian postulates and later Marxist

postulates. Whatever did not fit into the Procrustean bed of his concepts was regarded at first as heresy and then as opportunism. And since he rarely experienced doubt about the truth of the ideas and theories he believed in, he did not see the need to subject them to criticism. In his own mind, he never departed from the classical precepts of Marxism. . . . Until the end of his life, he never succeeded in freeing himself from the shackles of dogmatism.”<sup>36</sup>

American historian Ethan Pollock reports similar findings that are based on his study of Soviet archival material regarding Stalin. Pollock reports that top-secret Soviet documents from the Stalin period “are saturated with the same Marxist-Leninist language, categories, and frames for understanding the world that appeared in the public discourse.”<sup>37</sup> He concludes that during Stalin’s rule the USSR “did not keep two sets of books, at least on ideological questions.”<sup>38</sup> This finding has been corroborated by British scholar Nigel Gould-Davies, who concludes that new archival sources “show that Soviet officials and leaders, in forums never intended for public scrutiny, took ideology very seriously.”<sup>39</sup>

As is generally true for political leaders everywhere, a fair amount of what the Kremlin leadership said and wrote was crafted for propaganda effect, as well as to gain or maintain political power and prestige. Similarly, political memoirs can be expected to put their authors in a favorable light. Of course we still lack unimpeded access to all of Russia’s archives from the Soviet period, so one must be cautious in attempting to separate Soviet propaganda and self-serving recollections from expressions of leadership conviction. One must also be tentative, and as explicit as possible, in interpreting Soviet behavior on the basis of such evidence.

Still, I believe the memoirs of former Soviet decision makers and their advisors are persuasive as to the importance of the psychological milieu. Part of the role of a nomenklaturist, especially in the senior ranks, was to function as if he or she was a true believer in the official conception of governance. In discussing the work of a Communist functionary, Czeslaw Milosz noted, “After long acquaintance with his role, a man grows into it so closely that he can no longer differentiate his true self from the self he simulates, so that even the most intimate of individuals speak to each other in Party slogans. To identify one’s self with the role one is obliged to play brings relief and permits a relaxation of one’s vigilance. Proper reflexes at the proper moment become truly automatic.”<sup>40</sup> Consider, for example, former Gorbachev foreign affairs advisor Chernyaev’s retrospective description of the power of the official conception of governance over his personal outlook. Chernyaev has disclosed that

he was never a communist believer but nonetheless joined the party during World War II for purely patriotic reasons. He subsequently chose to serve his country within the existing system of governance because he felt there was no feasible alternative short of becoming a dissident or an emigrant.<sup>41</sup> Nonetheless, for much of his career, Chernyaev was, in his words, “trapped by the old ideological system of values and ideas about the future,” and as of mid-1985 was still thinking within the parameters of the old system.<sup>42</sup>

# 6

## Formation of the Soviet Conception of Governance

### Historical Context: Tsarist Political Culture and the Legacy of Lenin

The official Soviet conception of governance did not allow objective comparison of the Bolshevik regime with the Romanov empire that preceded it. According to the Bolshevik worldview, the only appropriate framework for comparative analysis after 1917 was the Marxist theory of history as interpreted by Lenin and later by Stalin. In the Bolshevik scheme of things, revolution took place in Russia because of the way class struggle unfolded within the global system of imperialism as well as within Russia, which was considered to be a constituent part of the imperialist system. The 1917 Russian revolution supposedly marked the first “break” in the global imperialist network, the first step in a worldwide transition from imperialism—the highest stage of capitalism—toward socialism and communism, essentially as Marx and Engels had predicted.

Russia’s pre-1917 history was perceived within these concepts and categories as significant primarily for the way it created the economic and political conditions leading to the overthrow of the capitalist order in the country. Non-economic factors such as nationalism, tradition, race, and religion were considered byproducts of the capitalist economic order that would fade away once the capitalist system was abolished. In the Bolshevik conception of socio-economic development, such phenomena did not play an independent historical role—although practice later trumped theory when these non-economic factors generated major problems that the Bolsheviks were forced to confront.<sup>1</sup>

Neither did the official Soviet conception allow—after Lenin’s death in January 1924—an objective analysis of the role of Lenin as the chief architect of the Bolshevik regime. During Stalin’s reign, Lenin came to be accorded saintlike status as Founding Father and Principal Theoretician, with Stalin as

his Comrade-in-Arms and Worthy Successor. In keeping with this mythology, after Stalin's death in 1953 his embalmed corpse was given the ultimate place of honor next to the embalmed corpse of Lenin in his quasi-religious tomb at the edge of Red Square, near the Kremlin's outer wall. Khrushchev's 1956 denunciation of Stalin sent a strong shockwave throughout the communist world, causing even more emphasis to be given to the cult of Lenin within the Soviet Union—and leading to the unceremonious but highly symbolic removal of Stalin's remains from Lenin's hallowed resting place.

As visitors to the Soviet Union will recall, virtually every city in the country had a Lenin Street and a Lenin Square, featuring a huge statue of the great man. Virtually every Soviet office and schoolroom had a portrait of Lenin on the wall—although in offices only senior party officials were allowed to sit directly under his image (in the offices of lower-ranking officials the portrait was hung slightly to one side).<sup>2</sup>

As students in Soviet kindergarten, my daughters, along with little children across the Soviet Union, were taught to chant the ridiculous mantra “Lenin lived, Lenin lives, Lenin is more alive than the living” (the incantation is more alliterative in Russian: *Lenin zhil, Lenin zhiv, Lenin zhiveye zhivikh*). Soviet bookstores, as well as hard-currency shops in Moscow and other cities visited by Western tourists, carried large stocks of “Leninabilia,” including a wide assortment of busts, small figurines, and lapel pins depicting baby Lenin, teen-aged Lenin, and adult Lenin. Stalin's image was rarely encountered outside his native Georgia after Khrushchev's criticism of him in 1956.

On both counts, the legacy of the tsarist past and the role of Lenin, the Soviet conception of governance grossly distorted reality. Important historical parallels between the old regime and the new become obvious when the two systems of governance are compared outside of the Marxist-Leninist conceptual framework. Lenin, who was far from a saint, was the inspiration for the essential components of the conception of governance—including its brutal, coercive aspects—that Stalin formalized and imposed upon Soviet society after Lenin's death. Brief examination of each of these issues will assist us in understanding the nature of the Stalinist conception of governance and its evolution from Stalin to Gorbachev.

*Roots of the Stalinist Conception: The Tsarist Past.* Three important lines of continuity bridged the Russian and Soviet empires and survived the revolution, the civil war, and the subsequent Stalinist purges. First, the generation to which Lenin (born in 1870) and Stalin (born in 1879) belonged personally experienced the old regime as mature adults. Even Nikita Khrushchev, four-

teen years younger than Lenin, had been pursuing a promising career as a twenty-three-year-old metal worker at the time of the 1917 Bolshevik takeover. These eventual Soviet leaders, along with all of their generational cohorts—men and women throughout the Russian empire who were born during the period 1860–95 or so—were personally familiar with the realities of the old regime at the time of its collapse in 1917.

Second, starting at least with Peter the Great (1672–1725), the rulers of the Russian empire shared a defining interest with the subsequent rulers of the Soviet empire. In both the old regime and the new, successive ruling elites were concerned with ensuring their empire's defense while increasing its power and influence relative to its foreign competitors under conditions of comparative disadvantage. These conditions included a harsh winter climate in most of the country, a widely disbursed population, difficult-to-defend borders, relative isolation from international trade routes, and a semifeudal society that persisted due in part to the weak impact of the Renaissance and Reformation in Russian lands.<sup>3</sup> Tsarist as well as Soviet leaders therefore saw the mobilization of human and material resources under their control as an overriding imperative in an immense, militarily vulnerable land that was historically and economically backward in comparison with its competitors to the west.<sup>4</sup>

The intensity and the specific policy ramifications of this imperative varied considerably over the three hundred years of the Romanov dynasty as well as during the seventy-four years of the Soviet empire. The imperative itself, the perceived need to maximize the effectiveness of available resources, was central to the rulers of both empires—at least, as we shall see, until the reign of the last ruler, Mikhail Gorbachev. In this light, what changed with the fall of the old regime and the establishment of Bolshevik Russia was the composition of the ruling elite and the content of its perception of the need to mobilize. The imperative itself remained a dominant psychological factor for roughly seven decades after 1917.

When the necessity for mobilization to defend against external and internal threats was strongly felt—as during the reign of Nicholas I (1825–55) and, roughly a century later, during Stalin's rule (1923–53)—similarities between the tsarist regime and the Soviet regime could be striking. This phenomenon is illustrated by Astolphe de Custine's oft-quoted *Letters from Russia*, written in 1839 to convey to French readers the nature of Russia under Nicholas I. In describing the militarization of Russia in 1839, Custine captured much of the essence of the Stalinist regime that was to come: "Let the reader imagine the



ambition, the rivalry, and all the other passions of war in operation during a state of peace; let his mind conceive an absence of all that constitutes social and domestic happiness; and, in place of these, let him picture to himself the universal agitation of an ever-restless though secret intrigue—secret, because the mask is essential to success; finally, let him realize the idea of the almost complete apparent triumph of the will of one man over the will of God, and he will understand Russia. Russian government is the discipline of a military camp substituted to the order of the city; it is the state of siege turned into the normal state of society.”<sup>5</sup>

A third line of continuity concerned fundamental attitudes regarding governance that defined pre-1917 Russian political culture and hence shaped the way mobilization was carried out by the Romanov tsars. During the reign of Nicholas I, these attitudes were officially described as Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality, each reflecting historically conditioned beliefs held by the ruling elite and, in a less well-defined fashion, by Russian people, some 80 percent of whom were uneducated peasants living under various types of serfdom. Under Nicholas I, Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality composed the regime’s official outlook, which was termed “Official Nationality.”

Orthodoxy referred to the Russian Orthodox Church’s teachings, considered the only correct interpretation of Christianity. Orthodoxy also referred to the Church’s pervasive influence over the country’s spiritual life, subject to the divinely inspired authority of the tsar. Autocracy described the hierarchical, authoritarian organization of political power, featuring an all-powerful ruler whose authority stemmed directly from God. Nationality, although not precisely defined, stood generally for the mystical uniqueness of the Russian people, who supposedly had an innate proclivity to revere the tsar within the general framework of Russian Orthodoxy.<sup>6</sup> Some proponents of nationality went further, claiming that the Russian people were fated to fulfill a mystical, historic destiny. According to one frequently cited formulation of this concept, penned by Nicholas’s director of police: “Russia’s past is admirable; her present more than magnificent; as to her future, it is beyond the grasp of the most daring imagination.”<sup>7</sup>

As with the imperative to mobilize, the content of Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality, together with the emphasis given to each set of attitudes, underwent major changes over the three centuries of Romanov tsardom. Yet the essence of these conceptions, particularly that of autocracy, conveyed qualities of pre-1917 Russia that set it apart from Western Europe.<sup>8</sup> There were periods of considerable Western influence among the Russian

elite, when Russian historical traditions were muted, as during the reigns of Peter the Great (who ruled from 1682 to 1725), Catherine II (1762–96), Alexander I (1801–25), and during the first half of the rule of Alexander II (1855–81).

However, the traditional themes of Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality were emphasized not only by Nicholas I but also by his son Alexander II—who during the second half of his reign moved from reform to reaction—as well as by the last two Romanovs, Alexander’s son and grandson, Alexander III (ruled 1881–94) and Nicholas II (1894–1917). For the great majority of those within Russia who experienced the transition from tsarist rule to Bolshevism, “Official Nationality” was the Romanov regime’s creed and therefore the predominant conception of governance under which the Russian people had lived from the mid-1860s until Nicholas II abdicated the throne in March 1917.

Western political ideals of course had advocates in the upper reaches of Russian society during the reigns of Alexander III and Nicholas II, but many supporters of Western enlightenment and liberalism opted to depart Russia during the period of the Bolshevik revolution and the ensuing Civil War, or perished in that conflict, or were subsequently persecuted by Lenin and Stalin as “class enemies.”<sup>9</sup> As a result, within months of the collapse of the Romanov empire the dominant Western influence in Russia was not enlightenment or liberalism. It was the revolutionary teaching of German philosophers Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels as interpreted by Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks. Yet we shall see that the main elements of tsarist political culture—mobilization, Orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality—reasserted themselves after 1917 within the concepts and categories of the official Soviet worldview.

In sum, the official Soviet view of the 1917 revolution as a break with the past, as a leap toward a qualitatively new type of social and political order, represented ideological myth rather than historical reality. In the words of Orlando Figes, the Soviet regime “was a mirror-image of the tsarist state. Lenin (later Stalin) occupied the place of the Tsar-God; his commissars and Cheka [Bolshevik secret police] henchmen played the same roles as the provincial governors, the *oprichniki* [tsarist secret police], and the Tsar’s other plenipotentiaries; while his party’s comrades had the same power and privileged position as the autocracy.”<sup>10</sup>

*The Influence of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin.* During their initial years in power the Bolsheviks barely managed to survive World War I, almost lost a bloody civil conflict, and then had to cope with a war-weary, predominately peasant population and a devastated domestic economy. In the midst of this turmoil,

their revered leader, Vladimir Lenin, was seriously wounded by a would-be assassin in 1918, suffered a series of debilitating strokes that began in 1922, and died an invalid in January 1924. In contrast to the exalted, semidivine status accorded Lenin by subsequent Soviet propaganda, the historical record, as set forth by Dmitri Volkogonov and later by Gorbachev advisor Alexander Yakovlev (and by numerous Western scholars), shows Lenin to have been single-minded and ruthless in establishing and sustaining the Bolshevik regime.<sup>11</sup>

Lenin shaped the initial Bolshevik conception of governance, at the foundation of which was the firm ideological conviction that the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917 would soon spark a series of revolutions that would in turn bring down the world's leading capitalist countries. Convinced that the Russian revolution would soon lead to the downfall of capitalism on an international scale, Lenin and his fellow Bolsheviks advocated coercive mobilization—employing widespread violence, terror, and prison camps—so that Bolshevik Russia could defeat its enemies and play its new role as a source of inspiration and support for a world revolution that was just around the corner. Contrary to the official Soviet line laid down by Khrushchev and reiterated by Gorbachev, the conception of governance characteristic of Stalin's twenty-five-year rule was not a perversion of Leninism. Stalinism was a logical extension of the Leninist theory and practice in which Stalin had been schooled.

The historical record does indicate, as Gorbachev asserted forcefully during his reign as party general secretary and has asserted since, that Lenin seemed to change his mind, shortly before his untimely death, about the wisdom of coercive mobilization. In one of his last published writings, which appeared in May 1923, Lenin advocated bringing the entire Russian peasantry into cooperatives and teaching them to trade in a "European manner," through a process of education that would require at least a decade or two. Lenin acknowledged that this marked a "radical change" in the Bolshevik outlook regarding socialism. In his words: "This radical change lies in that formerly we placed, and had to place, the main weight of emphasis on the political struggle, on revolution, on winning power, etc. Now the weight of emphasis is changing and is being shifted to peaceful, organizational, 'cultural' work."<sup>12</sup>

Lenin's apparent reconsideration of the utility of coercion and terror in the countryside should be evaluated in its historical context. Lenin was in frail health when he first wrote about this in January 1923. He had suffered two strokes, in the summer of 1922 and again in mid-December of that year, and

was soon to be rendered an invalid, barely able to speak, by a third stroke in March 1923. Perhaps because of his growing incapacity, Lenin seemed to have had an increasingly dim appreciation of political and economic realities within Russia. His emphasis on patient, prolonged education of the entire Russian peasantry appears in retrospect to have been utopian, given that the party's standing in the countryside was problematic, its ability to govern the peasantry was correspondingly weak, yet its need to ensure adequate agricultural deliveries to urban areas was a problem critical to the regime's survival.<sup>13</sup> The judgment of reformist Soviet historian Yuri Afanasyev, rendered in the late 1980s, seems apt: "I must protest the formula, widespread even among supporters of perestroika, that we can simply return to Lenin, repent, receive his blessings, and move onward. That is a foolish way of thinking, more of a religious idea than a political-historical one. . . . Lenin didn't live long enough to develop a full conception of socialism. He changed his thinking in the early 1920s and had only begun to work out a new model . . . when he died in 1924."<sup>14</sup>

During 1923 Stalin managed to isolate the ailing Lenin from active political involvement. By 1924 the basic elements of the Stalinist regime began to take shape. By the end of the 1920s Stalin had succeeded in establishing a high degree of personal power within the Bolshevik Party and then in inexorably imposing upon society his conception of governance—a disciplinary matrix consisting of beliefs, values, and institutions that, as viewed from the inside, formed a logically interconnected, integral whole. Stalin obviously chose not to pursue Lenin's 1923 call—taken up after Lenin's death by Nikolai Bukharin and his followers—for a moderate approach toward building socialism and instead relied upon Lenin's earlier tactics of political struggle, coercion, and terror in a brutal effort to mobilize resources so as to increase Soviet power, defend Bolshevism, and accelerate the attainment of socialism within Soviet borders.<sup>15</sup>

While several of Stalin's successors made important modifications to his concepts and practices, it was essentially the Stalinist conception that Gorbachev attempted to reform during the period 1985–91. To facilitate our understanding of his attempt and its bearing on the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet empire, the remainder of this chapter and the two that follow highlight the basic features of the Stalinist conception, how they evolved after Stalin, and how Gorbachev attempted unsuccessfully to restructure them.

## The Stalinist Worldview

Volkogonov's 1996 biography of Stalin reinforces the impression one gets from the publicly available writings, speeches, and other evidence regarding the Stalinist period that Stalin had a defined, dogmatic, "Leninist" view of the world that few within his reach dared to challenge.<sup>16</sup> In seizing and consolidating power in Russia, Lenin had emphasized those components of Marxism that buttressed his goals and rationalized his tactics. Stalin, in turn, took from Leninism those components of theory and practice that justified and furthered his goal of building socialism in Soviet Russia. This is not to suggest that Marxist-Leninist doctrine was primarily instrumental for Stalin and hence more a component of propaganda than a determinant of policy. I believe the historical record leaves no doubt that it was within the structure and content of his belief system that Stalin perceived and evaluated foreign and domestic enemies, the Soviet Union's foreign and domestic mission, and the consequent need for forced mobilization.

Battered by world war and civil war, in Stalin's view by the early 1930s Soviet Russia unexpectedly found itself alone on a dangerous, trailblazing journey to socialism and communism, surrounded by hostile capitalist countries. Stalin saw the newborn Soviet state as threatened from within by Trotskyites who opposed his policies, class enemies who opposed Bolshevism altogether, and numerous other narrow-minded and sinister forces. He believed that a defining feature of international relations was implacable class conflict waged by world imperialism against newborn Soviet socialism, in addition to the traditional class struggle between workers and capitalists within imperialist countries, and cutthroat economic competition among imperialist countries. Moreover, Stalin was convinced that a second world war would erupt from inevitable clashes among imperialist states, stemming from their desperate economic need for world markets, and would surely threaten the existence of the fledgling Soviet regime. Even after World War II, Stalin warned that irreconcilable economic tensions among imperialist countries were still operative and sooner or later would generate yet another global conflict.<sup>17</sup>

In Stalin's virtual universe, the Soviet regime was required by historical circumstances to build socialism on a crash basis, under unprecedented conditions of hostile "capitalist encirclement," relentless class warfare within the Soviet Union as well as abroad, and the looming inevitability of world war. Nationwide mobilization was imperative to achieve rapid economic develop-

ment and accelerated militarization. Stalin attempted to drive this point home in a February 1931 address to Soviet industrial managers:

One feature of the history of old Russia was the continual beatings suffered because of her backwardness. She was beaten by the Mongol khans. She was beaten by the Turkish beys. She was beaten by the Swedish feudal lords. She was beaten by the Polish and Lithuanian gentry. She was beaten by the British and French capitalists. She was beaten by the Japanese barons. All beat her because of her backwardness, because of her military backwardness, cultural backwardness, political backwardness, industrial backwardness. They beat her because to do so was profitable and could be done with impunity. . . . Do you want our socialist fatherland to be beaten and to lose its independence?

. . . We are fifty or a hundred years behind the advanced countries. We must make good this distance in ten years. Either we do it, or we shall go under.<sup>18</sup>

Economic success was also viewed in the Stalinist perspective as important for gaining moral support from workers within the imperialist camp and for serving as an increasingly powerful magnet that would over the longer term help extract other countries from the imperialist system and put them on the high road to socialism and communism.

This self-generated, doctrinally based “mega-imperative” to mobilize, intertwined with the ruthlessness and paranoia of Stalin’s personality, was the prime motivational force behind Stalin’s remarkable attempt to construct a totalitarian system in which essentially all resources, human and material, were marshaled to accomplish his goals. This grandiose conception of governance—Volkogonov has termed it “sacrificial socialism”—served as justification for perpetuation of a single, all-powerful political party, a centrally controlled “command” economy, forced collectivization of agriculture and resulting mass starvation, regimented industrialization, an extensive system of prison camps and forced labor, strict controls over mass media and information from abroad, and a pervasive system of regime informants and secret police.<sup>19</sup> The mega-imperative for mobilization also was used as justification for imprisonment and often death for those suspected of opposing Stalin’s policies, even on the basis of a casual joke or disrespectful comment about the general secretary. The overall human cost is difficult to calculate accu-

ately, but there is little question that it involved at a minimum some twenty million Soviet victims, most of whom by civilized standards had committed no serious crime.<sup>20</sup>

The Soviet Union emerged from World War II as a hyper-militarized society and remained so for the duration of the Cold War. All state resources were organized and allocated according to the dictates of the Communist Party. The best resources—human as well as physical—went to the military sector, the next best to the nonmilitary industrial sector, and the remnants to the agricultural and consumer sectors. As my embassy colleagues and I witnessed during our travels around the USSR, the huge military-industrial complex was literally walled off from the rest of society.

Since all prices were assigned by the state bureaucracy, and the entire military-industrial complex was shrouded in secrecy, it was (and remains today) impossible to assess the precise cost of this militarization. Nevertheless, as Clifford Gaddy has pointed out in his carefully reasoned book *The Price of the Past*, the military sector in effect cannibalized the rest of the economy, so that the cost to the nonmilitary sectors was enormous, and the overall impact of militarization of Soviet society continues to represent “one of the biggest continuing burdens that today’s and tomorrow’s Russia—regardless of the nature, extent, and speed of reform—will have to bear.”<sup>21</sup>

*Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality Under Stalin.* As pointed out earlier, there was an objective basis for the reemergence of tsarist political culture during Stalin’s reign. Common Russians and particularly frontline peasant soldiers may have been swayed by the 1917 Bolshevik slogan of “peace, land, and bread,” but fundamental Russian attitudes toward political authority had been formed over many decades of life under the Romanovs and were resistant to change. Stalin, a student of Russian history, was well aware of this fact. In the mid-1930s, he told the popular Soviet author Mikhail Sholokov, in answer to Sholokov’s criticism of the praise being given Stalin: “What can I do? The people need a God.” On another occasion Stalin confided to the wife of a colleague that “the people need a Tsar, whom they can worship and for whom they can live and work.”<sup>22</sup>

In Stalin’s conception of governance, the traditional religious content of Orthodoxy was replaced by the uniformly materialistic doctrine of Marxism-Leninism and accompanied by an all-pervasive system of ideological control over the country’s intellectual and spiritual life, subject to the absolute authority of Stalin himself. All education, publicly available information, and foreign travel were painstakingly regulated so that, to the extent feasible, only

the officially sanctioned picture of life in the Soviet Union and abroad was available to the average citizen. Stalin radically changed the content of the natural order described by Russian Orthodoxy and perpetuated by the Romanov dynasty. The pre- and post-1917 orthodoxies were mutually exclusive in substance, yet the functional notion of individual subordination to enlightened central authority, and the absolute nature of that authority's conception of the spiritual and political universe, were common to both.

Autocracy was manifest in a hierarchical, authoritarian structure of political power, overseen at all levels by the party-appointed and party-supervised nomenklatura. The all-powerful Communist Party general secretary, along with the elite nomenklatura, were at the pyramid's apex. Lower orders of the nomenklatura, thousands of them, were arrayed below the summit according to the power they wielded. Millions of politically powerless, state-employed workers and collective farmers occupied the pyramid's lower reaches. The toiling masses were regarded primarily as cogs in the machinery of a huge command economy that operated on the basis of centralized planning and obligatory directives.<sup>23</sup>

Nationality, in the sense of popular support for the tsar, mutated into the notion that the country's peasants and workers revered the Soviet regime and its tsarlike leader because both represented the true interests of the Soviet people. The expanded sense of nationality, conveying a historic mission, was at the heart of Stalin's foreign policy doctrine of "socialism in one country," which from the late 1920s until Stalin's death in 1953 defined Russia's role in global affairs. By insisting that socialism could and should be built in the Soviet Union, even if further world revolution did not take place in the foreseeable future, Stalin in effect combined the two meanings of "nationality." That is, construction of socialism as designed and supervised by the Communist Party would serve the best domestic interests of the Soviet people and thus strengthen their allegiance to the regime. At the same time, building socialism would place the Soviet people at the center of a historic effort to advance mankind's progress toward a communist future.

Socialism in one country attempted to explain how Russia would remain in the forefront of Marxist-Leninist world revolution even though the Russian revolution of 1917 had failed to spark the downfall of capitalism elsewhere. According to Stalin, Soviet Russia was destined to be in the vanguard of world history during a prolonged period of global transition from capitalism to socialism, serving both as the model for humanity's future and as the headquarters for facilitating the transition process. A perceptive if politically biased



Western biographer of Stalin, Isaac Deutscher (an admirer of Stalin's arch-rival, Leon Trotsky) eloquently summed up the psychological appeal of socialism in one country for Bolshevik Russia as follows: "[In] Stalin's doctrine Russia no longer figures as a mere periphery of the civilized world. It is within her own boundaries that the forms of a new society are to be found and worked out. It is her destiny to become the centre of a new civilization, in all respects superior to that capitalist civilization that is defending itself, with so much power of resistance, in western Europe. This new view of the future undoubtedly reflected the exasperation of Russian communism at its own isolation; but it gilded that isolation with dazzling prospects. Exhausted and disillusioned, Bolshevik Russia was withdrawing into her national shell, feasting her sore eyes on the vistas of socialism in one country."<sup>24</sup>

Soviet nationality, in both senses of the term, gained strength throughout the USSR and beyond with the Soviet defeat of Hitler's armies and the accompanying, widely accepted claim that it was the viability of the Soviet system, the strength of the Soviet people, and the wisdom of Stalin's leadership that saved the world from Hitler and allowed the Soviet Union to continue to lead the way along the historic path to socialism and communism. Former Czechoslovak Communist Zdenek Mlynar, one of the leaders of the 1968 reform movement in Czechoslovakia and a longtime friend of Mikhail Gorbachev (from their days as classmates at Moscow State University in the early 1950s), described the impact of the Soviet victory in these words: "A system that had been victorious in the biggest war the world had ever seen, that had brought a significant part of the world under its rule, the system that prevailed within the borders of one of the great superpowers of the world—that kind of system was able to reject criticism for many long years and reject the need for any fundamental changes."<sup>25</sup>

As noted in Part 1, the positive contribution of this victory to the legitimacy accorded the regime by average Soviet citizens was palpable to my embassy colleagues and me during the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. In the words of Soviet philosopher and historian Alexander Tsipko: "We [the Soviet people] came to believe sincerely that we were a unique country and a chosen people preordained to work wonders, to do things that cannot be done, and to rise to the most fantastic challenges."<sup>26</sup>

## The Stalinist Conception as a Pseudo-Scientific Paradigm

Thomas Kuhn points out that in the world of natural science a paradigm gains status because it is more successful than its competitors in promising to

solve problems the group of practitioners has come to recognize as acute. Following Lenin's death, Stalin set about to eliminate potential rivals who disagreed with his view of the Soviet Union's most acute problem, the need for rapid mobilization. Stalin then constructed a set of institutions and practices that he regarded as essential for meeting foreign and domestic threats as well as for fulfilling the country's ideologically defined foreign and domestic missions.

*A Quick Review of Marxism-Leninism.* Given the centrality of Marxism-Leninism in the Stalinist conception, a brief digression to highlight this doctrine's substance should be helpful to the reader who has had no occasion to delve into Soviet ideology. With apologies to those who have done so, and still remember the excursion, herewith a short review. This belief system essentially rested on three assumptions, described by the theory of "dialectical materialism": there is nothing in the universe but matter, all matter is in motion, and all motion conforms to a single, law-governed pattern. The pattern is in the general form of an unevenly developing, upward spiral. Relatively slow development takes place within a given object along one horizontal plane. At some point the object undergoes abrupt, transforming change and moves to a higher plane of development, where another phase of slow, internal development commences.

"Historical materialism" undertakes to explain how dialectical materialism operates in human history. History in its totality is seen as consisting of the rise, development, and transformation of four types of society, or "socioeconomic formations": primitive, slave-holding, feudal, and capitalist/imperialist. The fifth and final socioeconomic formation is the socialist/communist type, which emerges from capitalism—or, more accurately, from imperialism, considered the global and highest stage of the capitalist formation—but undergoes no further basic transformation. The uneven, upward spiral of historical development supposedly flattens out to a smooth ascending slope whose pitch and tempo is brought under control, thanks to the scientific knowledge of the ruling Marxist-Leninist party.

The fundamental engine of historical development is class struggle within the first four types of society. Class struggle is generated by tension between production relations, defined as the human organization of economic production that gives each of the four socioeconomic formations its basic definition (primitive, slave-holding, feudal, and capitalist), and production forces, defined as economic growth potential that steadily intensifies and renders production relations increasingly outmoded. The root cause of class struggle is inevitable exploitation of the working class (slaves, serfs, the proletariat) by

those who control and profit from existing production relations (slave-holders, feudal lords, capitalists/imperialists) and therefore use coercion to maintain existing production relations. Class struggle gradually fades away in the socialist/communist formation, as production relations and production forces are brought into harmony by the communist ruling elite, who supposedly understand the mechanics of history and represent the true interests of the workers.<sup>27</sup>

Marxism-Leninism mandates that the first task of the policy maker is to determine, by means of “programmatic analysis,” where in the overall historical pattern the Soviet Union and the rest of humanity are currently situated. Policy makers next determine the key entities and motivational forces pivotal to further historical progress and on this basis establish basic programmatic goals for the current historical period (for example, fostering the global transition from capitalism to socialism while preparing the way for communism in the USSR). They then elaborate the strategy and tactics best suited to accomplish these goals (for example, fomenting class struggle in capitalist countries, exacerbating tension among capitalist countries, and urgently constructing socialism in the Soviet Union).<sup>28</sup>

*The Architecture of Stalin’s Belief System.* This, in a wee nutshell, was the substance of Marxism-Leninism. As with scientific paradigms generally, the Stalinist conception had a clearly articulated structure, consisting of three interconnected levels. At the core was Stalin’s interpretation of Marxist-Leninist doctrine, regarded as a universally valid science that described the physical and social universe, explained world history, and established the Soviet Union’s “leading role” in mankind’s development. In effect, this doctrinal component functioned as the primary energy source for the entire conception.

At the intermediate level of the conception was programmatic analysis for the current historical period, including specific analysis of threats confronting the Soviet regime and of the regime’s mission beyond self-defense. These latter two analytical products in effect acted as generators that transformed doctrinal power into more specific, intensified sources of energy. Each of these “generators” consisted of a set of interlocking concepts derived from application of doctrine to examination and diagnosis of current and impending real-world problems.

The Stalinist “threat generator” produced an urgent need for the Soviet Union to mobilize and to remain at a high state of alert in order to thwart domestic and foreign enemies. The Stalinist “mission generator” defined the

Soviet Union's main domestic and foreign tasks beyond survival as building socialism and communism at home, while promoting revolutionary movement from capitalism to socialism abroad. This conception of domestic and foreign mission, together with the threat conception, created an overriding imperative for mobilization, accompanied by strict control and careful management of the regime's resources.

The third level consisted of the institutions, the roles, and the practices that made up the interface between the regime, Soviet society, and its international environment. As noted earlier, the essential components at this level included a political and ideological apparatus, an economic apparatus (including the huge military-industrial complex), and a military and coercive apparatus (including the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the secret police, as well as the uniformed military services).<sup>29</sup> All three apparatuses were legitimated and energized by programmatic analysis of threat and mission, which in turn flowed from Marxist-Leninist core "science."<sup>30</sup>

Tsarist political culture—in the form of attitudes toward mobilization, plus conceptions of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality—permeated and conditioned (to use Julian Towster's term) the entire Stalinist conception.<sup>31</sup> These historical modes of thinking shaped all components of the conception and in particular channeled energy from the threat and mission generators to the conception's upper level in a way that put that area into broad conformity with Russian historical tradition and with the Russian cast of mind.

To recapitulate, the Stalinist paradigm of governance can be considered from a structural point of view as consisting of a three-part matrix, the contents of which proceeded with a fair degree of internal logic from core belief (Marxism-Leninism), through derivative belief (doctrinal analysis of the current situation and establishment of general lines of policy), to instrumental belief (specific strategy and tactics, as well as specific institutional arrangements, roles, and practices). Energy in effect flowed outward from the doctrinal core to produce programmatic analysis and to provide power—in the sense of giving doctrinal legitimacy—to the threat conception and the mission conception that stemmed from programmatic analysis. The energy generated by threat and mission flowed further outward to animate as well as to legitimate the regime's institutions, roles, and practices at its interface with Soviet society and the world. This was the overall structure of political belief shared by virtually all Stalinist paradigm practitioners—although its operational importance as well as its substantive content varied greatly depending upon the specific role of a given nomenklaturist in the Soviet regime.

To function effectively, the regime's highly bureaucratized institutions required a high level of energy stemming from the doctrinal core and intensified by programmatic analysis and derivative policies formulated by the leadership in Moscow. In particular, for the centrally planned command economy to work satisfactorily, the managers and workers throughout the vast economic structure had to be motivated—inspired to the greatest degree possible, coerced and cowed when necessary—from the center.

Because the components of the Stalinist conception were logically interconnected, modification of one part could affect the energy flow and cause significant changes in other parts of the matrix. For instance, change in programmatic analysis regarding threat and mission and the resultant need for mobilization could result in corresponding modifications in institutions, roles, and practices. Perception of high threat could increase the power of the secret police and the military establishment, while diminished threat perception could have the opposite effect. Similarly, change in the conditioning factors of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality could cause change in the institutional realm—less emphasis on orthodoxy, for example, could result in greater freedom of expression, while a diminished sense of autocracy could bring limited pluralization of political decision making. Modification of programmatic analysis could imply changes in the doctrinal foundation—for instance, significant decline in perceived threat could signify that the force of international class conflict had diminished. As we trace the evolution of the official conception of governance from Stalin to Gorbachev, we shall see how these interrelationships in fact operated.

Overall, by stressing the infallibility of doctrine and, metaphorically speaking, operating the threat and mission generators at high output, by imposing strict discipline and resorting to coercion and even arbitrary terror, Stalin exerted strong pressure from the center to keep the system's energy level high. The Soviet Union's eventual victories in World War II seemed to vindicate his approach to governance, as did the country's rapid economic recovery in the immediate postwar period.

*The Semantics of the Paradigm Approach.* To avert drift into Grand Theory, we should at this juncture consider the semantics of the above analytical approach by asking what aspects of the real world the Stalinist conception of governance represented. Obviously, dissection of Stalin's brain would not have revealed a discrete physical structure with the components and internal wiring described above. The idea of a structured, logically interconnected

matrix obviously is a figure of speech, a metaphor intended to capture the functional organization, the substantive content, and the interlinked nature of Stalinist thinking about the Soviet Union's role in the world and the nature of the Soviet regime—just as Kuhn's concept of scientific paradigm is a metaphor intended to capture the functional organization of a given body of thought in natural science.

The Soviet regime's huge ideological apparatus, of course, did not describe the Stalinist conception of governance in the mechanical terms I have used. Regime propagandists during Stalin's rule relentlessly insisted on the scientific objectivity, the political brilliance, and the overall magnificence of Stalin's worldview. They did not dare to venture a critical analysis of how this worldview was structured or how it actually functioned, beyond what Stalin had to say about these matters, or what he specifically authorized to be said. I have introduced such an approach here, based on what I find to be convincing historical evidence, and using Kuhn's notion of scientific paradigm as an illuminating concept, so that we can trace accurately and efficiently the development of the official Soviet outlook from its construction under Lenin and Stalin to its disintegration under Gorbachev.

### Deviant Views of the Stalinist Conception

Those members of the *nomenklatura* concerned professionally with doctrine, programmatic analysis, and propaganda during Stalin's rule were justifiably fearful of deviating noticeably from the Stalinist line. They knew well the tragic fate of figures like Trotsky and Bukharin, who had publicly challenged Stalin's programmatic analysis and eventually paid with their lives. (Bukharin was executed following a bizarre 1938 show trial in the Soviet Union; Trotsky was brutally assassinated at his place of exile in Mexico in 1940.) They knew their careers and their lives, as well as the welfare of their loved ones, depended upon the whim of Stalin and the coercive *nomenklatura* apparatus he personally controlled.

Even innovation within the bounds of Stalinist thinking was dangerous, as one of Stalin's economic advisors, Yevgeni Varga, discovered in the late 1940s when he ventured the notion that the "general crisis of capitalism" had eased temporarily following World War II. This notion implied that the external threat to the Soviet Union and the resultant need for domestic mobilization also had eased. Stalin evidently saw this as undercutting his programmatic

analysis of growing intra-capitalist tensions that inevitably would lead to a new world war, a view that Stalin reiterated in his 1952 pamphlet *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR*. Varga was dismissed and severely criticized but somehow managed to escape with his life and in fact was able to resume an academic career following Stalin's death in 1953.<sup>32</sup>

The case of Varga and the few courageous analysts who supported his views was exceptional. As a rule, the official Soviet conception of governance was virtually identical to Stalin's personal mind-set. From the mid-1930s until his death in 1953, Stalin himself was the sole authoritative author and arbiter of doctrine, programmatic analysis, strategy and tactics, and institutional structure and function. In this, and in his harshly enforced interpretation of mobilization, orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality, only Stalin was the anointed prophet who could speak for Lenin and Marx.

# 7

## The Conception's Evolution Under Khrushchev and Brezhnev

### The Rule of Nikita Khrushchev

Throughout his ten years as party leader, Nikita Khrushchev lived in the alternative universe created by the Stalinist conception of governance.<sup>1</sup> He assumed the validity of Leninist-Stalinist doctrine. He believed that resource mobilization and internal controls were essential to the Soviet empire's ability to defend itself from world imperialism while constructing communism and fostering the world revolutionary process. At the same time, after Khrushchev had consolidated his personal power as general secretary following Stalin's death in 1953, he summoned the courage to modify several components of the Stalinist worldview and, more remarkably, to criticize Stalin personally, if posthumously, for Stalin's inhumanity. Overall, Khrushchev attempted to keep the need for mobilization high by emphasizing the regime's mission of building communism in the USSR, while making the threat assessment less menacing and the conception's interface with society more humane.<sup>2</sup>

*The Impact of Khrushchev's "Secret Speech."* Khrushchev did not alter substantially Leninist-Stalinist doctrine at the core of the official conception of governance, although he authorized a less dogmatic rendering of doctrine.<sup>3</sup> Khrushchev did make significant changes in other components of the conception, however. Above all, his strong denunciation of Stalin at a closed session of the Twentieth Party Congress in 1956 caused many party members in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and throughout the world to question the official conception's overall credibility in light of the flaws in Stalin's personality and performance that Khrushchev for the first time disclosed.

Since Stalin had been characterized by the Soviet regime for many years as a semidivine prophet of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, and he was appropriately considered to have been the prime architect and chief engineer of that regime,



it is not surprising that Khrushchev's description of Stalin's shortcomings came as a stunning revelation to his immediate audience and created violent aftershocks in Eastern Europe. In 1957 Khrushchev was almost removed from office by his Politburo colleagues, who feared that his denunciation of Stalin had gone too far. Indicative of leadership concern over the explosive nature of Khrushchev's "secret speech," the full text remained an official secret within the Soviet Union for over three decades, until its publication under Gorbachev in the late 1980s.

As a young nomenklaturist working in the Central Committee's ideological apparatus, Alexander Yakovlev—who some thirty years later would become a key reform-minded advisor to Gorbachev—was present when Khrushchev delivered his scathing indictment of Stalin. Yakovlev many years later recalled his reaction to the speech: "I was crushed, not knowing in whom to believe—in Stalin, with whose name generation after generation had linked their lives and hopes, or in the new chief, who spoke with such passion and conviction of the crimes of his teacher, under whom he had served so loyally and for so long. To believe the new leader was not easy—one had to leap over oceans of faith in the old. . . . I sensed that Khrushchev was telling the truth, but it was a truth I was afraid of."<sup>4</sup>

Yakovlev recalled that the reaction of Khrushchev's audience, carefully restricted to members of the nomenklatura, was one of stunned silence and deep shock. He observed that, during the days immediately following the speech, a majority of his colleagues among the Central Committee nomenklatura were negative toward Khrushchev's accusations.<sup>5</sup>

Eduard Shevardnadze—who would later become Gorbachev's reform-minded foreign minister—was at the time of Khrushchev's secret speech a young party careerist assigned to a city Komsomol organization in his native republic of Georgia (Stalin's birthplace). In his 1991 memoir, Shevardnadze recalls being personally shaken by the direct connection Khrushchev made between the politics of terror and Stalin's activity: "It is agonizingly difficult to acknowledge that you have worshiped the wrong god, that you have been deceived. It shattered my life and my faith."<sup>6</sup>

Mikhail Gorbachev was a Komsomol official in his home district of Stavropol in 1956 and, like Shevardnadze, did not hear Khrushchev's speech in person, although Gorbachev soon had access to the text through party channels. Discussing the speech with his close friend Zdenek Mylnar in 1993, Gorbachev recalled: "For me the Twentieth Congress was . . . a shock, but it was not something that would have meant a loss of orientation and that I therefore

would have refused to accept. . . . I did not perceive it as a catastrophe or as the collapse of everything that had existed up until then. On the contrary, I perceived it as the beginning of something new, as providing tremendous new opportunities for the future. . . . But the thought that we were traveling on the wrong road, that it was necessary to change the whole system of economic and political relations down to their very foundations—there was no such concept.”<sup>7</sup>

Gorbachev also recalled that many Communist Party members in his region had trouble accepting the validity of Khrushchev’s charges against Stalin. Instructed to conduct seminars to explain the official line on the significance of Khrushchev’s speech to party members throughout the Stavropol area, Gorbachev said he found that the reaction was “very guarded,” and many “simply had a negative reaction” to Khrushchev’s initiative.<sup>8</sup>

*Khrushchev’s Impact on Programmatic Analysis.* One motivation for Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin’s “cult of personality” at the Twentieth Party Congress may have been Khrushchev’s modification at the same congress a few days earlier of Stalin’s programmatic analysis of the postwar international situation. Khrushchev may have felt that for a major change in Stalinist thinking to be acceptable to the nomenklatura, he had to demonstrate that despite years of Soviet propaganda to the contrary, Stalin had not been infallible. In announcing his changes to the congress, Khrushchev did not assert publicly that Stalin had erred, but neither did Khrushchev claim that Stalin’s analysis needed updating because the international environment had changed significantly over the three years between Stalin’s death and the Twentieth Congress. The obvious implication of Khrushchev’s revisions was that Stalin had been fundamentally mistaken about key features of postwar international affairs.<sup>9</sup>

In any event, shortly before his secret speech, Khrushchev publicly informed the Twentieth Congress that global war was no longer inevitable. While acknowledging that class struggle remained the determining factor in international relations, Khrushchev asserted that its postwar impact on international affairs had undergone a major change. The dominant aspect of international class conflict had become the antagonism between imperialism and the Soviet Union—not, as Stalin had insisted publicly as late as 1952, antagonisms among imperialist countries stemming from their global economic competition.<sup>10</sup>

This somewhat obscure change did not affect the regime’s core doctrine but nonetheless had major policy implications. By shifting emphasis from intra-capitalist tensions to the tension between capitalism and socialism,

Khrushchev in essence gutted Stalin's 1952 analysis of the cause of world war. With the key determinant now the correlation of forces between the Soviet empire and the capitalist West, world war could be averted primarily because of the emergence of the Soviet Union as a nuclear superpower. Thanks to its growing might and prestige, the Soviet Union, in Khrushchev's view, henceforth could restrain the innate aggressive tendencies of the imperialist countries toward the Soviet Union as well as toward each other. A world war, as well as local wars, therefore could be averted and no longer were fatal inevitabilities.

Khrushchev also told the Twentieth Congress that world revolution, defined as the transition of countries from the imperialist system to the socialist system, henceforth could take place under peaceful circumstances—also thanks to the growing might and attractive example of the Soviet Union. On the other hand, small-scale “wars of national liberation,” in which underdeveloped countries within the imperialist system strove to break free and move toward the world of socialism (as Russia had done and Cuba supposedly was doing), were, according to Khrushchev, likely to occur and should be supported by the Soviet Union. Since major international armed conflicts were no longer inevitable, “peaceful coexistence” was possible between the imperialist camp, led by the United States, and the socialist camp, led by the Soviet Union.<sup>11</sup>

In short, Khrushchev redefined the nature of the international threat to the USSR and reduced the output of the threat generator. This in turn made possible a shift in military priorities from relatively expensive conventional forces to relatively inexpensive nuclear forces. It also implied a diminished role for the traditional military establishment. As we shall see, this revision provided an example and something of an inspiration for Gorbachev's further revision of analysis of the foreign threat some thirty years later.

Following the Twentieth Party Congress, Khrushchev made a dramatic change in the substance of the Soviet Union's domestic mission by claiming that socialism had been completed in the USSR and communism was just over the horizon. At the Twenty-second Party Congress in 1961, he solemnly proclaimed that in twenty years the Soviet Union would overtake the United States in most key economic measures and in so doing would ensure that the present generation of Soviet citizens would live under communism.<sup>12</sup> This exuberance met with problematic domestic acceptance. In his conversations with Mlynar, Gorbachev recalled that people began to understand that Khrushchev's programmatic slogans “were basically empty declarations . . . [that]

soon became an object of ridicule in all strata of our society and within the Party itself. The damage done to the authority of the CPSU and to socialism was colossal."<sup>13</sup>

*Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality Under Khrushchev.* To his credit, Khrushchev softened Stalin's harsh approach to orthodoxy and autocracy. He loosened the tight Stalinist constraints on personal expression, allowing, for instance, publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's account of life in a Soviet prison camp and exhibition of Ernst Neizvestny's abstract art—although Khrushchev found Neizvestny's work distasteful and bluntly told the artist as much. Khrushchev also tolerated repeated expressions of concern by Andrei Sakharov—then a key nuclear weapons scientist working inside the military-industrial complex—over Soviet nuclear testing. Sakharov's dissent from official policy was voiced only within leadership circles during that period, but sufferance of such criticism nonetheless was a significant advance over Stalinist behavior.<sup>14</sup>

Khrushchev moderated Stalin's approach to autocracy by reducing the arbitrary use of coercion. When, for example, the 1957 coup against him failed, Khrushchev did not attempt to subject the perpetrators to severe personal punishment.<sup>15</sup> At the same time, as one of Stalin's most trusted lieutenants, Khrushchev had actively implemented the murderous Stalinist purges of the 1930s and 1940s. He was the chief organizer of the arrest and summary execution of Lavrenty Beria, Stalin's secret police chief, shortly after Stalin's death. Khrushchev also sanctioned the suppression of the 1956 Hungarian uprising by Soviet military force and was ultimately responsible for the use of military force against striking workers in the Soviet city of Novocherkassk in the summer of 1962.<sup>16</sup> Khrushchev could rationalize such coercion because, like Stalin before him, he believed it was the Soviet regime's solemn duty to deter imperialism, support the world revolutionary process abroad, and thwart internal enemies while building communism at home. In short, mobilization had become less brutal, but it was still the organizing principle of Khrushchev's conception of governance.

At the third level of the conception, where the regime interacted with society, the scope of personal behavior free from regime interference grew appreciably, although the Stalinist nomenklatura apparatuses remained in place and essentially maintained their earlier roles. Determined to increase Soviet power and accelerate the construction of socialism and communism, Khrushchev fiddled incessantly with the structure and function of these organizations, reforming the military, reining in the KGB, reducing the role of government

ministries, increasing regional integration, and finally splitting the regional party apparatus into two economic components: one for industry, the other for agriculture.

Khrushchev's generally optimistic outlook colored his sense of Soviet nationality. Having served proudly as a senior political commissar during World War II, he continued the glorification of the Soviet Union's contribution to the defeat of Hitler. He expanded Stalin's concept of socialism in one country to an even more ambitious notion of socialism in one international camp, claiming that after World War II countries in Eastern Europe had joined the Soviet Union in a "world socialist system." He reveled in Soviet space exploits that dramatized the Soviet Union's scientific and technical capabilities. He doubtless believed that the USSR would in fact overtake the United States and reach at least the threshold of communism in a couple of decades.

A chilling example of how these exuberant conceptions affected Khrushchev's decision making is provided in his son's recollections of Khrushchev's thinking during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962, along with two book-length analyses of Khrushchev's behavior with respect to this crisis by Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali. According to these accounts, as well as to Khrushchev's own memoirs, Khrushchev was convinced that the Soviet Union, as leader of world socialism, was obligated to protect the fledgling socialist country of Cuba from U.S. military invasion by secretly basing nuclear weapons on the island. The historical record indicates that it was in part this conviction, plus Khrushchev's more general desire to enhance the impact of the USSR's then-limited nuclear arsenal by moving a part of that arsenal close to U.S. borders, that brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.<sup>17</sup>

Regarding Khrushchev's concern to increase the deterrent as well as the political impact of Soviet nuclear weapons, we know from KGB defector Vasili Mitrokhin that in June 1960 then-KGB chairman Alexander Shelepin personally briefed Khrushchev on supposed Pentagon plans to attack the USSR "as soon as possible," before Soviet defense capabilities grew further, and that Khrushchev took this assessment seriously.<sup>18</sup> In addition, Fursenko and Naftali cite recently declassified Kremlin documents indicating that Khrushchev, keenly aware of the Soviet Union's comparative strategic weakness and frustrated that he could not bring the United States to accept his position on the status of Berlin and on other global issues, saw the placement of strategic nuclear weapons on Cuba as a remedy to these problems.<sup>19</sup>

Accounts of Khrushchev's behavior during the Cuban Crisis Missile also illustrate how the dysfunctional aspects of his personality—crudeness, disdain and disregard for views contrary to his own, half-cocked improvisation, and emotional volatility that included semicoherent ranting and bullying—had become alarmingly pronounced.<sup>20</sup> These unfortunate aspects of Khrushchev's psychological makeup, taken together with his deeply held ideological misconceptions (as well as Kennedy administration uncertainties about Khrushchev's motives), made the U.S.-Soviet confrontation over Cuba incredibly dangerous.

*Internal Flexibility of the Conception Under Khrushchev.* Khrushchev's secret speech at the Twentieth Party Congress had an important indirect effect on the official conception of governance. Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin implied that the entire conception—still basically Stalinist in structure and content—was open to question. The documents of the Twentieth Congress made official the changes in Stalinist programmatic analysis described above. Khrushchev's secret speech implied that more changes were likely to come, although he did not indicate what else in the official conception might be modified or when further changes might be announced.

Meanwhile, Khrushchev and other members of the senior nomenklatura knew that throughout his party career he had been a practical party administrator, a trusted implementer of Stalin's policies, but not a specialist in ideology. This meant that the elite nomenklatura members who *were* specialists in doctrinal matters, along with the Central Committee (cc) departments and other organizations they oversaw, had the opportunity to suggest modifications in the official conception to Khrushchev and to other members of the ruling elite.

This ambiguous situation enhanced the authority of Mikhail Suslov, who had been a senior specialist in doctrine and propaganda under Stalin and became *the* senior specialist in these fields under Khrushchev. Suslov of course answered to Khrushchev and the other members of the Party Presidium, but on most issues, large and small, Suslov became the arbiter of doctrinal and ideological correctness.

An illustrative account of Suslov's authority has been provided by Georgy Shakhnazarov, who in the mid-1950s was working for the Communist Party's main publishing house. Shakhnazarov was responsible for editing the widely used official party desk calendar, which had an annual publishing run of twenty million copies and noted significant dates in the party's history. Until the Twentieth Congress, the calendar of course highlighted Stalin's birthday

as well as the date of his death. Following the Twentieth Congress, Shakhnazarov was confronted with the issue of how Stalin should be treated in the 1958 edition, which had to be prepared over a year in advance.

Keenly aware of the political sensitivity of this issue, he sought guidance from his supervisors, who in turn telephoned CC Secretary for Ideology Pyotr N. Pospelov (whose work was supervised by Suslov). Pospelov was emphatic that the dates honoring Stalin should be dropped from the calendar. When the 1958 calendar was published and distributed, however, communists in Stalin's home republic of Georgia complained loudly to Moscow about this slight to their native son. When the Central Committee demanded a written explanation from the publishing house, Shakhnazarov was persuaded by his immediate superior not to mention the oral instruction from Pospelov, for fear that Pospelov might deny having made it. Shakhnazarov reluctantly agreed to take the fall and say that the decision was his alone. He was then summoned to a tribunal conducted by the CC secretariat, including Pospelov but chaired by senior CC Secretary Suslov. Pospelov sat silently as Shakhnazarov—who had only followed what he had been told were Pospelov's instructions—was personally reprimanded by Suslov for exercising poor judgment.<sup>21</sup>

Even under Stalin, academic specialists like Pospelov, a prominent historian, and economist Yevgeni Varga, who headed a large academic institute, had served as advisors to the top party leadership, although, as the Varga case illustrated and the Pospelov incident suggested, they had to be cautious about the advice they offered. The practice of employing full-time consultants—to advise, draft speeches, prepare policy papers and other official documents, and implement decisions—became institutionalized only after the Twentieth Congress. Pioneers in this effort were CC Secretary for International Affairs Boris Ponomarev and CC Secretary for Relations with Ruling Communist Parties Yuri Andropov. Several of their consultants favored basic reform of the Stalinist conception and later became outspoken supporters of Gorbachev's perestroika. These included Ponomarev subordinates Anatoly Chernyaev and Vadim Zagladin, and Andropov subordinates Georgy Arbatov, Alexander Bovin, Fyodor Burlatsky, and Georgy Shakhnazarov.

Hence the Khrushchev period was notable not only for Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin and for the changes in Stalinist thinking that Khrushchev made. Khrushchev created an atmosphere in which it was possible at relatively small personal risk to propose changes to the official conception of governance. At the same time, because Khrushchev obviously was not inclined to follow Sta-

lin's example and purge the nomenklatura of all opponents, many within the nomenklatura continued to oppose de-Stalinization and resist further modification of Stalinist thinking. As the official conception underwent limited change in derivative and instrumental beliefs, some high-ranking nomenklaturists pushed for deeper change, while others pushed against it. This dynamic, centering upon one's attitude toward Stalin and his worldview, was to continue until the Soviet Union's fall in 1991.

Meanwhile, as of the late 1950s economic performance began to slow. With the end of Stalinist terror and the partial easing of Stalin's resort to harsh coercion, the force of negative incentives diminished. At the same time, due to Khrushchev's changes in Stalin's programmatic analysis regarding peaceful coexistence and transition to communism, the energy output of the threat generator and the mission generator also diminished. The regime commenced to lose vitality.

*Khrushchev's Political Demise.* Khrushchev's instinct was to try to unlock the positive forces he believed inherent in Soviet-style socialism by eliminating distortions in the programmatic aspects of the Stalinist conception and also by undertaking a series of innovative policies and reorganizations of the conception's institutions and practices. Often unchecked by his deferential colleagues in the leadership, and increasingly dismissive of their views, he was fond of bold, dramatic measures in both domestic and foreign policy, a tendency that culminated in the near-disastrous 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis. As he endeavored to speed the Soviet Union's advance to communism, Khrushchev alienated nomenklatura conservatives by his repeated criticism of Stalin and barely survived their attempt to oust him from power in 1957. He subsequently alienated senior military leaders by insisting on the reform of military doctrine and force structure. He also alienated much of the nomenklatura in Moscow and in the provinces with his repeated attempts to reorganize the nomenklatura system. Many regime conservatives saw the withdrawal of nuclear missiles from Cuba as a humiliating defeat for the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, Khrushchev angered his close colleagues in the top leadership group with his increasing resort to humiliating personal insults.

A group of his longtime colleagues, nominally headed by Leonid Brezhnev—the identity of the key ring leaders is still murky—quietly organized a majority of the party's Politburo and Central Committee against Khrushchev in the fall of 1964.<sup>22</sup> Confronted by overwhelming political opposition, Khrushchev agreed to retire without a fuss. He in effect became part of his own legacy when his successors brought no political or criminal charges against



him—even after his lengthy personal memoirs were smuggled out of the Soviet Union and published abroad.

### The Rule of Leonid Brezhnev

Thus began the eighteen-year rule as general secretary of Leonid Ilyich Brezhnev, who soon became the butt of underground Soviet jokes about his conservative, plodding leadership style. The Soviet Union may have been an evil empire, but by the mid-1960s even the KGB could not suppress the Russian sense of humor. One of the best-known Brezhnev jokes depicted Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev sharing a compartment on a Soviet train heading toward full communism. The train unexpectedly lurches to a complete stop. The three leaders confer about what should be done. “Shoot every third passenger and force the survivors to push the train,” suggests Stalin. “Reorganize the crew,” proposes Khrushchev. “Close the curtains, rock back and forth, and pretend the train is moving,” recommends Brezhnev.

Former Soviet insiders have described Brezhnev as a man of limited leadership abilities. After gaining access to Brezhnev’s personal diary several years after Brezhnev’s death, Dmitri Volkogonov reported that in comparison with the diary of the last Romanov tsar, Nicholas II—often cited by historians as evidence of Nicholas’s shallowness—“Brezhnev’s gibberish [makes] even Nicholas II appear brilliant.”<sup>23</sup> Brezhnev advisor Georgy Arbatov has described the general secretary as a provincial leader of limited vision and a decision maker of average abilities, although far from a simpleton, until he fell ill and became increasingly infirm during the last half of his reign (roughly 1973–82).<sup>24</sup>

Brezhnev’s implicit mandate from his backers was to eliminate Khrushchev’s excesses and in particular to put the lid on de-Stalinization and stop riling the nomenklatura with reorganization schemes. In this Brezhnev unquestionably succeeded, but at a heavy cost to the vitality of the Soviet system. The ruling class aged, grew more conservative, and became increasingly corrupt. Brezhnev’s eighteen years in power may have amounted to a time of stagnation for the Soviet system, but, as Alexander Yakovlev later pointed out, it was a golden age for the self-centered, risk-averse nomenklatura.<sup>25</sup>

The civilian economy suffered from a costly, prolonged military buildup urged by the military establishment in the aftermath of the Cuban missile

crisis and readily agreed to by former Red Army Colonel Brezhnev—who as a CC secretary had supervised a portion of the military-industrial complex and later, as general secretary, was shamelessly elevated to the supreme military rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, Brezhnev was determined to protect the Soviet people from another war. Like Ronald Reagan some years later, Brezhnev supported an increase in strategic military might in order to sustain détente and negotiate arms control agreements from a position of strength.<sup>27</sup> Constraints on personal expression were tightened, as I witnessed in Moscow in the mid-1970s. Popular disaffection, in the sense of tuning out official propaganda and concentrating on improvement of one's personal situation, began to increase, as my embassy colleagues and I also observed. In the words of Soviet historian Igor Klyamkin, ideology during the Brezhnev years “bumped into a solid wall of indifference and apathy” as millions of people “rushed to arrange their own private life.”<sup>28</sup>

*Brezhnev's Impact on the Stalinist Conception.* By ousting Khrushchev for “voluntarism,” Brezhnev and his colleagues implied that Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin had been excessive and Khrushchev's reforms had been ill-considered. Public criticism of Stalin was halted, and this of course made it easier for party members to assume that there was nothing fundamentally wrong with the official conception of governance and that it therefore required no further modification.

The Brezhnevites did not touch Marxist-Leninist doctrine at the conception's core. Their programmatic analysis continued to identify class struggle as the key dynamic factor in international affairs. The already diminished output of the threat generator was ratcheted back a notch or two more, as the Brezhnev group developed further Khrushchev's analysis of a relatively benign international situation, claiming that the all-important correlation of forces between the Soviet Union and the United States had reached rough strategic parity.

In the view of Brezhnev and his supporters, this, plus the huge concentration of Soviet tanks and other conventional military forces in Central Europe, made possible not only peaceful coexistence but détente between the two superpowers.<sup>29</sup> Of course, from Brezhnev's perspective the Soviet Union and the world socialist system were restraining the aggressive proclivities of the United States and world capitalism, not the other way around. Détente was also seen as facilitating economic advance within the Soviet empire and assisting the national liberation movement in the underdeveloped world, which in turn would weaken world imperialism and strengthen world socialism.

Mobilization involved the centralized allocation of enormous resources—perhaps as much as one-third of GNP, possibly even more, depending upon the criteria one uses in making the calculation—to achieve and maintain military parity with the United States and to provide material assistance to Eastern European allies as well as to the national liberation movement in developing countries. While the Foreign Ministry under Gromyko focused on East-West relations, the KGB under Andropov and the CC International Department under Ponomarev were preoccupied with the Third World. Indeed, there is good evidence that Andropov, Ponomarev, and senior ideologue Suslov, along with the KGB as an institution, considered the Third World to be the pivotal sector of the Cold War and were convinced that the USSR was prevailing there.<sup>30</sup>

The mission generator also was ratcheted back to a minimal level of output. Brezhnev's approach to the regime's domestic obligations was to maintain the basic doctrinal tenets inherited from Khrushchev while quietly shelving Khrushchev's optimistic predictions about overtaking the United States and reaching communism. The Soviet Union was said to be perfecting "developed socialism" rather than moving rapidly toward full communism. A modest attempt at economic reform in the mid-1960s was advocated by Prime Minister Kosygin, who proposed giving economic enterprises more autonomy, but the effort soon petered out. Meanwhile, economic corruption and inefficiency grew. Brezhnev expressed concern over domestic economic shortcomings in his public speeches and urged better performance, but he did not call for, and evidently did not contemplate, systemic economic reform.

Soviet military force was used to defend socialism's "accomplishments" in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, the 1979 invasion of neighboring Afghanistan, and the 1980–81 threat of armed intervention against Poland. As under Khrushchev, the rationale for this coercion was that the Soviet-led socialist camp had to remain strong and viable to deter the imperialist camp and fulfill the other aspects of its historic mandate.

*Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality Under Brezhnev.* Brezhnev and his colleagues reverted to a more Stalinist interpretation of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality. The regime attempted to maintain an upbeat picture of domestic progress and foreign successes. This of course meant protecting the orthodox view by silencing domestic critics and trying to keep the Soviet people ignorant of the realities of life in advanced industrial countries. Organized dissent was gradually but relentlessly crushed, as described in Chapter 3.

Media controls were strengthened, although the widening gap between regime propaganda and the true situation at home and abroad meant that the truth could not be suppressed totally. Foreign radio broadcasting to the Soviet Union had an impact, despite the countrywide jamming effort, as the public relations effort of the Helsinki Monitoring Group and the unofficial artists had demonstrated in the mid-1970s.

Even Soviet media sometimes let reality slip through. During the late 1970s, Soviet television, as part of its children's programming, ran the American TV series *Flipper*, which depicted the antics of a domesticated dolphin in Florida. Judging from my unofficial Moscow acquaintances, Soviet viewers were much more interested in what the program revealed about middle-class American living standards (housing, clothing, automobiles, appliances, food served during meals) than in the story line and the dolphin tricks.

Autocracy under Brezhnev centered upon providing the nomenklatura with autonomy and stability, giving the military what it wanted within the limits of growing economic constraints, and strengthening the role of the KGB in combating internal dissident. Significantly, both the minister of defense and the chairman of the KGB were made full members of the party's ruling Politburo, in accord with their importance at the instrumental level of the Brezhnevite conception of governance. The workers and collective farmers at the bottom of the political pyramid of course remained without meaningful political power.

Nationality was expressed by Brezhnev and his colleagues primarily in terms of the Soviet Union's status as a global superpower roughly equal in military strength to the United States. The Soviet Union was still officially depicted as in the vanguard of history, having saved the world from Hitler, then continuing to lead humanity toward communism and assisting the national liberation struggle. But as the Soviet economy faltered, and the disparity between party mythology and daily life grew, a dwindling number of the empire's subjects were inspired by the Kremlin's incessant claims of Soviet exceptionalism. The official conception of governance, and the Soviet regime that it generated and sustained, seemed listless and out of fresh ideas.

*Variations on the Official Conception During the Brezhnev Period.* Like Nikita Khrushchev, Leonid Brezhnev throughout his career in the nomenklatura had been a trustworthy executor of party policy and an able practical politician, but not a theorist. Upon becoming general secretary, Brezhnev had no pretensions to a Stalin-like role as sole interpreter of Marxism-Leninism

and was comfortable relying on the nomenklatura for guidance on doctrine, programmatic analysis, and propaganda. As during the Khrushchev years, the acknowledged master of such topics was Mikhail Suslov, along with CC secretaries Boris Ponomarev and Yuri Andropov—until the latter was put in charge of the KGB by Brezhnev in 1967.

As it became clear that the Brezhnev leadership was disinclined to build upon Khrushchev's tentative liberalization of the official conception of governance, many reform-minded CC consultants moved to other pursuits. Fyodor Burlatsky became a political analyst for the influential weekly newspaper *Litturnaya Gazeta* (Literary Gazette), Alexander Bovin became a popular television commentator and newspaper columnist, Georgy Arbatov became the founding director of the Institute for the USA and Canada, and Georgy Shakhnazarov moved to a senior position at the Prague headquarters of the Moscow-controlled journal of the world communist movement, *Problems of Peace and Socialism*. But the hope of these individuals and others like them for reform remained alive.

More broadly, liberals like my acquaintances Yuri Zamoshkin and Mark Masarsky kept their heads down but did not abandon their desire for less dogma and more pragmatism. This was also true of many who remained within the senior nomenklatura group (as they eventually disclosed in their memoirs)—including Anatoly Chernyaev, Georgy Shakhnazarov, Eduard Shevardnadze, and Alexander Yakovlev—whose professional work was conducted within the boundaries of the official conception even though they were personally disillusioned with it. Brezhnev and his colleagues could suppress open manifestations of discontent, but they could not quell the growing dissatisfaction with the existing system, even among some high-level nomenklatura practitioners.<sup>31</sup>

*The Decline of Leonid Brezhnev.* One measure of cynicism toward regime mythology was the growing number of jokes at the expense of General Secretary Brezhnev, jokes that became more pointed with the decline in his health. For example, the following cruel tale circulated in Moscow shortly after the 1980 Moscow Olympic Games. Brezhnev makes his way to the podium at Lenin Stadium to officially open the games. A short statement, drafted by the Soviet Olympic Committee, is in place at the rostrum. Brezhnev puts his finger at the top of the page and commences to speak into the microphone, loudly and deliberately: "Oh . . . Oh . . . Oh." An aide hurries to Brezhnev's side and whispers: "Leonid Ilyich, you have placed your finger too high! You're reading the Olympic symbol!"

This imagined happening was not far from reality. Historian Dmitri Volkogonov, in his capacity as a senior army general, was present at one of Brezhnev's last speeches before the Soviet Union's military leadership. As Volkogonov describes it: "Brezhnev was led to a rostrum, papers were set before him and, clinging shakily to the edge of the speaker's lectern, he tried to read his speech. The generals in the audience lowered their heads; they were ashamed for their country and sorry for Brezhnev, a sick man who had reached the top by an organizational quirk."<sup>32</sup>

Mikhail Gorbachev, who was a junior member of the central party leadership during Brezhnev's final four years as general secretary, recalls Politburo meetings at which Brezhnev forgot the topic of discussion or became so confused that his close associate Konstantin Chernenko would jump up and dash toward Brezhnev to straighten things out. Gorbachev comments: "It was a sad sight. All this was done without any visible embarrassment. I was ashamed, and sometimes assumed that the others must have similar feelings. Whether right or wrong, they sat there without batting an eyelid."<sup>33</sup>

Gorbachev has well summarized the overall significance of the Brezhnev period as follows:

In a political sense, Brezhnevism was nothing but a conservative reaction against Khrushchev's attempt at reforming the authoritarian model of his time. . . . But the most important thing about Brezhnevism was its failure to meet the challenges of the time. Through its blind adherence to old dogmas and obsolete ideas the leadership overlooked the far-reaching changes that were taking place in science and technology, and in the life and activity of the people, and they ignored the transformations that were occurring in other countries. A solid barrier was set up against any kind of change; the country had thus been driven into an impasse, and was doomed to lag far behind.<sup>34</sup>

### The Soviet Paradigm's "Normal" Phase

During the almost thirty-year span from Stalin's death in March 1953 to Brezhnev's death in November 1982, the official Soviet conception of governance, when considered as a Kuhnian scientific paradigm, underwent essentially "normal" development, in the sense that its essence did not come under

direct challenge from among the paradigm's key practitioners. The development most threatening to the paradigm's viability during this period was Khrushchev's blunt criticism of the paradigm's chief architect. This damage was quickly papered over by Khrushchev's successors, and the conception's basic components evidently remained intact and credible in the minds of most members of the senior nomenklatura.

As Gorbachev suggests in his assessment of the Brezhnev period, and as Czeslaw Milosz foresaw in 1951, an indirect but nonetheless corrosive problem for the paradigm's credibility unfolded during Brezhnev's rule. True to his role in the joke about the train to communism, Brezhnev and his cronies in the senior leadership paid little attention to growing economic stagnation and pervasive corruption and essentially acted as if everything were fine. In fact, the obvious disinclination of the Brezhnev nomenklatura to modernize the Soviet economy, and the growing gap between Soviet and Western economic progress that resulted, contradicted the paradigm's core doctrine about the economic advantages of Soviet-style socialism and the Soviet Union's eventual attainment of full communism. However, consistent with Kuhn's analysis of reactions to events that are contrary to paradigm-induced expectations, Brezhnev and his supporters took Kuhn's first option: they set the problem aside and ignored it. They pretended the train was still moving.

# 8

## Gorbachev and the Conception's Terminal Phase

Of the five general secretaries that followed Stalin, only the last, Mikhail Gorbachev, had the perceptiveness, political will, and physical stamina to declare openly that the Soviet Union was in crisis and then to make a sustained effort to resolve the situation as he understood it. We have seen that Nikita Khrushchev was surrounded by conservatives and was himself too erratic to articulate and implement a comprehensive reform program. Leonid Brezhnev and his entourage did not rise to the challenge because they were disinclined to acknowledge that there was a challenge. Ironically, given Brezhnev's illness during the last half of his reign, the next two general secretaries, Yuri Andropov (1982–84) and Konstantin Chernenko (1984–85), were both in poor health upon assuming the top job, and each was able to serve only a matter of months before becoming incapacitated and dying in office soon thereafter.

### The Transition from Brezhnev to Gorbachev

*Andropov.* Several aspects of Andropov's brief reign merit attention. First, he evidently was successful in improving the performance of the command economy by imposing discipline on the economic apparatus, particularly on its managers but also on rank-and-file workers. According to economist Gregory Khanin, the steady decline in Soviet economic performance that dated from the late 1950s had led to an absolute decline in national income by the last years of Brezhnev's rule. Khanin's analysis shows that Andropov's insistence on responsible economic performance, accompanied by a crackdown on malfeasance, quickly turned this situation around, producing a remarkable eleven percent *increase* in national income over the period 1983–87.<sup>1</sup> This apparent uptick in economic performance indicated that there was still some life left in the Stalinist command economy, if properly energized from the



center. In addition, Andropov's young protégé in the central leadership group, Mikhail Gorbachev, must have been impressed with Andropov's economic policies, since Gorbachev attempted to emulate them in the first years of his tenure as general secretary.

On the negative side of the ledger (from the Kremlin's perspective), Andropov and his colleagues interpreted the policies of President Reagan during the period 1981–83 as meaning that Soviet-U.S. détente had come to an end, that the United States was seeking military superiority over the Soviet Union, and that U.S. hostility toward the USSR had reached the point at which an unprovoked U.S. military attack was a real possibility.<sup>2</sup> It appears in retrospect that this analysis led to an increase in Soviet military spending, presumably to maintain military parity and thus ensure effective deterrence between the two superpowers. According to declassified CIA estimates, during the period 1985–87 military procurement of interceptor aircraft and surface-to-air missiles grew by 8.2 percent, while procurement for research, intelligence, and communications grew by 5 percent.<sup>3</sup> The timing of these decisions is speculative, however, because the temporal gap between them and actual procurement detected by the CIA cannot be established.

In any case, part of Gorbachev's inheritance, upon his election as general secretary in March 1985, was a growing military budget that must have been reflected in the twelfth Five Year Plan (1986–90) for the entire Soviet economy that had been prepared during Chernenko's rule and was formally approved shortly after Gorbachev's election.

*Chernenko.* Chernenko was viewed by most of the senior nomenklatura as a transitional figure from whom little could be expected.<sup>4</sup> The defining feature of his political career had been his faithful service to Leonid Brezhnev, so it was not surprising that as general secretary Chernenko was supportive of Brezhnev holdovers in the leadership like Prime Minister Nikolai Tikhonov and Moscow party boss Viktor Grishin. It was also unsurprising that Chernenko allowed the nomenklatura to drift back to the lax mode of operation typical of the Brezhnev era. In the words of Georgy Arbatov: "Chernenko was a professional clerk, an average bureaucrat, and not a statesman. He really should never have gone further than assistant head of the Documentation Department of the Central Committee, or manager of the chancellery of the Supreme Soviet. There was no reason to expect anything valuable from him as a leader, although he was not a malicious person. But he could have caused a lot of harm if he had had more time and been in better health."<sup>5</sup>

## Gorbachev's Pre-1985 Attitude Toward the Official Conception

Mikhail Gorbachev's attitudes and experiences prior to becoming general secretary set him apart from the typical party apparatchik. While the education of most Brezhnev-era party functionaries was related to engineering, industry, or agriculture, Gorbachev completed the full five-year course in law at Moscow State University before starting his party career (although he later earned a second, more orthodox degree in agricultural economics from the Stavropol Agricultural Institute). Stalinism was still in full force during most of Gorbachev's time at Moscow State University—he began his studies there in 1950, when Stalin's paranoia was running high. Still, Gorbachev records that his university years brought an important intellectual awakening. Even in reading the works of Marx, Engels, and Lenin, Gorbachev says he discovered a style of intellectual discourse that contrasted sharply with Stalinist dogmatism.<sup>6</sup>

Later in his career, after he had risen to the rank of Party First Secretary in his home district of Stavropol (in the southwest of the Russian Republic), Gorbachev vacationed in Italy and France, where he and his wife toured via rented car—in those days an unusual adventure for a Soviet official of Gorbachev's rank. He also visited Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands as a member of official Soviet delegations. Gorbachev later confided to his close aides that these trips to the West revealed to him for the first time the discrepancy between Soviet propaganda and the reality of life in “capitalist” countries.<sup>7</sup>

Gorbachev disclosed in his 1995 memoir that he was amazed during his travels westward “by the open and relaxed attitude of the people we met and marveled at their unrestrained judgment of everything, including the activity of their governments and their national and local politicians.” He admitted that his previous belief in the superiority of socialist democracy over the bourgeois system was shaken as he observed the functioning of civil society and of the different political systems. He wrote that the most significant conclusion he drew from his journeys abroad was that

people there lived in better conditions and were better off than in our country. The question haunted me: why was the standard of living in our country lower than in other developed countries? It seemed that our aged leaders were not especially worried about our undeniably lower living standards, our unsatisfactory way of life, and

our falling behind in the field of advanced technologies. Instead of seeking ways to catch up with other countries and prevent the country and the system from sinking deeper into a state of crisis, the leadership was primarily concerned with devising new artificial ideological concepts which would sanctify the existing realities and present them as historical achievements.<sup>8</sup>

Even an official visit to Czechoslovakia in 1969 proved eye-opening. At the time of the 1968 Soviet invasion of that country, Gorbachev accepted the official explanation that Soviet military action was required “for the defense of socialism against subversive activities on the part of the Western powers.”<sup>9</sup> When he visited Czech and Slovak factories one year later, however, he was shocked to find that workers turned their backs to the Soviet delegation. Gorbachev later wrote:

From that time on I began to think more and more about what was going on in our country, and I came to an unconsoling conclusion: there was something wrong in our country. An understanding ripened in my mind: the actions of the Brezhnev leadership had been dictated not only by the threat that the “socialist commonwealth” might fall apart but also by the internal situation in the Soviet Union. The time was ripe for change in our own country, and they were using this as a way of putting off such changes.<sup>10</sup>

Several of Gorbachev’s colleagues have recorded his early conviction that the Soviet regime required major reform. Eduard Shevardnadze recalls that among his first impressions of Gorbachev, then a Komsomol official in Stavropol, was that “his thinking went beyond the boundaries of prescribed norms.”<sup>11</sup> Shevardnadze also recalls that both he and Gorbachev felt the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a “fatal error.” “It was clear to both of us,” Shevardnadze writes, “that if we did not change our foreign policy by removing the main sources of distrust—the use of force and rigid ideology—we would never create a zone of security around our country.”<sup>12</sup> Shevardnadze states that in 1984 he told Gorbachev that “Everything’s rotten. . . . It has to be changed.”<sup>13</sup> Shevardnadze does not report Gorbachev’s response, but less than a year later Gorbachev brought Shevardnadze to Moscow as Soviet foreign minister.

Alexander Yakovlev has disclosed that when he was Soviet ambassador to

Canada in 1983, he and Gorbachev, who was visiting Canada as head of a Soviet agricultural delegation, agreed that the Soviet Union could not continue on its current course.<sup>14</sup> As has been widely reported, Gorbachev wrote in his own memoir that he told his wife, literally on the eve of becoming general secretary, that he would accept the position if nominated because “we can’t go on living like this.”<sup>15</sup> Gorbachev surely knew that only as general secretary, a position of authority and prestige similar to that of the pope within the Catholic Church hierarchy, could he hope to correct the defects he believed were plaguing the Soviet system.

### Changes in Doctrine and Programmatic Analysis

Cognitive psychology suggests that change in belief systems usually occurs first in peripheral aspects not directly linked to core convictions.<sup>16</sup> This was the general pattern of Gorbachev’s changes in the official conception. His initial inclination was to follow the example of his patron Yuri Andropov by improving the performance of the existing regime at the institutional level. When, roughly by the end of 1987, it became apparent that his concentration on the “human factor” (by, for example, cracking down on drunkenness and corruption, insisting on high manufacturing standards, criticizing by name and often dismissing underperforming managers and party overseers) would not produce the economic results he felt were required, Gorbachev moved to *perestroika*, to restructuring substantive aspects of the official conception of governance.

*Modifying Doctrine with “New Thinking.”* A significant deviation from the pattern of initial nonsubstantive change was Gorbachev’s revision of traditional programmatic analysis regarding international class struggle, which, as mentioned in Chapter 4, we in Embassy Moscow noted during the Twenty-seventh Party Congress in 1986. This “new political thinking,” as Gorbachev and his supporters termed it, was important in its own right but also had major implications for the conception’s doctrinal core.

As outlined in Chapter 6, historical materialism taught that class conflict, both within nations and among nations (except for the Soviet Union and its “socialist” allies), was the key driver of international relations. In Gorbachev’s view, however, class struggle as a determinant of international affairs had been eclipsed by the development of nuclear weapons, the subsequent establishment of rough strategic parity between the Soviet Union and the United

States, and the growth of powerful interests common to all people (e.g., peace, prosperity, health, nourishment, environment). In a broader sense, Gorbachev was asserting—tentatively at the Twenty-seventh Party Congress but much more strongly in his 1987 book *Perestroika* and in subsequent pronouncements—that the force of class conflict had been superseded by the force of globalization.

Alexander Yakovlev, who headed the speechwriting team for Gorbachev's report to the Twenty-seventh Congress and was primarily responsible for the sections dealing with ideology and foreign policy, noted in his 2003 memoir that the report's characterization of the world as "contradictory but interdependent and largely integral" was the key phrase of the entire congress. Confirming what we had suspected at the time, Yakovlev went on to say that these words "marked a radical departure from Marxism, from its postulates regarding class struggle and world revolution. They placed in doubt the inevitability and necessity of struggle between the two systems. Practically speaking, this was the first signal from the highest political level of the inevitability of globalization of basic world processes."<sup>17</sup>

During the first years of his rule, Gorbachev did not focus publicly on the incompatibility between new thinking and core doctrine. Indeed, he revealed in his 1995 memoir that at first he was unaware of this incompatibility. By mid-1991, however, with the Soviet economy in steep decline and its consumer sector in chaos, Gorbachev evidently concluded that the need for change at the official conception's doctrinal core had to be confronted. In July 1991, Gorbachev convened a Central Committee meeting to consider a new Communist Party program—Gorbachev's plan was to organize a Party Congress in November or December 1991, at which the new program would be adopted, but the August 1991 coup attempt and its aftermath caused this scheme to be abandoned.

Nomenklatura conservatives had stubbornly attempted to reinforce Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy in the 1991 draft program, requiring Gorbachev publicly to rebuff their efforts.<sup>18</sup> Noting the "monstrous price we have had to pay for a doctrinaire attitude and unlimited belief in ideological postulates and myths," Gorbachev informed the gathered Central Committee members that

In the past, the Party recognized only Marxism-Leninism as the source of its inspiration, while this doctrine itself was distorted to the extreme to suit the pragmatic purposes of the day and was turned into a kind of collection of canonical texts. It is now necessary to

include in our ideological arsenal the riches of our and the world's socialist and democratic thought. Such an approach is dictated by the fact that the realization of the socialist idea and movement along the path of economic, social, and spiritual progress can be successfully implemented today only in the channel of the common development of civilization.<sup>19</sup>

Gorbachev was clearly saying that because his new thinking correctly regarded the Soviet Union as an integral part of world civilization, Marxist-Leninist doctrine was inadequate as the party's sole "source of inspiration" and henceforth should be considered together with other theories of socialism and democracy from around the world. In effect, he was declaring that Soviet doctrine, along with the programmatic analysis it had produced, was not necessarily scientific and certainly did not constitute the only valid approach to governance. This in turn opened to question the utility of the conception's instrumental beliefs, as manifested by the institutions, roles, and practices that doctrine and programmatic analysis had spawned.

A second revision of traditional doctrine implicit in new thinking was made explicit by Gorbachev at the July 1991 plenum. This concerned the teaching of historical materialism that human history consisted of the rise, development, and fall of four socioeconomic formations, leading to the rise and perfection of the fifth and final socialist/communist formation. New thinking saw the world as an interconnected whole: it therefore implied that one should not, as the Bolsheviks had done since 1917, construe the contemporary world as divided between the capitalist/imperialist formation and the socialist/communist formation, between the capitalist camp and the socialist camp.

The draft program itself underscored this notion, stating: "Under present conditions the implementation of the socialist idea may be successfully . . . [accomplished] . . . only within the mainstream of the formation of a new world civilization."<sup>20</sup> Leaving no doubt he was not talking in this context about historical materialism's fifth socioeconomic formation, Gorbachev noted that attainment of communism was unrealistic for the foreseeable future but, in the sense of all-around individual development, had been and remained "an attractive guideline for mankind."<sup>21</sup>

*Eliminating the Traditional Threat.* Gorbachev's new political thinking amounted to a unilateral declaration that the Cold War in principle was over because implacable class enmity between imperialism and socialism, the con-

flict's underlying cause (from the Soviet point of view), had lost validity. There was no dire military or subversive menace to the Soviet Union from the United States and its allies, Gorbachev implied. It was no longer obligatory for the Soviet Union to engage in a costly and dangerous contest with world imperialism for power, influence, and eventual global triumph. The Soviet Union therefore could, and should, abandon its self-assigned role as leader of the revolutionary camp and assume its appropriate role as a responsible member of a single, global community of nations.<sup>22</sup>

Given the importance of new thinking for its impact on the official conception of governance, several aspects of its development should be highlighted. First, it did not originate with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze. Andrei Sakharov had discussed the eventual convergence of socialism and capitalism some two decades earlier, in his 1968 samizdat essay *Progress, Peaceful Coexistence, and Intellectual Freedom*. This and similar concepts were, of course, widely written about and debated in the West, and as of the late 1970s Gorbachev probably had access to much of this material by virtue of his nomenklatura seniority.<sup>23</sup> By the early 1980s, many Moscow foreign policy specialists working for think tanks and the media, along with many in the foreign policy nomenklatura, had concluded that the traditional Soviet approach to international relations was out of touch with reality.<sup>24</sup> For example, Georgy Shakhnazarov, who was to become one of Gorbachev's closest advisors, had written in 1984 that the nuclear era required a new way of thinking, in which universal human priorities should take precedence over class interests.<sup>25</sup>

Second, Gorbachev's personal transition from old to new thinking was prolonged and uneven. While the essence of the new approach was adopted at Gorbachev's initiative by the Twenty-seventh Party Congress in March 1986, over a year later he discussed foreign affairs with Zimbabwean leader Robert Mugabe using the old categories of "ruling circles of imperialist countries" and "mighty socialist camp." Gorbachev's Soviet interpreter for that meeting later wrote that he was surprised to hear such rhetoric from the chief architect of new thinking, noting that he had heard the same anti-imperialist phraseology from Leonid Brezhnev eight years earlier.<sup>26</sup>

Gorbachev's foreign policy aide Chernyaev has explained this apparent inconsistency by pointing out that while Gorbachev's speech to the Twenty-seventh Congress showed that he had formed the concept of new thinking, the notion "was still contaminated by ideological and class mythology, and influenced by an outdated view of the situation even at that moment." Chernyaev added that Gorbachev was also still hostage to the traditional interna-

tional obligations of the Communist Party general secretary. In Chernyaev's words, Gorbachev's thinking

was hampered by old commitments to friends and allies as well as the duties of "proletarian" and "socialist" internationalism. The CPSU [Communist Party of the Soviet Union] saw itself as the mainstay and guarantor of that internationalism and considered it one of the main sources of our strength as a superpower. Hence the mixture of new and old, the imaginary and real, the contradictions and inconsistencies in Gorbachev's views that I constantly encountered when reading my notes of his conversations.<sup>27</sup>

Gorbachev seemed to turn a psychological corner toward firm commitment to new thinking in the latter part of 1987, in the course of working on his book *Perestroika* and then preparing his major address later that year commemorating the seventieth anniversary of the 1917 revolution.<sup>28</sup>

Third, the psychological shift from old to new thinking about international affairs without question was motivated by Gorbachev's perception of the need to end the arms race, reduce Soviet military spending, and use the savings to finance domestic reform. Gorbachev discussed this need in numerous Politburo and other closed meetings but said little about it publicly—doubtless to avoid the perception at home and abroad of Soviet weakness. At a meeting with Soviet diplomats at the Foreign Ministry in May 1986, for example, Gorbachev emphasized that Soviet foreign policy must "do anything in its capabilities to loosen the vice of defense expenditures."<sup>29</sup> On the eve of the October 1986 Reykjavik summit, he told the Politburo that "we are at the limit of our capabilities," and if a new round in the arms race takes place "the pressure on our economy will be unbelievable."<sup>30</sup>

New political thinking was more than a pragmatic effort to transfer resources from the military to the civilian sector. Speaking at a Princeton University conference in 1996, Chernyaev acknowledged that economic needs played a major role in Gorbachev's new thinking but then went on to say:

The new foreign policy of Mikhail Gorbachev was also based on thinking autonomous from domestic concerns. There were a number of elements involved. For example, the understanding that a nuclear catastrophe was a real possibility. This differed from the view of the previous Soviet leaders, who still clung to the idea that if a



nuclear war were to erupt one day, it would end in our victory. Gorbachev regarded nuclear war as a total catastrophe, as a global disaster. Another crucial element in the new foreign strategy is Gorbachev's conviction—which had not yet jelled in the first years of perestroika but took shape later—that we had lost the ideological war which we had been conducting for so many decades in the international arena. That ideological war had been lost not just because of technological and economic inferiority, but because the ideology itself that underlay it was wrong. Yet another important element was that long before Gorbachev became the general secretary, he became convinced that no one was going to attack us. And, a final element that was very important in defining Gorbachev's foreign policy was his moral principles [that] . . . evolved over his entire life . . . [and included] rejection of violence . . . [and] rejection of the use of force, not just in policy and politics, but generally in life, as a way of living in a human society.<sup>31</sup>

Similarly nuanced interpretations of new thinking can be found in the memoirs of Gorbachev advisors Medvedev, Shakhnazarov, Shevardnadze, and Yakovlev, and in Shevardnadze's July 1988 address to Foreign Ministry personnel.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, the doctrinal and programmatic revisions stemming from new thinking were facilitated by Gorbachev's gradually gaining personal control over ideology and foreign policy. He became formally responsible for these fields in 1984, when he moved into the powerful number two position in the party leadership under Chernenko. This was the position that had been held for decades by Mikhail Suslov, who, fortunately for Gorbachev's reform effort and particularly for his downgrading of class conflict, had died in 1982.

Upon Chernenko's death in March 1985 and Gorbachev's election as general secretary, Gorbachev split formal oversight of ideology between Yegor Ligachev, who at Gorbachev's request had moved into the number two party position, and Gorbachev confidant Alexander Yakovlev, who soon thereafter was promoted to full Politburo and Secretariat membership.<sup>33</sup> Ligachev was a strong supporter of Gorbachev's initial reform effort but at the same time was a firm believer in Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. He vigorously opposed such doctrinal "revisions" as the deemphasis of class conflict—although he stopped short of challenging Gorbachev's authority as general secretary over

these matters and, while sympathetic toward the August 1991 coup plotters, did not participate in their attempt to reverse Gorbachev's reforms.

True believers in the Stalinist conception Andrei Gromyko and Boris Ponomarev soon were moved aside. Gromyko was replaced by "new thinker" Eduard Shevardnadze in the summer of 1985, and Ponomarev was replaced in 1986 by the relatively pragmatic Anatoly Dobrynin, following the latter's long service as ambassador to the United States. Ligachev's authority in the ideological field was gradually overshadowed by that of Yakovlev and of another Gorbachev supporter, Vadim Medvedev, who had worked closely on ideological matters with Yakovlev in the Central Committee apparatus in the late 1960s. This process culminated in Ligachev's 1988 transfer from oversight of ideology to oversight of agriculture, and Medvedev's promotion to full Politburo status in the same year. In short, some three years into his reign, Gorbachev had removed old thinkers from leadership positions that otherwise would have given them standing to challenge his revisions of doctrine and programmatic analysis.

*Dimming the Radiant Future.* A second major change in programmatic analysis unfolded even more gradually and unevenly, as Gorbachev attempted throughout his tenure as general secretary to revitalize the Soviet economy. Even if class struggle had been overshadowed by interests common to all, and as a result the traditional foreign threat and a major part of the international mission had been eliminated, one could still argue that the Soviet Union needed to preserve its domestic empire and maintain some measure of centrally controlled mobilization to perfect socialism and move toward communism, while providing an example—a shining red city on a hill—for the rest of humanity.

Gorbachev stopped short of renouncing explicitly the idea that the USSR had a historic domestic mission to fulfill, but he abandoned the goal of attaining full communism in favor of constructing what he considered to be Lenin's conception of "democratic socialism," vaguely characterized as more humane, more gradual, and more moderate than Stalin's conception of socialism. By July 1991, when Gorbachev introduced his new program for the Communist Party, he characterized the current situation in blunt terms: "The previous theoretical and practical model of socialism which was foisted on the party for many decades has proved bankrupt. The need for a thoroughgoing restructuring has appeared, a democratic reformation of all aspects of public life. Both the renewal of the party itself and the need for a new party program are connected with this."<sup>34</sup>

In something of an approving nod toward Stalin, Gorbachev acknowledged that “the totalitarian and bureaucratic system created by Stalin allowed major results to be achieved through the concentration of the forces and resources of the huge country.” However, Gorbachev went on to say, these “extraordinary efforts” gradually eroded society’s health and “led to the squandering of its resources, the loss of incentives for productive and creative labor.”<sup>35</sup> What was now required was “yet another change of our whole concept of socialism, which should now consider our 70 years of experience.” In particular, a market system and private property should be added to the concept of economic perestroika. This, Gorbachev argued, would be entirely compatible with the Leninist concept of socialism, would increase efficiency, and would enable the Soviet Union to become “an organic part of the world economy.”<sup>36</sup>

In practice, while Gorbachev succeeded in dismantling much of the command economy, he failed to bring a new conception of socialism to life. The result was renewed economic decline, beginning at the end of 1987 and leading to grave economic problems, particularly in the consumer sector, in 1990 and 1991.<sup>37</sup> Yet in his 1991 draft party program Gorbachev was still advocating renovation of the existing conception of governance. His call was for less doctrine, more openness to outside ideas, more democracy, a reinvigorated party, a global conception of socialism, and the addition of private property and a market economy.

These goals obviously marked a major departure from Stalinist thinking. Yet after some six years in office, Gorbachev could not offer a credible path to a radiant future. Instead, by publicly focusing attention on systemic economic problems and then, as the Soviet economic performance began to plummet, proving unable to resolve them, Gorbachev virtually shut down the energy that had been generated by the notion of a transcendent domestic calling.<sup>38</sup> During the Brezhnev years, the output of the mission generator had greatly diminished due to the lack of compelling domestic and international goals. Despite Gorbachev’s concerted effort to revive this energy source, its output soon declined to Brezhnevian levels, for essentially the same reason.

Even his close personal aide and supporter Anatoly Chernyaev became pessimistic about the Soviet Union’s future under Gorbachev. In May 1989, Chernyaev wrote in his personal diary: “Inside me, depression and alarm are growing, the sense of crisis of the Gorbachevian idea. He is prepared to go far. But what does it mean? His favorite catchword is ‘unpredictability.’ And most likely we will come to a collapse of the state and something like chaos. . . . He has no concept of where we are going. His declaration about socialist

values, the ideals of October, as he begins to tick them off, sound like irony to the cognoscenti. Behind them—emptiness.”<sup>39</sup>

*Negating the Rationale for Mobilization.* We have seen that from its inception, the Soviet conception of governance, including its institutions, roles, and practices, was premised on the Stalinist imperative for nationwide mobilization. This imperative, in turn, stemmed from doctrinally based programmatic analysis of threats to the regime and of the regime’s domestic and international missions beyond self-defense. In attempting to restore the Soviet conception of governance to health, Gorbachev placed in question the validity of the conception’s scientific foundation, eliminated the traditional foreign threat, and drained the traditional domestic and international missions of their content. By negating the essential prerequisites for mobilization, he destroyed the conception’s internal logic and deprived the regime’s key institutions, roles, and practices of their underlying paradigmatic rationale.

### Changes in Political Culture and the Conception’s Instrumental Aspects

*Diluting Orthodoxy.* As Gorbachev’s policies eroded the official conception’s logical integrity, they also undercut the Stalinist manifestations of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality that for decades had shaped Soviet political culture. Orthodoxy was diminished by Gorbachev’s new thinking as well as by his emphasis on glasnost and democratization. New thinking about international affairs indicated that even the traditional notion of class struggle was subject to revision. Gorbachev’s critical attitude toward Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy peaked in the summer of 1991, when, as just noted, he declared publicly that the entire doctrinal foundation of the regime was distorted and required enrichment from outside intellectual sources.

Glasnost, initially intended by Gorbachev as a device for revealing incompetence among the nomenklatura and lower-level regime cadres, was increasingly utilized by independent-minded editors, journalists, and intellectuals to criticize virtually all aspects of the Stalinist conception of governance and its negative impact on Soviet society.<sup>40</sup> While this not what Gorbachev had in mind, glasnost as it evolved opened the way for many voices to be heard, on almost any topic. For example, the film *Repentance*, a powerful satire of Stalinism (written, directed, and acted by Georgians), was shown throughout the

USSR in 1986 and 1987. Khrushchev's 1956 secret speech criticizing Stalin was published in full in the Soviet press shortly thereafter.

Even Lenin was subjected to public criticism, a development that evidently came close, even in Gorbachev's mind, to the line beyond which glasnost should not go.<sup>41</sup> Volkogonov cites, in this regard, the stenographic record of a June 1989 Politburo discussion about the wisdom of publishing Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*:

*Gorbachev:* Now to the question of publishing the works of Solzhenitsyn. . . . The issue is not about Stalin, but the assertion that he was Lenin's faithful pupil. That he continued his cause. And he [Solzhenitsyn] does it by quoting Lenin's telephone-tapes and letters.

*Ligachev:* How can we allow this sort of thing to be written about Lenin?

. . .

*Gorbachev:* It turns out that, as far as Lenin was concerned [in Solzhenitsyn's depiction], the worse, the better. Let people suffer, let men die in the trenches . . . for him there was only the lust for power. . . . There's a hint about the link with Inessa Armand [who had been virtually a second wife to Lenin]. . . . Contempt for the Russian people . . .

*Yakovlev:* We have to publish it. Everyone's in favour of publication: the Union of Writers, the magazines . . .

*Gorbachev:* So, are we the only ones left? I'd better read it myself.<sup>42</sup>

Overall, Gorbachev allowed unprecedented relaxation of domestic coercion and ideological control. Despite his concerns about Lenin's public image, *The Gulag Archipelago* was published in the Soviet Union shortly after the above discussion. He personally telephoned human rights activist Andrei Sakharov—shortly after the KGB mysteriously appeared at the Sakharov's apartment to install a functional telephone—to invite him to return to Moscow from his forced exile to the closed city of Gorky (brought about by Sakharov's public criticism of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan). The media and the arts were accorded freedom unseen since the early days of Bolshevik rule. The delegation of the U.S. CSCE Commission directly experienced this new openness during its 1988 visit to Moscow to look into Soviet human rights practices, as described in Chapter 4. Although the process was uneven, and sometimes ugly, on balance regime orthodoxy under Gorbachev became much more pragmatic, much less restrictive, and much more humane.<sup>43</sup>

*Reducing Autocracy.* Gorbachev's reform efforts caused profound changes

in the traditional practice of autocracy, changes that involved both the structure of political power and the exercise of that power. In 1988 Gorbachev called for replacing monopolistic Communist Party rule—although not the Communist Party itself—with a new governmental system based on meaningful popular elections, a relatively independent parliament, individual rights, and the rule of law.<sup>44</sup> This was a remarkable intellectual breakout from the conception of autocracy Gorbachev inherited, even if it was (and has continued to be) extraordinarily difficult to implement. A new Soviet parliament, the Congress of People's Deputies, was established under Gorbachev's leadership, which in turn selected from its huge membership of 2,250 a smaller and more functional parliamentary body, the Supreme Soviet. In a significant but only partial move toward democracy, two-thirds of the Congress's members were popularly elected; the remaining one-third were chosen by "public organizations" for the most part dominated by the Communist Party. (Gorbachev later explained that he felt he had to favor the party in this way so that senior officials would not be humiliated by defeat in popular elections.)<sup>45</sup>

As for the exercise of Soviet power in the Eastern European sector of the empire, as early as 1985, immediately upon becoming general secretary, Gorbachev assembled the leaders of the Warsaw Pact countries to tell them privately that henceforth Moscow would adhere strictly to principles of equality and independence in dealing with its Eastern European allies and would not intervene or interfere in their internal affairs—although, as Gorbachev later discovered, they did not take him seriously at the time.<sup>46</sup> Two years later, Gorbachev proclaimed publicly that each nation had the sovereign right to choose its own path of social development. Interference in the domestic affairs of states should be renounced, he wrote in his 1987 book *Perestroika*: "Let every nation decide which system and which ideology is better."<sup>47</sup>

This new "Gorbachev Doctrine" had a remarkable restraining effect on the use of Soviet power in Eastern Europe. Gorbachev acquiesced in the destruction of the Berlin Wall, the merger of the German Democratic Republic with the Federal Republic of Germany, membership of reunified Germany in NATO, and the withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact of one country after another throughout the region. As these developments unfolded, the hundreds of thousands of well-equipped Soviet troops stationed in Eastern Europe remained in their garrisons until their peaceful repatriation to Russia.

Equally remarkable was Gorbachev's restrained exercise of coercion in the internal empire, within Soviet borders. Despite a shaky start, and deplorable but limited incidents of violence in Georgia, Latvia, and Lithuania (about

which Gorbachev has insisted he had no advance knowledge), Gorbachev largely refrained from the use of armed force as each of the fifteen Soviet republics, starting with Lithuania and ending with Kazakhstan, withdrew from the Soviet Union and declared national independence and sovereignty.<sup>48</sup> This essentially orderly breakup of the Soviet Union was a significant accomplishment, given that strategic nuclear weapons were located in four Soviet republics (Byelorussia, Kazakhstan, Russia, and the Ukraine).

By December 1991 the internal empire as well as the external empire had collapsed: all of the constituent republics, including Russia itself, had opted to withdraw from the Soviet Union. On December 25, 1991, Gorbachev resigned his by then meaningless position as Soviet president. Immediately after his televised resignation address, Gorbachev quietly transferred to Russian Federation president Boris Yeltsin—through an intermediary, because Yeltsin refused to participate in person—what had become perhaps the ultimate symbol of Soviet autocracy, the control mechanism for authorizing launch of Soviet strategic nuclear weapons.<sup>49</sup>

*Eroding “Nationality.”* We have seen that “nationality” centered on the idea that the Soviet people were leading all humanity toward socialism and communism while heroically restraining the evil proclivities of world imperialism. Gorbachev first announced that it no longer made sense to construe the world as divided into two hostile camps representing two opposing class systems. Next, his obvious inability to make Soviet “socialism” work confirmed the suspicions of many inside the empire that Gorbachev’s path to systemic revival had become a dead end.

In fact always a mirage, the image of a shining red city on a hill evaporated permanently. Gorbachev’s argument that the Soviet Union should combine the best elements of socialism and capitalism—and thus show the world, in a cooperative spirit, a better approach to governance and well-being—was rejected at home by both the left and the right. Increasing numbers of people in the nomenklatura, with Boris Yeltsin in the lead, abandoned the official conception completely. Russia and the other newly independent countries that emerged from the Soviet Union gave up the patently absurd pretense of being at the forefront of world history and accommodated the dismal reality of low ranking on most economic and social indices among the world’s industrialized countries. In place of Khrushchev’s grandiose vision of overtaking the U.S. economy by 1980, for instance, Vladimir Putin’s announced goal for Russia as of 2003 was to overtake Portugal in per capita GDP by 2020.<sup>50</sup>

*Transforming Instrumental Aspects.* Established by Stalin to implement

mobilization of resources and carry out his other aims, the political, economic, and coercive institutions, together with the nomenklatura that ran them, had become so fixed in their ways that they were on the whole incapable of innovation, of departing from the traditional political mind-set. When it became clear that Gorbachev's attempt to emulate Andropov by emphasizing the "human factor" could not produce the results Gorbachev desired, he attempted with limited success to remove the party from day-to-day management of the regime by shifting political power from the party to popularly elected state organs and moving the locus of economic decision making from the center to the actual production units. Much of the party apparatus opposed Gorbachev's attempt to diminish its role in running the country. The economic system fell into disarray as traditional patterns of decision making were destroyed but no new, comprehensive, effective system of economic management was put in their place.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze did his best to instill new thinking and perestroika in the foreign affairs establishment. Gorbachev's confidants Yakovlev and Medvedev did the same in the party's ideological and propaganda apparatus. Unfortunately for the fate of Gorbachev's reforms, the "organs of power"—the military, the KGB, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs—remained in conservative hands and were largely impervious to new thinking and perestroika. CIA analysis showed that from 1988 to 1990 Soviet military spending declined in all categories even more sharply than it had increased from 1985 to 1987, indicating that Gorbachev and his supporters believed that the military threat from the West was manageable, thanks to overall Soviet strategic deterrent capabilities, and did not require symmetry between Soviet and U.S. weapons systems—a finding that doubtless upset hardliners in the military establishment.<sup>51</sup>

In his 2003 memoir, Yakovlev summarized the dilemmas of Gorbachev's attempt to reform regime institutions, roles, and practices by noting that the Soviet system, a militarized state monopoly, resisted reform with every cell in its body. As Yakovlev put it: "Piecemeal reforms were unable to change the nature and character of the system as a whole, to alter its structure, created for realization of arbitrary socio-economic schemes."<sup>52</sup> In other words, even if Gorbachev's reforms in their totality deprived regime institutions of their paradigmatic rationale, most of the senior nomenklatura running these institutions, in particular the organs of power, belittled his reform effort, did not accept its logic, and attempted to carry on as before.



## The Uneven Nature of Gorbachev's Impact

When one examines Gorbachev's reform effort in terms of the traditional leadership mind-set, several intriguing questions arise. Why would Gorbachev insist upon eliminating the doctrinal justification for the foreign threat to the empire as well as for its mission of fostering world revolution, thereby enervating the official conception of governance and the regime he was attempting to revive? Since Gorbachev did choose to do this, how could he have been realistic and bold enough during the first years of his rule to declare programmatic analysis of foreign affairs outmoded, while clinging to equally obsolete, paradigmatic ideas about Soviet domestic affairs until the final months of his reign and beyond? Why couldn't he recognize that the Stalinist conception of governance from its inception was a logically interconnected matrix, wherein the regime's institutions and practices stemmed from Stalinist programmatic analysis of threat and mission, which in turn derived from Stalinist doctrine, so that substantive change in doctrine and programmatic analysis deprived the traditional institutions and practices of their legitimacy and reduced the energy, generated at the center, that was necessary to make the system function at a minimally adequate level? Why couldn't Gorbachev see that the Stalinist conception had become totally outmoded and therefore had to be abandoned altogether?

Perhaps the first thing to be said about these apparent puzzles is that cognitive psychology suggests it would be wrong to assume that a believer, even a highly intelligent one like Mikhail Gorbachev, is conscious of all aspects and all logical interconnections of his or her matrix of beliefs. In this regard, Robert Jervis reports that people often "do not know the structure of their own belief systems—what values are most important, how some beliefs are derived from others, and what evidence would contradict their views."<sup>53</sup> Hence some inconsistencies in Gorbachev's personal version of the Soviet conception of governance might be attributed to human nature. But to understand the psychological milieu of Gorbachev's reforms as clearly as the relevant evidence allows, these puzzles should be examined more closely.

*Why a Destabilizing Change in the Threat Environment?* Gorbachev's political vision evidently was such that he simply did not anticipate that altering traditional assumptions about class conflict, foreign threat, and world revolution would have an adverse impact on the official conception's doctrinal foundation, reduce the energy generated by its programmatic analysis, and weaken its major institutions and practices. In fact, Gorbachev later stated

that when he, Shevardnadze, and Yakovlev revised the doctrine of class struggle and foreign threat during his initial years in office, “we did not yet understand that we had struck a mortal blow at our entire ‘theory of development’ since 1917. If the world is interdependent and interconnected, then mankind is one, our priority must be universal problems, and class confrontation and violence as the motor of history are unacceptable. We did not immediately recognize this.”<sup>54</sup>

This explanation raises a further intriguing question. We know from Gorbachev’s long-serving chief of staff Valery Boldin, as well as from other sources, that both Gorbachev and his wife, Raisa, were serious about Marxist-Leninism. Gorbachev had Lenin’s works in his office and referred to them frequently. Chernyaev records in his private diary that “With all his dislike of idolatry and dogmatism, Gorbachev continues to solemnly believe that appeals to Lenin and ‘Lenin’s approach’ can serve not only as a moral, but also as a practically effective lever for the realization of his plans.”<sup>55</sup>

Raisa’s Moscow State University degree was in philosophy, and she subsequently taught Marxism-Leninism at the university level. Moreover, by 1986, when Gorbachev and his staff were working on his report to the Twenty-seventh Congress, Raisa had become a full participant in the preparation of such documents and, according to Boldin, did not hesitate to revise the work of ideology specialists Yakovlev and Medvedev. Boldin, who personally witnessed the process, also reports that while Yakovlev originated the section of Gorbachev’s report dealing with a new approach to international relations, Raisa “discussed every line [of the report] in minute detail” and was “the custodian of the ideological purity of the text.”<sup>56</sup> How, then, could she and her husband have failed to appreciate the doctrinal repercussions of putting into question the validity of class struggle?

I know of no direct evidence that answers this question. There is, however, sufficient indirect evidence to warrant at least a speculative answer. We know from informed third parties that Raisa’s personal interpretation of Marxism-Leninism was nuanced, relying more on analysis of original sources than on the secondary accounts in standard Soviet textbooks. She evidently was, in other words, much closer to Yuri Zamoshkin’s approach (described in Chapter 4) than to the orthodox approach of ideologues like Mikhail Suslov; in fact, she knew personally Zamoshkin, his wife Neli Motroshilova (an impressive authority on Western European philosophy, whom I had met in the mid-1970s), and other “semi-dissident” Soviet philosophers; and she reportedly brought the views of these individuals to her husband’s attention.<sup>57</sup>

It therefore seems likely—as I know was the case with Zamoshkin and Motroshilova—that Gorbachev and his wife were skeptical of the mechanical, inflexible nature of official doctrine and programmatic analysis and found support for their skepticism in the views of Western leaders and intellectuals as well as in the views of liberal, worldly Soviet philosophers like Zamoshkin and his wife. So in Gorbachev's personal version of the conception, Stalinist dogmatism probably had given way to what Gorbachev regarded as Lenin's more realistic, more intelligent view of doctrine and programmatic analysis. This was implicit in Gorbachev's statement to the July 1991 CC Plenum, quoted above, that Marxist-Leninist doctrine had become "a kind of collection of canonical texts" and had been "distorted to the extreme."

This would help explain why, in the case of new thinking, Gorbachev was relatively pragmatic in applying programmatic analysis to policy formulation. When the orthodox Soviet view seemed to him dangerously out of touch with contemporary reality, he was prepared to consider other views, Western as well as Soviet, and then adjust programmatic analysis to align it with reality.

As Gorbachev tells the story, he saw his new thinking about international affairs as the culmination of a long process that began with Khrushchev's finding in 1956 that world war was no longer inevitable. He also felt his new approach was consistent with the true spirit of Leninism:

we draw inspiration from Lenin. Turning to him, and "reading" his works each time in a new way, one is struck by his ability to get at the root of things, to see the most intricate dialectics of world processes. Being the leader of the party of the proletariat, and theoretically and politically substantiating the latter's revolutionary tasks, Lenin could see further, he could go beyond their class-imposed limits. More than once he spoke about the priority of interests common to all humanity over class interests. It is only now that we have come to comprehend the entire depth and significance of these ideas.<sup>58</sup>

As will be discussed in the next chapter, during the run-up to the Twenty-seventh Congress at least one of Gorbachev's close advisors warned—correctly, as things turned out—of the negative reaction of the conservative nomenklatura to new thinking. Gorbachev's decision to proceed with his revision of programmatic analysis most likely reflected his growing self-confidence as general secretary and as a world statesman, as well as his personal interpretation of Lenin's writings. Looking back at Gorbachev's years in office,

one suspects that elements of this self-confidence emerged as Gorbachev took the world stage in 1985 and discovered that he was no less gifted than other world leaders and indeed was fully capable of playing an internationally acclaimed leading role in world affairs.

His book *On My Country and the World* leaves no doubt that, at the time of its publication in the year 2000 and probably well before that, Gorbachev saw himself—certainly not without justification—as a leading international figure, a “wise man” of global stature whose experience and abilities should be utilized in the service of mankind. In the concluding section of this book, Gorbachev essentially argues that just as he brought democracy and realism to the Soviet Union by diagnosing its ills and then administering perestroika and new thinking to heal them, so should he, together with other senior world statesmen, diagnose the ills of the global system and then recommend appropriate corrective measures.<sup>59</sup>

As of 1986 and 1987, when new thinking made its official debut, Gorbachev probably believed that in a post–Cold War world the Soviet Union would still have a worthy mission, under his leadership and in keeping with genuine Leninism, of building democratic socialism in a global context of cooperation rather than confrontation. He evidently became convinced that existing programmatic analysis was unrealistic and required a fresh appraisal of international affairs, and if regime conservatives were upset over this innovation, they would just have to get used to it.

*Why No Comparable Change in the Domestic Order?* In discussing paradigm change, Kuhn makes the general observation that a long-standing practitioner within a given paradigm is unlikely to become an advocate of its total abandonment. Gorbachev’s relationship to the Soviet conception of governance would appear to conform to this observation. Having spent his entire career within the confines of the Soviet conception of governance, Gorbachev’s outlook was naturally shaped by its categories and concepts. In the words of Alexander Yakovlev, no one, including Mikhail Gorbachev, could rise in political power outside of the party apparatus, whose discipline, intrigues, and relationships strengthened and developed some personal qualities, repressed others, and atrophied still others. Yakovlev notes that it was a rare individual who could live within this system, this “iron cage” (as Yakovlev put it) and not be changed, and yet the “caged” individual was unaware of the changes he or she was undergoing. This happened to all of us, Yakovlev asserts, including Mikhail Gorbachev.<sup>60</sup> This perspective helps explain why Gorbachev did not

anticipate the destabilizing impact of his new political thinking and only gradually acknowledged the necessity for major restructuring.

That Gorbachev was hesitant to cut deeply into the official conception, and proved unable to abandon it altogether, did not make him a typical Communist Party apparatchik. It did indicate that he could not easily free himself from his formative experiences as a medal-winning young farm worker and exemplary student who won a prize for his essay “Stalin, Our Fighting Glory, Stalin, the Inspiration of Our Youth,” who was rewarded for his accomplishments in the classroom and in the fields with admission to the country’s best university, and who subsequently accomplished a remarkable ascent to the very summit of Soviet political power.

Nor was he prepared to distance himself from his family background: one of his grandfathers had continued to believe in Stalin even after spending over a year in a Stalinist prison; his father had been a combat veteran of World War II, a proud member of the Communist Party, and a dedicated, decorated collective farmer. Gorbachev articulated this emotional attachment during a January 1991 newspaper interview, as follows:

The story of my family . . . is such that I have heard a lot of unjust things [about the Soviet regime] in all these years, but I remember my grandfather. He came back home after 1938, in 1939, after all those tortures. . . . We spent the whole day listening to him, the whole family crying when he told us what they had done to him. But then he never returned to this talk. For 17 years he had been a kol-khoz chairman. A rural man, a peasant. What do you expect me to do, go against my grandfather? It never even occurred to me. . . . Or take my father. . . . He went through the entire war—Kursk, the Dnieper. His blood was spilled, he was seriously wounded at the end of the war; the war undermined his health. So, will I go against him? Should we announce that they—our father and our grandfathers—lived for nothing? What would then we be worth? Then we should be swept down to hell.<sup>61</sup>

Gorbachev’s memoirs and his recorded conversations with Zdenek Mlynar, both published in the mid-1990s, together with Gorbachev’s more recent book *On My Country and the World*, record how he had been captive of an idealized personal interpretation of the official conception. Gorbachev told Mlynar that until the early 1980s “everything remained within a closed circle for me, and

the only way out that I could see was a fundamental change of personnel.”<sup>62</sup> Gorbachev relates that as late as the spring of 1988, three years into his term as general secretary, it still seemed to him that “the country’s misfortunes were not in any way connected with any inherent properties of the system and that the contradictions that had built up in the economy, in politics and in the spiritual sphere could be resolved without going outside its original framework. In short, we were not yet aware of the scale of the impending changes, or that the crisis involved not just some aspects of the system, but rather all of it.”<sup>63</sup>

Gorbachev evidently could not abandon his goal of revitalizing the existing Soviet regime, following what he considered to be Lenin’s true legacy, because that would have meant abandoning the matrix of beliefs that had given fundamental meaning to his career and to his life. His tenure as general secretary thus was marked not only by pressure from radicals favoring a full break with the existing system and countervailing pressure from conservatives determined to preserve that system. This period doubtless also saw conflict within Gorbachev himself, as he attempted intellectually and emotionally to cope with dissonance between his preconceptions and unfolding reality, between his multiple and often conflicting roles as general secretary, leader of the world communist movement, reformer of a system in deepening crisis, and enlightened world statesman.<sup>64</sup> It must have been an exhausting, sometimes disorienting process, whose effects upon Gorbachev became increasingly obvious to his assistants during the latter years of his rule.

### Gorbachev’s Inability to Break Free: Testimony of His Advisors

Gorbachev’s chief of staff, Valery Boldin, who was increasingly disloyal to Gorbachev and played a supporting role in the 1991 coup attempt against him, later described the failure of perestroika as due primarily to Gorbachev’s “indecisiveness and his adherence to the underlying assumptions instilled into him from his early youth. The general secretary was, and remained, essentially a product of his age and of the structures that enabled him to grow and propelled him to the top. On the one hand, he could see the absurdity of the existing order and strove to transform society. On the other, he was wedded to the old ways of doing business.”<sup>65</sup>

Alexander Yakovlev, who did not betray Gorbachev but did resign as his aide in mid-1991 because he felt he no longer enjoyed Gorbachev’s confidence,

has been similarly critical of Gorbachev's reform effort. Yakovlev describes Gorbachev as a master of political maneuver and compromise, which would have been fine "if he could have seen the final goal not in the triumph of a renewed socialist idea but in the decisive destruction of the existing system and the realistic construction of a civil society in its concrete constituent parts."<sup>66</sup> Instead, Yakovlev believes Gorbachev was unable to move from perestroika to "reformation," to a fundamental psychological shift that would amount to abandoning the existing system.<sup>67</sup>

Comparable assessments have been advanced by Gorbachev assistants Shakhnazarov and Chernyaev, both of whom remained loyal to Gorbachev to the end. Shakhnazarov has criticized Gorbachev's tendency to vacillate and delay decisions, along with Gorbachev's lingering belief in the usefulness of the party system that he had served faithfully all of his adult life. At the same time, Shakhnazarov concludes that Gorbachev's service to the Soviet people was first "to throw off the blinders of moribund dogmatism and see his country and the world as they were," then, having liberated himself, to consider it his duty to liberate his people.<sup>68</sup>

Chernyaev has been less generous, expressing admiration for Gorbachev's ability to discard dogma when it conflicted with reality but noting that "in policy these changes were reflected very slowly, and sometimes his words and deeds diverged from what he was saying in private."<sup>69</sup> Chernyaev has also voiced frustration with Gorbachev's reluctance to abandon totally the traditional conception of governance. In Chernyaev's words:

By the late summer and fall of 1990, conditions were ripe for a break with the Party, with socialist ideology, and with the old way of government. We should have scheduled elections for a new parliament, given up the idea of the old Soviet Union and begun serious work on the Union treaty right then (and not half a year later). In other words, admit that perestroika is a revolution that means transformation of the existing order. But this didn't happen. . . . In the end, unfortunately, it was emotions, fear of risk, and an unwillingness to break with the old ways of ruling that won out.<sup>70</sup>

Had a party congress been held in the fall of 1991 to consider the new program Gorbachev was advocating—with its major changes in doctrine and programmatic analysis, in orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality, and in the regime's institutions and practices—perhaps an overwhelmingly adverse reac-

tion from nomenklatura conservatives would have brought Gorbachev to recognize that the conception of governance he was trying to resuscitate was beyond help. Possibly Gorbachev then would have given up his attempt at evolutionary reform and advocated an essentially new conception of governance with no doctrinal base decreed by the country's leadership; no romantic mythology about 1917, Lenin, and democratic socialism; no programmatic analysis based on traditional doctrine; no significant remnants of backward-looking orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality; no nomenklatura structure; and no institutions and procedures premised on the defunct imperative of mobilization.

Events took a different turn, however, and Gorbachev was unable to break free from the conception of governance for which he had assumed responsibility in 1985. Meanwhile, like a Kuhnian scientific outlook undergoing a paradigm shift, the pseudoscientific Soviet outlook had under Gorbachev shifted from a normal mode of development to a revolutionary mode and soon thereafter fell apart altogether—arguably a good thing for the peoples of the USSR, Eastern Europe, and the world, but far from what Gorbachev had hoped to accomplish. The following two chapters consider how this happened, and how in the process the Cold War came to an end.





**PART THREE**    Relevance:  
Psychological Milieu and Current  
Foreign Policy Issues



## Introduction

An accurate understanding of the circumstances surrounding the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet empire is important because our present and projected foreign policy should be informed by a correct assessment of the major historical events that came before. A misreading of such events, and more specifically a faulty assessment of the way U.S. policy shaped them, can lead to flawed foreign policy goals and ineffective strategies for accomplishing these goals.

The first two chapters in this section reappraise the Cold War's end and the empire's collapse in light of the psychological milieu set forth in Part 2. Chapter 9 identifies and discusses major factors involved in the war's conclusion and the empire's fall. Chapter 10 undertakes to show the interactions among these factors and then to fit them together into the causal pattern that brought about the end of the war and of the empire. Chapter 10 also considers the present-day relevance of this overall reappraisal for U.S. foreign and national security policy, with emphasis on the current implications of the role actually played by President Reagan.

Chapters 11 and 12 discuss two other applications of this reappraisal to present U.S. foreign affairs. Chapter 11 looks at the continuing impact of the Soviet conception of governance on imperial thinking and democracy in today's Russia. The chapter also considers the implications of this residual effect for present and future U.S. policy toward Russia. Chapter 12 explores why, in assessing the state of the Cold War and the viability of the Soviet empire under Gorbachev, American observers tended to focus on the operational milieu rather than the psychological milieu, largely disregarding or misinterpreting Gorbachev's approach to ending the war and reforming the Soviet system. It identifies and then suggests ways to overcome a major analytical blind spot that not only hindered our understanding of the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet empire but continues to impede our view of these historic happenings as well as our general understanding of contemporary foreign affairs.

# 9

## Reappraising the Cold War's End and the Regime's Fall I: Key Pieces of the Puzzle

Our reappraisal of the Cold War's end and the Soviet empire's collapse begins with an examination of the key players as well as the defining features in the domestic and international environment of Gorbachev's reform effort. The following chapter will suggest how these factors interacted with Gorbachev's thinking to form the causal pattern that led to the conclusion of the war and the subsequent fall of the empire.

### A Flawed Conception of Governance

*Immorality and Unreality.* From the point of view of Western standards of morality, Stalin's conception of governance produced an undeniably "evil" empire, in which an autocratic leadership imposed ideological goals on society and then employed unconstrained coercive means to attain these goals.

In addition to its immorality, the conception obviously produced a distorted view of the past, the present, and the future. The doctrinal base was from its beginning unrealistic, and programmatic analysis therefore was ill-founded and often detached from reality. The institutions, roles, and practices at the interface between regime and society became increasingly dysfunctional to the regime's goal of economic growth and prosperity, largely because they were instruments of unsound doctrine and faulty programmatic analysis. The inherited attitudes of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality impeded modernization because they were rooted in the past and fostered acceptance of a problematic approach to governance.

One manifestation of the conception's unrealistic premises was the enormous cost to the domestic economy of programmatic analysis regarding foreign threat and international mission. As earlier noted, the military sector for

many years had consumed the best 20–30 percent (or thereabouts) of Soviet human and material resources in order to deter what was perceived as a grave, continuous threat posed by international class enemies. The trend in military spending was steadily upward from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s at a rate of about 2 percent annually, although the CIA has estimated that procurement of military hardware was more or less flat during that period (contrary to what Reagan administration officials were saying publicly in the early 1980s).<sup>1</sup> In addition, pursuant to its self-declared international mission, the Soviet leadership year after year subsidized the regimes it had imposed in Eastern Europe and provided material aid to friendly Third World regimes, insurgent movements, and communist parties around the globe.<sup>2</sup>

*Inability to Adapt in a Changing World.* In terms of the Soviet regime's overall viability, however, the official conception's main failing at the time of Gorbachev's selection as general secretary was not its immoral nature, its distortions of reality, or its backward-looking political culture. As indicated by the survey in Part 2 of the conception's evolution from Stalin to Gorbachev, its fatal flaw was its resistance to change in a rapidly evolving global setting. As a result, the third level of the conception—the instrumental institutions, roles, and practices stemming from programmatic analysis—became an increasingly serious hindrance to the Soviet Union's economic development, at a time of technological advance and increasing prosperity in the United States and other countries with comparatively flexible and adaptive market-based economies.

A cogent example of this problem was the inability of Gorbachev, even as the second-ranking official in the regime, to convene a conference on issues of science and technology, where Soviet backwardness in comparison to the West was particularly acute. Shortly after he was appointed second secretary of the party by General Secretary Chernenko in 1984, Gorbachev, together with economist Nikolai Ryzhkov and a team of specialists, undertook intensive preparations for a Central Committee meeting on the scientific and technical progress of the entire Soviet economy, only to have the project abruptly canceled at the last moment by Chernenko—presumably at the urging of Prime Minister Tikhonov and other Brezhnevite holdovers in the party leadership, who probably feared they might be blamed for having held back needed economic reform during the Brezhnev period.<sup>3</sup>

An underlying cause of this flaw was the way in which the official conception, still Stalinist in essence, dominated the thinking of the nomenklatura. Georgy Shakhnazarov described this problem in a 1990 article in the party's

theoretical journal *Kommunist* as follows: “[I]deology has completely taken hold of all spheres in our country and has penetrated into corners where it has probably not had occasion to be throughout the entire history of the world. This was [before Gorbachev’s reforms] a society which was, in the full sense of the word, insanely ideologized, which had become half-blind, and which had lost the ability to comprehend its own condition.”<sup>4</sup>

The problem of a rigid, stale conception of governance, as it existed in the minds of the nomenklatura, became so pronounced that even some prominent regime conservatives were disturbed by it. For example, dedicated nomenklaturist Vladimir Kryuchkov, a protégé of KGB chairman Andropov who was appointed KGB chairman by Gorbachev in 1988 (and nonetheless a few years later led the coup attempt against Gorbachev), wrote in his 2001 memoir the following about the Brezhnev years:

Policy that is entirely based on ideology and deprived of healthy pragmatism of course cannot be the optimum and sooner or later must be changed. But this would represent a correction in political course, a departure from outmoded stereotypical thinking. The misfortune of the socialist countries, including the Soviet Union, was that they could not bring themselves to take this step, could not look ahead to predict even short-term developments. This was hindered by our obdurate worldview, which rejected all ideas that did not fit into the strict framework of our overly ideologized, official doctrine.<sup>5</sup>

Resistance to change was exacerbated by the fact that most members of the nomenklatura had come to benefit personally from their respective roles in the regime. The nomenklatura therefore was inclined to resist reform of the Stalinist conception that threatened its privileged status and disrupted its long-held matrix of beliefs. Throughout most of Stalin’s rule, the nomenklatura had lived in constant apprehension of arbitrary arrest and harsh punishment. During the Khrushchev period, the ruling class had been upset by Khrushchev’s impulsive attempts to restructure the system. During eighteen years of systemic stagnation under Brezhnev, the nomenklatura enjoyed long tenure in office, grew comfortable with its power and privileges, and was largely content to let the existing system run on inertia. By the time Gorbachev became a member of the Kremlin elite in 1978, most nomenklaturists, at high levels and low, had little interest in altering the rules of a game in which they were sure winners.

In sum, by the mid-1980s the conception was still premised on an overriding need for mobilization that dated from the 1930s. Andropov had shown that imposition of discipline from the center could make the command economy function better, but forcing the Stalinist system to work more efficiently was not enough. Gorbachev and his supporters recognized that if the Soviet Union was to catch up to the West, the productivity of its existing economic plant would have to be increased through infusion of modern science and technology. This in turn would require a new mentality, a new approach to economic planning and management.

*Leadership Perceptions of Backwardness.* By the mid-1980s the economic aspects of the official conception were hopelessly unsuited to the requirements of the post-industrial age. The already large gap between the Soviet Union and the West in economic performance, development and application of new technologies, and living standards continued to widen. The drama of crossing the Soviet-Finnish border by train, and the delights of visiting Helsinki after experiencing the depressing conditions of daily life in Moscow, epitomized this gap in Western eyes. The experience represented a palpable escape from the confines of the Soviet alternative universe—from the mentality of Stalinist conception of governance and the living conditions this conception had created and sustained.

As we have seen, Gorbachev relates in his memoir that he experienced similar cultural disparities as a self-directed tourist in Western Europe. Many Soviet diplomats, KGB agents, members of various sorts of Soviet delegations, and other Soviet officials who lived in the West or visited there doubtless came away with similar impressions.

According to Leon Aron's biography of Boris Yeltsin, Yeltsin's impromptu visit to a Randall's supermarket in Texas, on the way to the Houston airport during his first visit to the United States in 1989, symbolized in his eyes the enormity of this gap in development. Recounting to a Soviet journalist his first American supermarket experience, Yeltsin said: "For us, used to empty shelves, canned food, awful, dirty, wrinkled vegetables and equally unappealing fruit, this madness of colors, smells, boxes, packs, sausages, cheeses was—impossible to bear. Only in that supermarket [did] it became very clear to me why Stalinism so painstakingly erected the 'iron curtain.' To see all that is simply beyond the pale [of endurance], damaging even to a hardened [Soviet] person."<sup>6</sup> According to an aide, during Yeltsin's subsequent flight from Houston to Miami he sat motionless for a long time, with his head



in his hands. “What have they done to our poor people?” he said after a long silence.<sup>7</sup>

## Mounting Domestic Economic Problems

It was Gorbachev’s misfortune to inherit an inflexible, outmoded conception of governance at a time when the conception—including its institutions, its practices, and its leadership—was subjected to growing economic pressure from the outside world. The decrepit Stalinist system proved unable to cope with this external challenge, over which Gorbachev and his colleagues had no effective control. The result was a worsening domestic economic climate that led to unprecedented foreign indebtedness and a corresponding inability to import badly needed food and technology, in turn causing shortages of consumer goods and increasing inefficiencies in virtually all sectors of the economy.<sup>8</sup>

The pressure resulted from a drop in world oil prices, commencing in 1985–86. Since oil exports were the prime source of Soviet hard currency earnings, the USSR’s hard currency reserves began to shrink. At the same time, unfavorable weather conditions and the inefficiencies of the Soviet economy’s agricultural sector created shortfalls in the harvesting and processing of grain and other crops. In addition, shortsighted past exploitation of oil resources, combined with the declining wherewithal to import badly needed equipment and technology for the energy sector, caused a reduction in Soviet oil output. Gold reserves were insufficient to finance needed imports. The overall backwardness of the industrial sector meant that Soviet machine tools and other finished producer goods were not competitive on the world market.

Yegor Gaidar suggests that the economic solution to these problems was to increase domestic retail prices and to curtail domestic investment and military spending. But the mind-set of the senior Soviet nomenklatura got in the way. When Gorbachev and his advisors finally began to realize the seriousness of the economic situation, they hesitated, Gaidar believes, to make the required hard decisions. Gorbachev and company feared a negative public reaction to higher prices for bread and other necessities. They also feared a negative reaction from the nomenklatura in the military-industrial complex and other sectors of the economy, whose interests would suffer from reduced investment.<sup>9</sup> By 1990 and 1991, when the leadership saw it had no choice but to raise prices and curtail domestic investment, the economy was out of control. In Gaidar’s

words, "There is no way of knowing whether it would have been possible to save the USSR in those conditions, acting energetically and precisely, without making a single mistake. But in order to have a fighting chance, the new leaders had to understand the scale and nature of the problems facing the country. It took them more than three years to get even a superficial idea of what was happening to the Soviet economy. That was too long in a crisis."<sup>10</sup>

### Gorbachev's Patrons and Opponents in the Leadership

As I have suggested, the conservative cast of mind of the nomenklatura and the passivity of Soviet society at the time of Chernenko's death meant that significant reform of the conception of governance almost certainly would have to come from the very top, from the general secretary of the party. It therefore is important to understand how Mikhail Gorbachev managed to rise to this most senior and most authoritative nomenklatura post. Gorbachev's initial promotion to the central leadership group in Moscow from a large pool of capable, ambitious regional party chieftains was far from inevitable. Senior nomenklatura member Yuri Andropov, who became acquainted with Gorbachev while vacationing in the Stavropol region of southern Russia that Gorbachev oversaw, evidently was instrumental in bringing Gorbachev into the central leadership circle in 1978.<sup>11</sup> We know that once Andropov became general secretary in 1982, he showed high regard for Gorbachev and in fact favored Gorbachev as his successor.<sup>12</sup>

We also know from a number of subsequent inside accounts that of all people, dour foreign policy traditionalist Andrei Gromyko played a leading role in ensuring Gorbachev's election as general secretary following Chernenko's death. During the high-stakes but muted political maneuvering that accompanied Chernenko's fatal illness and death, Gromyko reportedly worked behind the scenes, as well as in the pivotal Politburo and Central Committee meetings, to ensure that Gorbachev overcame opposition from Brezhnev holdovers.<sup>13</sup>

This apparently was more than an act of good citizenship on Gromyko's part. According to his long-time Foreign Ministry colleague Georgy Korniyenko, Gromyko had been interested in moving from the Foreign Ministry to the more prestigious but largely ceremonial position of head of state (the formal title was Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet) following Brezhnev's death in 1982. Korniyenko surmises that Gromyko championed

Gorbachev's election as general secretary in 1985 as part of a confidential deal with Gorbachev to realize this personal ambition. Korniyenko's supposition has been corroborated by Gorbachev aide Alexander Yakovlev, who later disclosed that Gromyko indirectly but unmistakably conveyed the possibility of such a tradeoff to Gorbachev.<sup>14</sup> Similar interpretations of Gromyko's motives have been put forward by Gorbachev aides Boldin, Chernyaev, and Grachev.<sup>15</sup>

The support of Gromyko, at the time arguably the most influential member of the Politburo, was critical. While General Secretary Chernenko had moved Gorbachev into the number two party position, this promotion was resisted by several other former Brezhnev cronies, led by almost eighty-year-old Prime Minister Tikhonov. Even on symbolic matters such as seating arrangements and office space, Tikhonov and his supporters prevented Gorbachev from occupying the traditional second chair (next to the general secretary) at Politburo meetings, and they blocked his moving into the spacious Central Committee office traditionally occupied by the number two. Boldin reports that these slights infuriated Gorbachev and led to his asking senior Politburo member Dmitry Ustinov for help in countering them (which Ustinov eventually rendered successfully).<sup>16</sup>

When the Politburo and then the Central Committee elected Gorbachev as general secretary, the senior leadership group could not know that he would undertake increasingly deep-cutting reforms of foreign and domestic policy—for that matter, as pointed out in Chapter 8, as of his March 1985 election to the top job and for several years thereafter Gorbachev himself believed that nonstructural modifications would suffice to revive the regime. Moreover, immediately after his election, Gorbachev informed the Politburo that he felt current policy was “the right, correct, genuinely Leninist policy” and the leadership should now “pick up the tempo, move forward, identify shortcomings and overcome them, and behold the sight of our bright future even more clearly.”<sup>17</sup> Opposition to Gorbachev from Tikhonov and other Brezhnevites in the leadership seems to have stemmed primarily from petty jealousy over Gorbachev's abilities and rapid promotions, plus concern that they could be personally humiliated and perhaps forced out of office by his critical attitude toward the policies and practices of the Brezhnev reign, in which they had played leading roles.

At the same time, Gromyko and probably most of the other Politburo members recognized that following the successive illnesses of Brezhnev, Andropov, and Chernenko, the Soviet empire required a healthy leader. In the view of Georgy Shakhnazarov, by 1985 not only the leadership but virtually

all of Soviet society passionately wanted just one thing: that at last the party would be headed by a young, energetic person. Hence, in the final analysis (according to Shakhnazarov) "Gorbachev was elected because this was the will of actually existing public opinion, even if this opinion was not recognized officially."<sup>18</sup> This may help explain why, when Gromyko took the initiative to propose Gorbachev as general secretary at the Politburo meeting immediately after Chernenko's death, the next speaker was Tikhonov, who unreservedly supported the nomination (as did all of the other members of the leadership in attendance).<sup>19</sup>

### Gorbachev's Reform-Minded Advisors

We have seen that advisors played significant roles in the central party apparatus under Khrushchev and Brezhnev and that some of these individuals were considerably more reform-minded than the senior officials for whom they worked. This phenomenon continued during Gorbachev's rule. Several of Gorbachev's aides reinforced his belief in the need for change in domestic and foreign policy and urged him to stay the course of reform. These individuals included ideology and foreign policy specialist Yakovlev, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, specialist in domestic political affairs Shakhnazarov, and foreign affairs assistant Chernyaev.

The backgrounds and contributions of these aides have been described fully in Archie Brown's *The Gorbachev Factor* and Robert English's *Russia and the Idea of the West*. In addition, each of these four aides has published his own memoir (in Yakovlev's case, several memoirs) recounting his experiences with Gorbachev, so there is no need to detail here their respective contributions. In the context of our analysis, it is worth considering briefly how, during the time they worked for Gorbachev, their respective personal conceptions of governance departed considerably further from the official conception than did Gorbachev's personal outlook.

*Alexander Yakovlev.* Yakovlev, who began his career in the Central Committee's ideology and propaganda apparatus in Moscow in the early 1950s, has disclosed that he became "fully conscious of the hollowness and unreality of Marxism-Leninism" as he studied the original sources of the doctrine at the party's social sciences academy in the mid-1950s. In Yakovlev's words: "[the] deeper I explored the theoretical rantings of the Marxist classics, the more clearly I saw the reasons for the dead end at which the country had arrived."<sup>20</sup>

Yakovlev discloses that his total abandonment of the official conception came some thirty years later. "At some point in 1987," he wrote, "I personally realized that a society based on violence and fear could not be reformed and that we faced a momentous historical task of dismantling the entire social and political system with all its ideological, economic, and political roots."<sup>21</sup>

*Eduard Shevardnadze.* Shevardnadze rose in the ranks of the party nomenclatura in his native republic of Georgia, where he spent his early career as a party organizer and a regional political leader rather than as a specialist in Marxist-Leninist doctrine. Shevardnadze has disclosed that upon reaching the position of Party First Secretary in the Republic of Georgia, prior to his appointment by Gorbachev as Soviet foreign minister, he found it difficult to deal harshly with local critics of the Soviet regime. In his words:

This struggle, along with my knowledge of the true state of affairs in our country, has led me to conclude that the root of existing evils is not in the individual people, but in the system. And if some people seethe with hatred for the system, that is only because the system is ruthless toward the individual. Under conditions of totalitarianism, it is impossible to guarantee observance of human rights and freedoms, and that means it is impossible to guarantee the normal development of the country.<sup>22</sup>

It seems clear that during the period 1985–87, when Gorbachev was focused on nonstructural reforms and was first asserting his new political thinking about universal human values, Yakovlev and probably also Shevardnadze had come to reject much of the official conception of governance. In this light, one should reexamine Gorbachev's claim, cited in the previous chapter, that in declaring the primacy of common global interests over international class struggle in 1986–87, neither he nor Yakovlev nor Shevardnadze initially realized the doctrinal implications of this pivotal reform measure.

One suspects that as Yakovlev encouraged Gorbachev's new thinking, he knew full well this revision directly contradicted official doctrine and urged it on Gorbachev at least in part for that very reason.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Shevardnadze most likely was not concerned in principle about the negative effects of new thinking on the conception's doctrinal foundation. In any case, Shevardnadze clearly was aware of the problem. In his 1991 memoir, he recalled that during preparations for the Twenty-seventh Party Congress he met frequently with Gorbachev to discuss changes in foreign policy. Shevardnadze writes that he

became concerned Gorbachev was moving too far from the orthodox view of international class conflict: "As I met with Gorbachev almost every day, I detected his thoughts moving in a completely uncharted and, frankly, dangerous direction. It was dangerous from the viewpoint of the exponents and defenders of those dogmas that had prevailed for decades. The iconoclast of centuries-old doctrine always takes a risk, because orthodoxy, which cannot forgive an encroachment upon its holy of holies, will automatically transform itself into an inquisition and will hasten to punish the 'heretic.'"<sup>24</sup>

Overall, this apparent disconnect between Gorbachev's perception of the views of two key advisors, and their actual thoughts at the time, suggests that neither Yakovlev nor Shevardnadze revealed to Gorbachev the full extent of their alienation from the overall conception that Gorbachev was attempting to revive. Most likely they were well aware of the gulf between Gorbachev's thinking and their own but understandably did not want to draw his attention to it for fear of diminishing their influence with him.

*Georgy Shakhnazarov and Anatoly Chernyaev.* Shakhnazarov and Chernyaev came from similar professional backgrounds. Early in their careers both had worked on the staff of the Soviet-sponsored journal *Problems of Peace and Socialism*, which was headquartered in Prague. This work exposed them to Western publications, foreign colleagues, and nondoctrinal outlooks.<sup>25</sup> Both were "men of the 60s," in the sense that they had welcomed Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin and had hoped that Khrushchev would succeed in liberalizing the Soviet regime. Both subsequently served as foreign policy specialists in the Central Committee apparatus in Moscow.

Judging from their respective memoirs, neither was as alienated from the official Soviet outlook upon joining Gorbachev's staff (Chernyaev in early 1986, Shakhnazarov in early 1988) as were Yakovlev and Shevardnadze. I noted in Chapter 5 that Chernyaev never considered himself a communist true believer, yet until the mid-1980s he found it difficult to think in terms other than the official conception's concepts and categories. Shakhnazarov has written that although his belief in the fairness of the Soviet regime ended in 1950, when he witnessed deplorable living conditions in the countryside, as of 1988 his personal goals were to strengthen political freedom and eliminate the differences between the official conception of the Soviet political system (as laid out in the democratically phrased but largely meaningless Soviet constitution) and Soviet practice.<sup>26</sup> Both Chernyaev and Shakhnazarov did what they could, together with Yakovlev and Shevardnadze, to ensure that party and government documents, Gorbachev's official speeches and his key policy decisions

were pragmatically reasoned and served to further the cause of genuine reform.

## Boris Yeltsin

An important role in the collapse of the Soviet Union obviously was played by Boris Yeltsin, who, as earlier noted, had become alienated from the entire Stalinist conception of governance while Gorbachev was still attempting to make it work.<sup>27</sup> Impulsive, impatient, outspoken, and iconoclastic, Yeltsin's was a personality highly unusual for a member of the senior nomenklatura. He had been brought to Moscow in December 1985 from Sverdlovsk oblast, an important industrial region in central Russia where he had been the regional party chief, by Yegor Ligachev, Gorbachev's deputy in the central party apparatus. Yeltsin was appointed head of party organization for Moscow City, ruled for years by Brezhnevite Viktor Grishin, and soon thereafter was made a Candidate Member of the Politburo. However, after speaking out at a November 1987 Central Committee meeting against the conservatism of Politburo member Ligachev and unnamed others in the senior leadership group, Yeltsin was removed from his Politburo position as well as from his job as Moscow party chief. When his request for political rehabilitation at the 1988 party conference was sharply rebuffed by Gorbachev and other senior nomenklaturists, it appeared that Yeltsin's career in high politics was over.

Yet Yeltsin managed a remarkable political comeback. In 1989 he was popularly elected to the new Congress of People's Deputies by an almost 90 percent margin, then overcame leadership efforts to keep him out of the more selective and more powerful Supreme Soviet. There he joined forces with Andrei Sakharov and other regime critics to become a leader of the radical reform faction. In mid-1990 he was elected chairman of the Russian Republic's Supreme Soviet, over Gorbachev's strong opposition. In mid-1991 he was popularly elected to the new post of President of the Russian Republic (although not by an enormous landslide—he received under 60 percent of the vote), a position that put him in direct competition with President of the Soviet Union Gorbachev.

From 1989 through 1991, Yeltsin served as a rallying point for those in the nomenklatura and elsewhere in Soviet society who, like Yeltsin, had broken free, or were in the process of doing so, from the official conception of governance. Yeltsin's opposition to regime conservatives culminated with his widely

publicized personal defiance of the August 1991 coup attempt against Gorbachev.

Yeltsin was determined to destroy the traditional conception of governance and the regime it had produced. As he later told an interviewer, who asked why, shortly before the breakup of the USSR in 1991, Yeltsin had surrounded himself with little-known political figures:

I had a perfectly clearly idea of the task to be solved. The political system had to be overturned, not just changed. In place of the Soviet political system, a democratic one had to emerge. The administrative command economy had to be replaced by a market one, and freedom of speech had to replace censorship. I realized that the transition could not be painless. That meant that unpopular measures were inevitable. What was needed was a kamikaze crew that would step into the line of fire and forge ahead, however strong the general discontent might be.<sup>28</sup>

## Ronald Reagan

Disagreement over the importance of President Reagan's role in ending the Cold War and bringing down the Soviet empire has been fueled by at least two factors: differing views of Reagan's personal capabilities and intentions, and the historical overlap between the Reagan presidency, Gorbachev's rule, the Cold War's end, and the crumbling of the regime. As Jack Matlock has pointed out, some of Reagan's political critics in the United States and Europe regard him as having been dangerously simple-minded in dealing with the Soviet Union and continue to disparage his policies as ill-founded. Conversely, those who admire what they saw as Reagan's blend of optimism regarding America, his emphasis on U.S. military strength, along with his outspoken toughness toward Soviet communism tend to assume that he brought about U.S. "victory" in the Cold War and played the leading role in the Soviet empire's downfall.<sup>29</sup>

More specifically, since the mid-1990s the centrality of President Reagan's role in ending the Cold War and bringing down the Soviet Union has been cited by American neoconservatives as the prime model for what they propose as a "neo-Reaganite" U.S. national security policy for the twenty-first century. Their manifesto is contained in a "Statement of Principles" issued in 1997 by



the Project for the New American Century and signed by such subsequently prominent members of the George W. Bush administration as Dick Cheney, Lewis “Scooter” Libby, Donald Rumsfeld, and Paul Wolfowitz, along with influential Republicans William Bennett, Jeb Bush, and Dan Quayle. The Statement advocates “American global leadership,” based on “a Reaganite policy of military strength and moral clarity” that builds on such American achievements as “having led the West to victory in the Cold War.”<sup>30</sup>

The issue of Reagan’s contribution to this “victory” involves the indisputable fact that the outcomes Reagan sought did indeed come to pass. He participated in four summit meetings with Gorbachev and frequently exchanged correspondence with the Soviet leader. Whatever the causal effect of this interaction, during and immediately after Reagan’s presidency the Cold War came to a close along the lines Reagan had hoped for, and shortly thereafter the regime collapsed along the lines Reagan had predicted. In the words of Garry Wills: “Part of Reagan’s legacy is what we do not see now. We see no Berlin wall. He said, ‘Tear down this wall,’ and it was done. We see no Iron Curtain. In fact, we see no Soviet Union. He called it an Evil Empire, and it evaporated overnight.”<sup>31</sup>

Because of this historical coincidence, it seems to many observers reasonable to conclude that Reagan caused the outcomes he had advocated. There is little question that he played an important part in them, but in my view his was a supporting role, not the leading role assumed by the Project for the New American Century and by many of Reagan’s present-day admirers. This conclusion is supported, I think, by an overview of Reagan’s policies and an assessment of their impact on the Kremlin in each of his two terms in the White House. A brief survey of his policies comprises the remainder of this chapter. Their interaction with Gorbachev’s thinking is discussed in the following chapter.

*Initial Reagan Administration Policy, 1981 to 1984.* As Deputy Director of the Office of Soviet Union Affairs in 1981, I was involved in an initial effort to formulate the Reagan administration’s basic policy on U.S.-Soviet relations. My role was to chair a working-level, interagency group that produced a first draft of this policy document. However, the State Department’s Office of Policy Planning, while represented in the group throughout our deliberations, refused to approve the final product and then, at the invitation of my office, produced its own draft, which, with modifications, we and the other concerned agencies eventually cleared.

Our colleagues in the Office of Policy Planning felt the paper should reflect

more explicitly Ronald Reagan's anticommunism by being more robust about meeting the global Soviet challenge head-on. I, along with my colleagues on the Soviet Desk and our superiors in the European Bureau, had no problem in principle with the notion of driving up the cost of empire through economic and psychological warfare and resistance to the ongoing Soviet aggression in Afghanistan as well as to Soviet irresponsibility in other Third World conflicts. As best I recall, the differences between my office and the policy planning staff, which was then headed by political appointee Paul Wolfowitz, involved emphasis and tone, not basic substance.

As it turned out, this was only the beginning of a long, contentious bureaucratic struggle, essentially between the State Department and the National Security Council (NSC), over Reagan administration policy toward the Soviet Union. The key player at the NSC was Harvard historian Richard Pipes, who had been appointed senior advisor for Soviet and Eastern European affairs and who argued tenaciously for a confrontational approach that included attempting to change the Soviet regime. The final document was approved in December 1982. It included Pipes's goal, somewhat watered down, of trying to alter the Soviet system—with President Reagan specifying he wanted nothing in the document that would preclude compromise and quiet diplomacy.<sup>32</sup>

My colleagues on the Soviet Desk and I, along with our policy planning colleagues and most of the other participants in the affair, had no way to anticipate that some of the most confrontational aspects of the new Reagan policy would be managed, often in deep secrecy and absent interagency coordination, by CIA director and former close Reagan political associate William Casey—an approach that would lead to some hair-raising and controversial escapades, including the Iran-Contra scandal of 1986–87.<sup>33</sup>

Director Casey's adventurism notwithstanding, a good case can be made that President Reagan's overall approach to U.S.-Soviet relations reflected a more accurate understanding of the essence of Soviet communism than did the corresponding approaches of Presidents Nixon and Carter. Reagan for years had viewed the Soviet leadership as ideologically driven and determined to prevail over the West, and upon assuming the presidency he therefore favored a policy of strength and resolve.

The Nixon-Kissinger grand strategy of manipulating the balance of power among the Soviet Union, China, and the United States certainly had merit, but it was accompanied by the mistaken (in my view) notion that the Kremlin's ideological drive was ancillary to its pursuit of Soviet national interests and could be managed by playing the China card and entangling the USSR in

a web of relationships with the West that would serve to moderate Soviet international conduct. Unfortunately, General Secretary Brezhnev and his colleagues did not see things this way. I believe they regarded the Nixon-Kissinger policy of détente as a symptom of American's post-Vietnam weakness. As noted earlier, this interpretation of U.S. policy, plus the conviction of the Brezhnev regime that the Soviet Union had attained rough strategic parity with the United States, emboldened Moscow to destabilize the international order by increasing Soviet support for the "national liberation movement" in the developing world.<sup>34</sup>

President Carter focused his administration's attention on the Kremlin's unquestionably abhorrent human rights practices (as earlier recounted, my Embassy Moscow colleagues and I were in a real sense at the point of the Carter administration's human rights spear). However, as many commentators have noted—and as I witnessed as an assistant to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's senior Soviet advisor Marshall Shulman—President Carter seemed to have no consistent core policy toward Moscow, instead vacillating unpredictably between the relatively confrontational position of National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski and the relatively cooperative approach of Secretary Vance. From this I believe Brezhnev and company concluded that U.S. international resolve remained weak and would tolerate continuing Soviet adventurism in the Third World, a conclusion that may have contributed to Brezhnev's decision to invade Afghanistan.

Despite the comparative soundness of President Reagan's understanding of the Soviet Union and its policies, some of his initial attitudes were faulty. His view of Soviet programmatic analysis, while not wildly inaccurate, was oversimplified. He seemed to think that Moscow was fixed on a course leading to world revolution set by Lenin rather than as reformulated by Stalin and his successors. He misunderstood the "Brezhnev Doctrine" as calling for Soviet global expansion, when in fact the phrase was coined in the West to describe the Soviet rationale for invading Czechoslovakia in 1968 (which, as earlier discussed, was to protect "socialism" there).

President Reagan, along with CIA director Casey, believed the Soviet system was near collapse because of its overmilitarized economy and other inefficiencies and could be forced to its knees by concerted Western economic pressure. The Soviet economy was grossly overmilitarized and inefficient but was not on the verge of economic failure, as its temporary revival under Andropov indicated. In addition, Reagan, along with Secretary of Defense Weinberger, was convinced that the Soviet Union had gained military superi-

ority over the United States during the 1970s, and that this imbalance had to be corrected before the United States undertook to negotiate arms reductions with Moscow. In fact, careful analysis by the Scowcroft Commission, established in the early 1980s to recommend a basing mode for a new U.S. strategic missile, showed there was no significant military imbalance.<sup>35</sup>

The policies toward the Soviet Union of Reagan's first term were based on these beliefs and featured a concerted effort to gain "victory" over Soviet communism, as opposed to the traditional policy of containment of Soviet communism. This effort included attempts to put the Soviet economy under additional strain by such measures as impeding the sale of Soviet natural gas to Western Europe, bringing down oil prices in order to reduce Soviet profits from sale of its oil products, driving up the cost of the arms race, and restricting technology transfers from the West. It also included forceful public criticism of the "evil empire," overt moral support and covert material assistance for anti-Soviet elements in Eastern Europe (particularly "Solidarity" in Poland), and resistance to what was perceived as Soviet expansionism in the Third World (particularly military assistance to the forces—including those of Osama bin Laden—fighting against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan).<sup>36</sup>

*U.S. Policy During Reagan's Second Term, 1985 to 1988.* Reagan administration policy began to move away from harsh rhetoric and confrontational policies during the election year of 1984. Reagan set the new tone in a January 1984 foreign policy address in which he announced that America's decline had been halted and the United States was now "in the strongest position in years to establish a constructive and realistic working relationship with the Soviet Union."<sup>37</sup> In March, a senior State Department official testified before Congress that although the administration remained concerned about exports to the Soviet Union that could enhance its military capabilities, U.S. policy was "not one of economic warfare against the Soviets."<sup>38</sup> The president continued this moderate tone in an address before the United Nations in September, avoiding direct criticism of Soviet policy and declaring U.S. readiness for "constructive negotiations" with the Soviet side.<sup>39</sup> Toward the end of the 1984 presidential campaign Reagan, during an interview on U.S.-Soviet relations, declared: "We made it plain we're not out to change their system. We're certainly not going to let them change ours. But we have to live in the world together."<sup>40</sup> Also in 1984 Reagan began to realize, to his self-confessed surprise, that "people at the top of the Soviet hierarchy were genuinely afraid of America and Americans."<sup>41</sup>

As promised in his campaign rhetoric, Reagan's policy toward the Soviet

Union during his second term in fact emphasized negotiation over confrontation. The president's views obviously had moved toward those of Secretary of State Shultz and away from those of Secretary of Defense Weinberger and CIA director Casey.<sup>42</sup> Richard Pipes had returned to Harvard and been replaced as senior White House advisor on Soviet affairs by career FSO Jack Matlock, who had served three tours in Moscow, had been director of the Office of Soviet Affairs in the State Department, and had been U.S. ambassador in Prague.

Reagan's basic view of Lenin, world revolution, and the Brezhnev Doctrine remained largely unchanged throughout his presidency. He continued to be outspoken about irresponsible Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe, in regional conflicts, in bilateral relations, and on human rights issues. While he persisted in raising these matters directly with Gorbachev in their four summit meetings and extensive private correspondence, he at the same time shared with his Soviet counterpart genuine concern over the danger of nuclear weapons and focused on measures to eliminate or reduce them in virtually all of his contacts with Gorbachev. The predominant issue here stemmed from Reagan's fixation, commencing in March 1983 and continuing unabated throughout the remainder of his presidency, on developing a strategic defense initiative, which he hoped might eventually provide a shield against incoming nuclear warheads and thus render these weapons obsolete.<sup>43</sup>

It is important to understand the substance of President Reagan's policies and to note how that substance changed during 1984 and into his second term. For our purposes, however, it is more important to consider how Reagan administration policies interacted with Gorbachev's thinking about domestic and foreign policy reform, a matter discussed in the next chapter.

# 10

## Reappraising the Cold War's End and the Empire's Fall II: Fitting the Pieces Together

### Gorbachev and the Nomenklatura

The most important interaction leading to the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet regime was, between a general secretary who was convinced he could restore the Soviet regime to health and prosperity, and a conservative majority of the nomenklatura, whose inflexibility, rooted in the dogmatic nature of the Soviet conception of governance and nurtured by the nomenklatura's privileged position in the regime, was the main barrier to Gorbachev's reform effort. Gorbachev came to recognize that for the Soviet system to be restructured, the thinking and behavior of the nomenklatura that operated the system would have to change. The nomenklatura came to recognize that Gorbachev's reforms would diminish its status. The interaction that determined the broad contours of the reform effort, affected the end of the Cold War, and ultimately precipitated the regime's collapse was the push for systemic change by Gorbachev and the push back by the conservatives who dominated the nomenklatura.

*Three Nomenklatura Groupings.* As the interplay between Gorbachev and the nomenklatura unfolded, three broad attitudes toward the official conception of governance took shape. The first, represented by Gorbachev and the small group of enthusiastic supporters surrounding him, called for restructuring the conception but not for destroying its overall integrity and cohesion.

The second approach, championed by nomenklatura conservatives, focused on measured change in technique—some glasnost, more democracy and more socialism, with perhaps some perestroika at the margins—but was averse to major restructuring. The most conservative nomenklaturists came to believe that Gorbachev, along with Yakovlev and Shevardnadze, were so carried away with new thinking, perestroika, glasnost, and democratization

that they either underestimated the destructive impact of their reform program on the regime's foundations or, particularly in Yakovlev's case, actually intended to destroy the existing order. Gorbachev's KGB chairman Vladimir Kryuchkov made this argument in his 2001 memoir, asserting that Gorbachev repeatedly ignored KGB warnings of systemic crisis and took no effective action even after being briefed by Kryuchkov personally on a supposedly well-documented KGB assessment of Yakovlev as a covert CIA "agent of influence."<sup>1</sup>

Gromyko protégé and senior Soviet diplomat Georgy Korniyenko took a less extreme but still highly critical position, arguing in his 2001 memoir that Gorbachev was an egocentric improviser and that in foreign policy Gorbachev and Shevardnadze were bumbling amateurs who were unduly accommodating to the West and whose "new political thinking" was so far removed from reality that it led to "the actual betrayal of the state interests of the Soviet Union."<sup>2</sup> It seems safe to assume that Kryuchkov and Korniyenko were voicing concerns shared by many of their nomenklatura colleagues.

The third approach involved a growing number of nomenklatura "radicals," with Boris Yeltsin in their forefront, who became convinced that the conservatives, along with Gorbachev himself, were hopelessly stuck in the past. This grouping, which was joined by prominent intellectuals and activists outside of the nomenklatura like Andrei Sakharov, believed that the Soviet conception of governance was beyond reform and had to be jettisoned in favor of a more suitable, Western-style model. As we have seen, Gorbachev advisers Chernyaev, Shevardnadze, and Yakovlev were sympathetic to this point of view, although Gorbachev himself was not.

*Growing Conservative Concern.* The conservative nomenklatura mainstream's perception of a threat to its interests grew as perestroika, along with democratization and glasnost, began to reduce the nomenklatura's authority over economic and political institutions and practices. The nomenklatura was slower to recognize a threat from Gorbachev's replacement of old thinking about international class conflict with new thinking about the universal values. Conservative nomenklaturists involved in foreign affairs, national security, and intelligence gradually came to understand that Gorbachev's revision of these aspects of doctrine and programmatic analysis meant that the basic mission of the foreign policy establishment was no longer to confront and rebuff capitalism's hostile diplomacy. Similarly, the task of the Soviet military-industrial complex and the uniformed military no longer was to deter and if necessary defeat the West in military conflict.<sup>3</sup> The mission of the KGB no longer was to focus its considerable resources on the United States as the

Soviet Union's main enemy. The general secretary had downgraded the threat posed by the West from menacing and potentially fatal to routine and possibly troublesome. In the process, he had also diminished the claim of the organs of power to privileged status and a generous share of the regime's best resources.

Gorbachev's new thinking also signified that the Soviet Union's international mission had shifted from fostering incremental world revolution to promoting global stability. This major conceptual shift had important implications for the work of the military, the foreign affairs establishment, and the KGB. It drained the doctrinal, messianic content from their operations at home and abroad and made their personnel normal governmental functionaries rather than crusaders for the hallowed communist cause. Their rationale for large budgets as well as their prestige thus were further diminished.

In addition, the *nomenklatura* viewed with alarm the deepening economic crisis and the increasing shift of political and economic power from the center, and hence from their control, to the republics and their respective national leaderships. As best one can determine from the available evidence, in 1986 overall annual GNP growth was about 4.1 percent. It fell sharply to about 1.5 percent by 1989, then dropped below -10 percent in 1990 and 1991. The annual rate of growth of industrial output, the traditional focus of the Soviet economic effort, gradually declined from over 6 percent in the late 1960s to about 2 percent in the mid-1980s. According to some estimates, the annual rate of growth of labor productivity—a key indicator of qualitative growth—declined from about 4 percent in the mid-1960s to 0 percent by the mid-1980s.<sup>4</sup> Michael McFaul points out that by 1991 “the Soviet economy was in free fall.” McFaul cites data from the World Bank showing that 1991 ended “with a nine percent decline in production, a 25 percent decline in real investment, an increase in retail prices of 142 percent and a climb in wholesale prices of 236 percent.”<sup>5</sup>

The effect on the consumer sector was devastating, as dramatized by a 1989 general strike of coal miners in Siberia and Ukraine, sparked by the unavailability of soap and other consumer essentials. Popular disaffection caused by a declining standard of living eroded Gorbachev's popularity and increased that of the radical reformers led by Boris Yeltsin. Specialist on Soviet public opinion Iurii Levada reports that habitual ideological stereotypes, which helped sustain the regime, “fell apart [in 1989–90] together with the general ‘faith’ in the advantages of socialism, Soviet Marxism, and the Soviet system.” According to Levada, in less than a year, from January to October



1990, Gorbachev's public approval fell from 60 percent to 21 percent, while Yeltsin's popularity rose from 20 percent to 60 percent.<sup>6</sup>

These developments could not have been pleasing to the nomenklatura mainstream. The mounting economic crisis and the increasing power of the republics—above all the Russian Republic—at the expense of the center threatened to weaken Soviet military power, diminish the USSR's international stature, and put in question the viability of the regime itself. Particularly disturbing to the conservatives, the Russian Republic under Yeltsin's leadership not only asserted the supremacy of its laws over Soviet law but began to squeeze Soviet authorities by withholding tax revenues essential to supporting the central government and its expensive military-industrial complex.<sup>7</sup> Meanwhile, workers in factories around the Soviet Union began to demand publicly the abolishment of party organizations at their workplaces, and many rank-and-file workers resigned their membership in the Communist Party.<sup>8</sup>

### Conservatives Push Back

*Outspoken Expression of Concern.* Overt negative reaction to perestroika and new thinking by the nomenklatura began to surface in 1988. In March of that year, while Gorbachev was out of the country, Politburo member Yegor Ligachev quietly promoted nationwide publication of a lengthy letter, ostensibly written by a teacher at a Leningrad technical institute, stridently defending the orthodox conception of governance, the role of Stalin, and the importance of class struggle.<sup>9</sup> Upon his return to Moscow, Gorbachev convened a two-day session of the Politburo to discuss and criticize the letter, and soon thereafter the party newspaper *Pravda* ran a lengthy editorial, reportedly written by Gorbachev's assistant Alexander Yakovlev, condemning the letter. That summer, however, Ligachev made two public speeches citing the importance of class conflict and criticizing aspects of domestic perestroika.<sup>10</sup>

By 1990 and 1991 nomenklatura criticism of Gorbachev's policies had mushroomed. At a Central Committee meeting in February 1990, Politburo member Vitaly Vorotnikov bemoaned the state of reform and the weakness of central authority, stating that the "sickly nature of perestroika and the fact that many of the problems which should have been already solved are unsolved can be attributed to the fact that the power that the authorities can wield—something without which no society can exist—has been weakened here."<sup>11</sup> At the same meeting, factory foreman V. A. Shabanov complained:

Some learned men, together with informals, sundry nationalists, and shadow economy wheeler-dealers, are pushing the country along the path of bourgeois reformism, restoration of private ownership, political anarchy, and subversion of the party's cohesion as the vanguard organized detachment of working people. . . . A genuine party member has no doubts about the truthfulness of Marxist-Leninist teaching, the correctness of the socialist choice, and the positive results produced by 70 years of Soviet power.<sup>12</sup>

Soviet Ambassador to Poland V. I. Brovikov asserted to this gathering that the Soviet Union "has been reduced to a poor condition and has been turned from a power admired in the world into a state with a mistaken past, a joyless present, and an uncertain future."<sup>13</sup>

Major General Ivan Mikulin, addressing the Twenty-eighth Party Congress in July 1990, characterized the Soviet hands-off policy toward Eastern Europe as a betrayal of proletarian internationalism and asserted that Soviet diplomats who engaged in new thinking were looking at the world through rose-colored glasses.<sup>14</sup> In a February 1991 interview, Ligachev asserted that class struggle remained "a cruel reality" both in the Soviet Union and abroad.<sup>15</sup>

More ominously for Gorbachev, at a closed, stormy session of the Supreme Soviet in June 1991 that Gorbachev did not attend, Prime Minister Pavlov called for a shift in power from Gorbachev to the Council of Ministers that Pavlov headed. As if to justify Pavlov's attempted power grab—about which Gorbachev knew nothing in advance—KGB chief Kryuchkov, Minister of Defense Yazov, and Minister of Internal Affairs Pugo each warned of impending domestic catastrophe and sharply criticized Gorbachev's policies in speeches, also news to Gorbachev, at the same meeting.<sup>16</sup> Gorbachev persuaded Pavlov to withdraw his proposal but took no discernible disciplinary action against him or against Kryuchkov, Yazov, and Pugo.

On July 23, 1991, the nationalistic newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya* [Soviet Russia] published a lengthy letter to the Soviet people—signed, among others, by Deputy Minister of Defense Valentin Varennikov and Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs Boris Gromov—calling for unified popular resistance to the entire reform effort and, by implication, to Gorbachev himself. Some excerpts:

An enormous, unprecedented misfortune has befallen us. Our homeland and country, a great state that was given into our care by

history, nature and our glorious ancestors, is perishing, breaking up, and being plunged into darkness and nonexistence. . . . Why is it that sly and pompous rulers, intelligent and clever apostates and greedy and rich money grubbers, mocking us, scoffing at our beliefs and taking advantage of our naiveté, have seized power and are pilfering our wealth, taking homes, factories and land away from the people, carving the country up into separate parts . . . [and] dooming us to pitiful vegetation in slavery and subordination to our all-powerful neighbors? . . . Let us start out on the path of saving the state this very minute. Let us create a people's patriotic movement in which everyone . . . will unite in the name of the supreme goal of saving the fatherland.<sup>17</sup>

*A Failed Coup Attempt.* The intensifying criticism of Gorbachev and his reforms by senior nomenklaturists foreshadowed an August 1991 coup attempt against Gorbachev, the organizers of which were headed by KGB chairman Kryuchkov and included Prime Minister Pavlov, Defense Minister Yazov, Deputy Minister of Defense Varennikov, Minister of Internal Affairs Pugo, along with Vice President Yanayev, and two prominent leaders of the military-industrial complex.<sup>18</sup> These senior nomenklaturists did not believe the Cold War had ended; they did not favor abandoning the traditional command economy or adopting Gorbachev's vague conception of democratic socialism; nor did they believe that the USSR should be replaced by a weaker union of sovereign Soviet republics. Their attempt to seize power from Gorbachev—which quickly failed because of poor planning, poor execution, and ineffective support from the KGB and the military—marked the apex of organized resistance by nomenklatura leaders to Gorbachev's reforms as well as to those of Yeltsin and his supporters.

The failed coup accelerated movement toward independence among the USSR's constituent republics and greatly enhanced the political power of Boris Yeltsin and the radical reformers he represented. Yeltsin was emboldened shortly after the August events to suspend the activities of the Communist Party on Russian territory and to intensify his assertion of the authority of the Russian Federation over the authority of the Soviet government. Political momentum shifted irreversibly from Gorbachev and the centrists to Yeltsin and the leaders of non-Russian republics, a development that led to the breakup of the Soviet Union some four months later.

*Gorbachev's Underestimation of Nomenklatura Opposition.* Gorbachev's

paradigmatic blinders evidently rendered him unable to assess accurately the negative reaction to new thinking, perestroika, glasnost, and democratization among the elite nomenklatura members who finally resorted to a coup against him. He reportedly brushed aside warnings by Shevardnadze and Yakovlev of likely coercive adventures by "the Bolsheviks." Gorbachev also evidently shrugged off the unauthorized, frontal attack on his policies by Pavlov, Kryuchkov, Yazov, and Pugo in June 1991.<sup>19</sup> Gorbachev clearly was shocked by the disloyalty of the coup instigators, most of whom he personally had appointed to their high positions.

Looking back on these events, Yakovlev concludes that Gorbachev could not conceive of the problems his reforms would encounter: Gorbachev could not fully comprehend that the military-industrial and agricultural complexes, the organs of power, and above all the party apparatus by their nature would not be his allies in reform. In the final analysis, Yakovlev believes, Gorbachev's myopia regarding the conservatism of the nomenklatura turned into a tragedy for the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup>

In sum, as Gorbachev forged ahead with restructuring the traditional conception of governance, he weakened his support within the nomenklatura by increasing the strength of the two camps that opposed his programs: he went much too far for the conservatives, but not nearly far enough for the radicals.<sup>21</sup> When, in an atmosphere of domestic economic crisis, leaders of the conservative camp failed in their ill-planned and ineptly executed effort to wrest political power from Gorbachev, the radicals led by Yeltsin seized the initiative and in less than five months left a politically weakened Gorbachev no viable option but to retire from political life.

## Gorbachev and Yeltsin

The troubled personal relationship between Gorbachev and Yeltsin led to bitter political rivalry and decreased the odds that Yeltsin, as the Russian Republic's first democratically elected president, would cooperate with Gorbachev in his position as Soviet president (to which Gorbachev had been elected by the Congress of People's Deputies in March 1990). Gorbachev had humiliated Yeltsin at party meetings in 1987 and 1988, following Yeltsin's unexpected and unprecedented criticism of senior party leaders. In 1990 and 1991 Gorbachev appeared to move closer to conservatives such as KGB chairman Kryuchkov and to economic traditionalists like Prime Minister Ryzhkov and his successor

Valentin Pavlov, causing Yeltsin and his radical colleagues to move further to the left of Gorbachev.

Yeltsin's leadership in putting down the coup attempt helped Gorbachev to preserve his position as ruler of the Soviet Union, but in a diminished capacity. Absent Yeltsin's resistance, the coup leaders could have neutralized Gorbachev, reversed his reforms, impeded the breakup of the internal empire (perhaps by using military force), and in the process seriously strained U.S.-Soviet relations. Instead, with the failure of the coup, Yeltsin demonstrated that he was prepared to go much further than Gorbachev in confronting conservative opponents of reform, in crushing the power of the Communist Party (although after initial hesitation Gorbachev did resign as party general secretary), in discarding its conception of governance, and in moving toward democracy and a market-based economic system.

Symbolic of the shift in political momentum, Yeltsin avenged his earlier humiliation at Gorbachev's hands by insisting that Gorbachev read aloud before the Russian Republic's Supreme Soviet a prepared statement condemning the coup plotters, whom everyone knew had been appointed to their high regime positions, or approved in such positions, by Gorbachev himself.<sup>22</sup>

Assertions of national independence in Eastern Europe and in the three Baltic republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania in the late 1980s had stimulated similar feelings in the other non-Russian republics of the USSR as well as in Russia itself. This prompted Gorbachev to devote enormous energy during most of 1991, before and after the abortive coup, to keeping the Soviet Union together by crafting a treaty that would replace the existing Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (minus the three Baltic republics, and Armenia, Belarus, and Georgia—all of which refused to take part in the effort) with a comparatively decentralized federation of sovereign republics.

His chief opponent in this effort was Boris Yeltsin, who, together with the leaders of Ukraine and Belarus, decisively rebuffed Gorbachev in early December 1991 by rejecting Gorbachev's draft union treaty, opting instead for full independence for their respective republics, and declaring the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In abandoning and thereby wrecking Gorbachev's draft treaty, and having in the meanwhile unilaterally taken over significant Soviet assets and institutions located in the Russian Federation, Yeltsin ensured that he soon would occupy the Kremlin as president of a powerful and fully independent Russia, while his rival Gorbachev would be deprived of meaningful political power as well as of Kremlin office space.

## Gorbachev and Reagan

If, as I am convinced was the case, Gorbachev's uneven but eventually conclusive shift to new political thinking was the prime cause of the Cold War's end, and his increasingly deep-cutting, destabilizing, and economically ineffective reform effort was the prime cause of the regime's collapse, it would follow that consideration of the interaction between Gorbachev and Reagan should focus on the nature and intensity of President Reagan's impact on these two processes.

In addressing this matter, one should at the outset acknowledge that there is no objective methodology for establishing the degree of influence Reagan's policies had on Gorbachev's new thinking about foreign affairs or on his approach to domestic reform. For example, any assessment of the impact on the Soviet economy and on Gorbachev's decision making of increased U.S. defense spending during Reagan's first term of necessity entails considerable guesswork. As Clifford Gaddy has pointed out, it is impossible to calculate with precision the sacrifice cost to the rest of the economy of Soviet defense spending.<sup>23</sup> A similar point has been made by former CIA analysts Noel Firth and James Noren, who have disclosed that "an analytically satisfactory definition of the Soviet defense burden eluded CIA's analysts throughout the Cold War." Firth and Noren also acknowledge that the U.S. intelligence community "did not understand or agree on how changes in perceived costs of defense would have affected Soviet leaders' decisions."<sup>24</sup>

Clifford Geertz reminds us that the main approach to investigation of this sort of problem is not mathematical calculation but rather our construction of Gorbachev's construction of what he and his compatriots were up to.<sup>25</sup> To paraphrase Geertz, such an effort should not be regarded as experimental science in search of law but as an interpretative effort in search of meaning.<sup>26</sup>

Proceeding on this basis, we can subdivide the question of President Reagan's impact into three parts: did Reagan's policies exert a major, shaping effect, causing Gorbachev to move toward ending the war and destabilizing the regime in directions he otherwise would not have taken? Alternatively, did Reagan's policies facilitate or reinforce Gorbachev's thinking about East-West relations and domestic reform based on assumptions Gorbachev had reached for other reasons? Or did Reagan's policies obstruct and delay Gorbachev's development and implementation of new political thinking and perestroika?

*Reagan's First Term, 1981 to 1984.* Mikhail Gorbachev of course did not rule

the Soviet Union during Reagan's first term as president and did not encounter President Reagan in person until their initial summit meeting in Geneva in November 1985, a year after Reagan's reelection and some eight months after Gorbachev became general secretary. Gorbachev was, however, in the elite leadership group during the period from 1981 through 1984, having been promoted to full Politburo membership, with primary responsibility for agriculture, in 1980. When he became general secretary in March 1985, he obviously brought to that position attitudes about the Reagan administration and its policies that he had formed over the preceding four years.

As a full member of the party's top policy-making body, Gorbachev undoubtedly was informed about developments in U.S.-Soviet relations, as filtered through the concepts and categories of official Soviet thinking, yet some aspects of the relationship were off-limits even for a full Politburo member. Gorbachev indicates in his memoir that while he was aware of the heavy burden of defense spending on the Soviet economy and particularly on its agricultural sector, until he became general secretary he was not fully briefed on the military dimension of U.S.-Soviet relations, did not know the exact level of Soviet military spending, and understood that such matters were within the exclusive purview of the general secretary.<sup>27</sup>

As one would expect, Gorbachev's public speeches and articles during the period 1981–84 reflected the Soviet leadership's growing concern over Reagan administration policy. For example, in May 1981 Gorbachev declared that "militaristic imperialist circles" were intensifying the arms race and pushing the world to the brink of war.<sup>28</sup> In various appearances and writings during 1982 and 1983, he stated that Washington's aggressive policies were caused by a frantic U.S. attempt to overcome "the general crisis of capitalism." He described these policies as including a new crusade against communism, an attempt to gain military superiority over the Soviet Union, as well as the use of sanctions, boycotts, and psychological warfare.<sup>29</sup>

In the fall of 1984, Gorbachev warned of a real threat of nuclear war, which required the Soviet Union to strengthen its defenses and would mean "diverting" significant resources to the military sector. In his December 1984 address to the British parliament, Gorbachev continued to sound the alarm but also foreshadowed his later reform of the Soviet approach to international relations by noting that the current atmosphere of growing nuclear danger required "new political thinking" in a world that was "vulnerable, quite frail, but interconnected."<sup>30</sup>

It seems reasonable to assume that the perception of increased U.S. enmity

toward the Soviet Union reflected in Gorbachev's public speeches and writings during Reagan's first term helped lead to Gorbachev's later assertions (1986–87) that the Cold War had become irrational, dangerous, and unnecessary. This perception probably underscored for Gorbachev the need to work out a durable, nonthreatening relationship with the United States, thereby lessening the danger of nuclear war, winding down the arms race, and in turn facilitating domestic reform by allowing reduction of the military establishment's share of the USSR's resources.

At the same time, in Gorbachev's frame of reference the perception of continuing hostility and confrontation from the United States would have worked against his rationale for "new political thinking." New thinking unmistakably implied a U.S.-Soviet relationship based upon shared human values, which in turn made feasible international cooperation in place of confrontation. This was not the bilateral relationship that President Reagan and his key advisors had in mind, and spoke of publicly and often stridently, during Reagan's first term. In this sense, Reagan's hard line may have impeded Gorbachev's eventual conclusion that the Cold War could, and should, be ended.

Several of Gorbachev's colleagues, writing after the empire's fall, have emphasized this general point. For instance, Chernyaev notes that U.S. "backsliding" after the 1986 Reykjavik summit meeting "helped continue the stereotypes of confrontation and 'class approach' in [Gorbachev's] thinking. Most important, it strengthened the hand of the enemies of perestroika and new thinking, of those advocates of power politics in his entourage, in the party apparatus, and in society at large."<sup>31</sup>

Foreign affairs analyst and long-time Kremlin consultant Georgy Arbatov, after dismissing claims that American toughness fostered Soviet reforms as "absolute nonsense," agrees with Chernyaev that "the hostility and militarism of American policy did nothing but create further obstacles on the road to reform and heap more troubles on the heads of the reformers."<sup>32</sup>

Without question, President Reagan's initial policies toward the Soviet Union—involving a major U.S. military buildup, his 1983 announcement of a strategic defense initiative, concerted economic warfare, and resistance to Soviet expansionism—denied to the Kremlin badly needed hard currency and technology and added marginally to the Soviet economy's already enormous defense burden. Yet, as Reagan himself later acknowledged, the net effect of U.S. economic pressure on the Soviet economy was far from life-threatening to the regime. The United States, acting unilaterally, lacked sufficient eco-



conomic leverage to bring Moscow to its knees, and our allies for the most part did not see it as in their interests to join the Reagan administration in a concerted effort to exert economic pressure on the USSR.<sup>33</sup>

It is clear in retrospect that the sharp drop in world oil prices in the mid-1980s had a devastating effect on the Soviet economy. While CIA director Casey and other hard-liners in the first and second Reagan administrations correctly assessed the importance of energy exports for Soviet hard-currency earnings, and doggedly attempted to exploit this Soviet vulnerability, it appears doubtful that their efforts were the prime cause of the 1985–86 decline in the market value of oil. That decline was brought about by a Saudi Arabian decision, announced in the fall of 1985 by Saudi oil minister Yamani and evidently made for other reasons, to greatly increase Saudi oil production and bring the price of oil down.<sup>34</sup>

In his 1994 book *Victory*, Peter Schweizer implies that Reagan administration policies constituted an important aspect of this Saudi decision. Relying on interviews with unnamed U.S. government figures, Schweizer describes several private meetings between Casey and senior Saudi officials during the period 1981–85 in which Casey raised the U.S. hope for lower oil prices to assist the U.S. economy as well as to weaken U.S. and Saudi enemies, including Iran, Libya, and the Soviet Union. Schweizer, again relying on an unnamed U.S. official, also reports that President Reagan discussed oil pricing directly but in general terms in a one-on-one meeting with Saudi King Fahd during the latter's state visit to Washington in early 1985. In addition, Schweizer points out that throughout the first Reagan administration the United States contributed to the Saudi sense of national security by providing Saudi Arabia with strong security guarantees as well as advanced military weaponry and technology. Schweizer does not claim there was a direct causal relationship between the Saudi decision and the effort by the Reagan administration to weaken the Soviet economy, concluding that, "What factor lay most heavily on the minds of the Saudis when they made this decision is anybody's guess."<sup>35</sup>

Reagan administration policies may have contributed to the 1985 Saudi decision to increase production, drive down the price of oil, and risk angering Iran, Libya, and the Soviet Union. But the consensus of outside analysts seems to have been that Yamani took this dramatic step primarily because he was fed up with the tendency of Saudi Arabia's OPEC partners to increase their respective national oil outputs in violation of OPEC policy and decided to teach them a costly lesson. (Saudi Arabia could compensate for a sharp price

decline by greatly increasing its production, an option not available to most other OPEC producers or to the Soviet Union.) King Fahd reportedly was not a strong supporter of Yamani's change in policy, fired Yamani in October 1986, and reversed Yamani by cutting back domestic oil production to enhance Saudi revenues.<sup>36</sup>

It should be noted that Schweizer's colleague Paul Kengor, in his 2006 book *The Crusader*, is less restrained in assessing the Reagan administration's role in this matter, asserting that the Saudi decision resulted from a specific, highly secret U.S.-Saudi deal. In Kengor's words, this was "an innovative, gutsy, and generally remarkable covert operation," undertaken in the "strictest silence in Washington and in Riyadh," in which Reagan and Casey "convinced Fahd and his regime to help the administration bust the Soviets economically by shifting Saudi oil flows."<sup>37</sup> Kengor offers no pertinent evidence to substantiate his account beyond that cited by Schweizer in 1994. Given currently available circumstantial evidence contradicting Kengor's assertion—including Schweizer's accounts of Casey's meetings with Saudi officials and of Reagan's meeting in Washington with King Fahd, accounts that do not suggest a specific "covert operation"; the alternative, OPEC-centered explanation for Yamani's decision; the fact that in the fall of 1986 King Fahd dismissed Yamani and annulled Yamani's policies; plus the certain Saudi awareness as of 1985 and 1986 that Reagan's approach to the Soviet Union was moving from confrontation to cooperation—unless new, unambiguous evidence comes to light, the nuanced Schweizer assessment of the Reagan administration's role surely is more appropriate than Kengor's assumption of a covert U.S.-Saudi action plan to damage the Soviet economy.

*Reagan's Second Term, 1985 to 1988.* For Gorbachev's desire to end the Cold War, as well as for his domestic reform effort, it proved to be a fortuitous coincidence that his first three years as general secretary overlapped with the last three years of Ronald Reagan's presidency. Of course Reagan was not the only Western leader who influenced Gorbachev's view of political affairs. In his memoir, Gorbachev speaks favorably of his conversations with Spanish prime minister Felipe González, West German chancellor Helmut Kohl, French president François Mitterrand, U.S. secretary of state George Shultz, British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, and numerous others. However, Gorbachev's interaction with Reagan, the leader of the other superpower, was of unique importance. As discussed in the preceding chapter, by 1985 President Reagan had decided to try to find common ground with his Soviet counterpart.

One obvious place to look for evidence regarding Reagan's net impact on Gorbachev's policies is the personal assessment of this matter by Reagan and by Gorbachev. Fortunately, the memoirs of both leaders specifically address the issue. In the concluding section of his autobiography, Reagan writes:

I think in our meetings I might have helped him understand why we considered the Soviet Union and its policy of expansionism a threat to us. I might have helped him see that the Soviet Union had less to fear from the West than he thought, and that the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe wasn't needed for the security of the Soviet Union.

Whatever his reasons, Gorbachev had the intelligence to admit Communism was not working, the courage to battle for change, and, ultimately, the wisdom to introduce the beginnings of democracy, individual freedom, and free enterprise.<sup>38</sup>

In contrast to some of his admirers, Reagan does not claim that his military buildup, his economic warfare, his moral clarity, or his insistence on development of a strategic defense initiative were instrumental in concluding the Cold War and demolishing the Soviet regime. He suggests instead that Gorbachev's thinking was determinative and that Reagan's contribution may have been to help his Soviet counterpart understand U.S. concerns, aims, and perspectives on Soviet–Eastern European relations.

It is possible, of course, that Reagan's autobiography is overly modest. Perhaps, in the afterglow of his warm personal relationship with Gorbachev, Reagan did not want to dwell on the confrontational aspects of his first term. As for the policies of Reagan's second term, Jack Matlock has implied that Reagan's actual role in bringing the Cold War to an end and fostering domestic reform was more significant than Reagan later described. Matlock in particular cites Reagan's insistence in his interaction with Gorbachev on a broad agenda, which caused Gorbachev to go beyond Soviet preoccupation with arms control to heed U.S. concerns on regional, bilateral, and human rights issues.<sup>39</sup>

Matlock cites in this context a statement by Gorbachev foreign affairs aide Chernyaev, made at an academic conference at Brown University in 1998, to the effect that "Our [domestic] policy did not change until Gorbachev understood that there would be no improvement and no serious arms control until we admitted and accepted human rights, free emigration, until glasnost became freedom of speech, until our society and the process of perestroika

changed deeply.”<sup>40</sup> Matlock’s assessment, buttressed by Chernyaev, is that Reagan’s policies hastened the Cold War’s end and contributed to domestic reform by prodding Gorbachev to move further in the U.S. direction on issues beyond arms control than he otherwise might have done.<sup>41</sup>

Gorbachev himself has been more restrained regarding President Reagan’s role. Gorbachev asserts that it was his initiative as general secretary to end the Cold War and undertake reform in the Soviet Union—and that U.S. behavior had little to do with it. In his conversation with Mlynar, for example, Gorbachev says that his new thinking about foreign affairs stemmed primarily from his determination to overcome stagnation in the Soviet system, not from threats or pressures from the United States. In Gorbachev’s words: “we had to develop our own initiative aimed at ending the Cold War because without that it would have been impossible to take the decisive steps of perestroika. This was both for economic reasons, primarily those connected with demilitarization of the economy, and for basic ideological and political reasons, mainly connected with the principle of freedom of choice within the Soviet bloc and within the USSR itself.”<sup>42</sup>

When Mlynar comments that many in the West continue to believe that by imposing an arms race on the USSR, the West forced Moscow to moderate its foreign policy, Gorbachev replies that this “oversimplified idea” persists “above all because of support for it by an odd alliance between Western conservative ideologists and local conservatives in our country and in other countries of the former Soviet bloc. The former are simply puffed up with braggadocio, and our conservatives locally support their viewpoint as alleged proof that the reformers here ‘betrayed’ both socialism and our homeland, along with its national interests. I would describe such a conception as mere political game playing.”<sup>43</sup>

Regarding his personal relationship with President Reagan, Gorbachev writes that despite a rocky beginning at the Geneva Summit in 1985, the human factor slowly began to emerge, and heated exchanges gradually gave way to a mutual desire to understand one another.<sup>44</sup> Gorbachev says this encouraging trend continued at the 1987 Washington Summit, noting in his memoir that “it seems to me that during my visit Reagan reappraised many things and succeeded in overcoming some of his own stereotypes and misconceptions.”<sup>45</sup> Gorbachev’s assessment of Reagan’s 1988 visit to Moscow highlighted a friendly atmosphere and a mutual desire to maintain a productive, trustful tone. Gorbachev particularly appreciated Reagan’s public acknowl-

edgement in Moscow that Gorbachev deserved “most of the credit” for the positive changes that perestroika had brought to the Soviet Union.<sup>46</sup>

In sum, Gorbachev, like Reagan, does not dwell retrospectively on Reagan’s initial hard line and instead characterizes increased understanding between the two leaders as facilitating, although not determining, change in Soviet foreign and domestic policy. Both leaders seem to agree that new thinking and perestroika were not caused by American pressure, and that Ronald Reagan’s impact on these policies, while not insignificant, was secondary.

### Schweizer Revisited

To underscore the difference between my sense of the supporting role played by Ronald Reagan, and the perspective of Peter Schweizer and others who argue that Reagan’s was a leading role, it will be useful to revisit the questions Schweizer posed in making his case in his book *Victory* (outlined in Chapter 5), as well to examine his use of the testimony of former Soviet insiders to support his argument. While some repetition is inevitable, I think it worthwhile to address specifically Schweizer’s questions and his evidence because these matters bear directly on the validity of the view, currently held by influential American neoconservatives, that U.S. foreign policy in the twenty-first century should emulate Ronald Reagan’s robust policies that “defeated” Soviet communism.

*Timing of Reform.* Schweizer asks that if Gorbachev deserves most of the credit for the demise of the Soviet empire, “Why did the Kremlin feel the need to radically reform when it did?” The answer is that upon becoming general secretary in 1985, Gorbachev was determined to overcome the stagnation of the Brezhnev period essentially by adjusting economic priorities, along with promulgating new personnel and media policies, but was forced by deepening domestic failure to recognize that major political and economic restructuring was required. As just discussed, Reagan administration efforts to strain the Soviet economy by diminishing Moscow’s hard currency revenues and driving up its defense spending undoubtedly exacerbated Gorbachev’s economic woes. But Gorbachev’s decision to move to increasingly substantive reform was not dependent upon economic pressure from the United States. By the time Gorbachev acknowledged the need for structural reforms, U.S. economic warfare largely had eased, as had Gorbachev’s perception of a mili-

tary threat from the United States—enabling him to more than reverse the 1985–87 increase in military procurement.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, the Soviet system's fatal flaw, in my view, was its resistance to change, not its shortage of hard currency revenues or its increased defense spending in response to Reagan's policies. The immediate cause of the system's collapse was political, not economic, as the coup attempt by alienated right-wingers both intensified the force of nationalism throughout the USSR and served to marginalize Gorbachev the reformer in favor of Yeltsin the demolisher—to be sure, against the backdrop of a failing domestic economy. This economic decline, however, was due in the first instance to Gorbachev's flawed policies, mainly his lack of a viable economic strategy for replacing the Stalinist command economy, complicated by nomenklatura resistance to his reform efforts.

*Gorbachev's Election as General Secretary.* Schweizer next asks how Gorbachev came to power, suggesting that he was selected as general secretary after an intense struggle between reformers and conservatives in the party leadership, a struggle caused in large part by Reagan administration policies. As we have seen, once Gromyko took the initiative in the Politburo to propose Gorbachev for the top party job, no one openly opposed the idea, and the vote was by acclamation. Gromyko was far from a reformer, and in fact Gorbachev soon made good on his promise to move the long-time foreign minister to the largely ceremonial post of Soviet president and brought into the Foreign Ministry and the central leadership Eduard Shevardnadze, who *was* a reformer.<sup>48</sup>

It is true, as discussed in Chapter 9, that Brezhnev holdovers resented Gorbachev's prominence under General Secretary Andropov and then impeded his rise to the position of second secretary under General Secretary Chernenko. Their primary concern, however, seems to have been that as a youthful and self-confident upstart, Gorbachev might threaten their comfortable positions and subject them to criticism for their respective roles during the Brezhnev period of stagnation—not that he would unleash fundamental restructuring of the regime in response to pressure from the Reagan administration.<sup>49</sup>

*Reform of Communism.* The answer to Schweizer's third question—"What are we to make of Gorbachev's continued insistence that his goal was to reform communism and not end it?"—is that the question incorrectly states Gorbachev's professed goal. Gorbachev attempted to reform the Stalinist conception of governance, not "communism" as such. We have seen that he

publicly abandoned the traditional Marxist concept of “communism” in the summer of 1991 for an ill-defined notion of democratic socialism, combined with a market economy, to be built gradually in a loosely organized Soviet federation that would be a responsible member of the world community. Gorbachev did insist upon the correctness of his approach until the empire’s fall and beyond. This, however, was a far cry from reforming and perpetuating “communism,” as Schweizer uses the term.

*Circumstances of the Cold War’s End.* Schweizer’s final question is “Why did the Cold War end on Reagan’s terms and not Gorbachev’s?” In posing this question, Schweizer had in mind, one assumes, that the end of the conflict was followed by the end of Soviet domination of Eastern Europe and soon thereafter by the demise of the entire Soviet empire, outcomes desired by Reagan but not by Gorbachev. The implication is that if Gorbachev was not pleased with such “terms,” they must have been caused by Reagan rather than Gorbachev. To the contrary, I believe the pertinent evidence shows that Gorbachev wittingly precipitated the end of the Cold War, then unwittingly destabilized the official Soviet conception of governance, including the empire it had produced and sustained. The fact that Ronald Reagan devoted much of his life to these outcomes is laudable but by no means establishes that he was instrumental in causing them to happen. By his own assessment, and by the weight of the relevant evidence, he was not.

*Assessing Personal Testimony.* Schweizer and other admirers of President Reagan refer to the opinions of former Soviet insiders other than Gorbachev (for obvious reasons, they sparingly cite Gorbachev himself) to bolster their case. This can be problematic, because much depends upon a given individual’s access to Gorbachev’s thinking and decision making as general secretary. Gorbachev’s circle of confidants was small, so one should take care to assess a particular witness’s position and function in the regime during Gorbachev’s rule. One also should consider carefully what a given witness asserts. Still, in light of the difficulty of calculating the economic impact of Reagan policies on the Soviet economy and on Gorbachev’s decision making, the opinions of former insiders are worth consideration.

Schweizer’s book *Victory* begins with a series of short quotations to set the stage for his argument that the “vanquished” (Gorbachev) should not be given more credit than the “victor” (Reagan):

“American policy in the 1980s was a catalyst for the collapse of the Soviet Union,” says Oleg Kalugin, a former KGB General. Yevgenny

Novikov, who served on the senior staff of the Soviet Communist Party Central Committee, says that Reagan administration policies “were a major factor in the demise of the Soviet system.” Former Soviet Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh told a conference at Princeton University that programs such as the Strategic Defense Initiative accelerated the decline of the Soviet Union.<sup>50</sup>

Oleg Kalugin, who now resides in the United States, broke with the KGB in 1990 and was involuntarily retired from the security service and stripped of his rank and awards by order of Gorbachev shortly thereafter. His expertise centered on KGB covert operations and counterintelligence, not on analysis of U.S.-Soviet relations during Gorbachev's rule. His characterization of Reagan policies as a “catalyst” for the regime's eventual fall says little about the relative causal weight of these policies.<sup>51</sup>

Yevgenny (or “Euvgeny,” as Novikov himself transliterates his first name) Novikov is later identified in Schweizer's book as having been a senior staff member in the Central Committee's International Department (ID). According to a book Novikov co-authored in 1993 or so, he worked in the ID from 1968 until 1988, when he sought political asylum in the United States. His responsibilities in the ID evidently included “active measures” (the covert shaping of foreign opinion) in Arab countries. In any case, the significance of Novikov's characterization of Reagan policies as “a major factor” in the regime's demise, assuming his Central Committee staff position afforded him meaningful insights into such matters, obviously depends on what other major factors may have been in play. (The book he co-authored, a wide-ranging treatise on Gorbachev and the collapse of the Soviet Communist Party, does not mention the Reagan factor.)<sup>52</sup>

Career diplomat Bessmertnykh had long been a specialist in U.S.-Soviet bilateral relations, although his term as foreign minister (which began in early 1991, following Shevardnadze's sudden resignation) was cut short when, at Yeltsin's urging, Gorbachev dismissed Bessmertnykh after the failed August 1991 coup for having cooperated to an unacceptable degree with the coup leaders. The substantive weight of Bessmertnykh's comment at Princeton obviously depends upon what he had in mind by “acceleration”—from 15 miles per hour to 55, or from 55 to 60.

Schweizer's colleague Paul Kengor, in his 2006 book *The Crusader*, cites, in addition to Bessmertnykh and Novikov, USA Institute senior staff member Genrikh Trofimenko, whom Kengor identifies as “the well-known director of



the prestigious Institute for U.S.A. and Canada Studies.”<sup>53</sup> Trofimenko, whom I first met in the 1970s when I was covering that institute, was then—and I believe has remained—director of the institute’s Foreign Policy Department and a specialist in U.S. foreign affairs. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the long-serving founding director of the institute was Georgy Arbatov, who upon his retirement in 1995 was succeeded by his deputy, Sergei Rogov. According to Kengor, Trofimenko told a 1993 Hofstra University conference that “it was Ronald Reagan who won the Cold War and brought it to an end . . . [and] ninety-nine percent of all Russians believe that Reagan won the Cold War because of [his] insistence on SDI.”<sup>54</sup>

We have just seen that the views of former USA Institute director Arbatov are diametrically opposed to those of Trofimenko. Assuming Trofimenko’s assessment of Russian public opinion was accurate, the remaining 1 percent of Russians included, in addition to Gorbachev and Arbatov, such well-positioned insiders as Gorbachev’s advisor Alexander Yakovlev, Gorbachev’s English-language interpreter and confidant Pavel Palazchenko, senior Soviet ambassador and later Chief of the Central Committee’s International Department Anatoly Dobrynin, and Gorbachev’s chief of staff Valery Boldin.

Yakovlev, in a 1992 interview with American journalist David Remnick, dismissed the idea that Reagan’s strategic defense initiative had any significant bearing on the collapse of the Soviet empire. Remnick quotes Yakovlev as saying: “I can tell you that with the fullest responsibility. Gorbachev and I were ready for changes in our policy regardless of whether the American president was Reagan, or Kennedy, or someone even more liberal. It was clear that our military spending was enormous and we had to reduce it. It was senseless to pursue the same policy. There have been better and smarter presidents. I can’t say that Reagan played a major role. You can’t take that seriously. It’s just political propaganda.”<sup>55</sup>

In the same vein, Palazchenko records in his 1997 memoir:

when Gorbachev embraced the idea of global interdependence and of the Soviet Union being part of an interdependent global whole, and when that concept was approved by the Communist Party hierarchy, it was a decisive break with the past that had far-reaching and, at the time, unappreciated consequences. . . . This break was voluntary. It did not result from the U.S. arms buildup of the early 1980s, which could have been met with a counter-buildup or a policy of

“waiting out Reagan” and hoping for a better deal with his successor. . . . Gorbachev rejected these alternatives.<sup>56</sup>

Dobrynin, who returned to Moscow in 1986 after twenty-six years as Soviet ambassador in Washington to head the cc International Department, wrote in his memoir:

Sadly for the ardent followers of Reagan, the increased Soviet defense spending provoked by Reagan's policies was not the straw that broke the back of the evil empire. We did not bankrupt ourselves in the arms race, as the Caspar Weinbergers of this world would like to believe. The Soviet response to Star Wars caused only an acceptable small rise in defense spending. Throughout the Reagan presidency, the rising Soviet defense effort contributed to our economic decline, but only marginally, as it had in previous years. The troubles in our economy were the result of our own internal contradictions of autarky, low investment, and lack of innovation, as even Western economic specialists at the World Bank and elsewhere now believe.<sup>57</sup>

Gorbachev's chief of staff Valery Boldin concluded that the end of the Cold War amounted to “a total rout of the disorganized units of the USSR and the moral devastation of a once powerful adversary. But this rout was not the work of American military and technological might, nor of its strategic genius. It resulted from the internal capitulation of those forces opposed to the structure in place in our country.”<sup>58</sup>

On balance, it seems fair to conclude from the available evidence that the most significant aspect of Reagan's part in the Cold War's end and the empire's fall was to foster Gorbachev's inclination, pursuant to new thinking and perestroika, to act responsibly on arms control, regional issues, human rights, and bilateral affairs.

### Fitting the Pieces Together

*Interaction of Causal Forces.* An attempt to comprehend the overall causal pattern in the psychological milieu of the end of the Cold War and of the Soviet regime should assist us in understanding the relative importance of the main actors and interactions discussed in this and the preceding chapter. It

should also help clarify the relationship between the war's end and the empire's collapse. This is not to suggest that there was some sort of inevitability to the events under review. As in most areas of human endeavor, personality traits played an important role, as did unpredictable factors such as coincidence, accident, and miscalculation. The outside observer cannot know with confidence why an actor in these circumstances chose a specific option from the choices perceived as available and viable at the time of decision. However, I think one can use the evidence currently available to make out an overall pattern of causation and thereby gain an enhanced appreciation of why the main players acted as they did.

By far the most important player in the war's end and the empire collapse, as I have attempted to show in this and earlier chapters, was Mikhail Gorbachev. His actions as general secretary and as Soviet president comprise the main piece of both puzzles. It therefore is essential to get the Gorbachev piece in its right configuration and proper place in the pattern.

As Clifford Geertz would have counseled us, we have examined in this and earlier chapters who Gorbachev thought he was, what he thought he was doing, and to what end. We have seen that in the process of ridding the official conception of governance of what he regarded as its Stalinist and Brezhnevite defects, he challenged the scientific validity of the conception's doctrinal core and its derivative programmatic analysis of threats and missions. This resulted in serious erosion of the rationale for mobilization that had been the conception's linchpin, its central programmatic goal, during and ever since Stalin's rule. Deterioration of the imperative to mobilize in turn meant that the conception's institutions, roles, and practices—designed to carry out mobilization—gradually were deprived of their paradigmatic justification.

Put another way, Gorbachev's reform of foreign and domestic policy weakened the centripetal forces that since Stalin's day had functioned to pull the system together. There was little need for centrally controlled mobilization absent an ominous foreign threat and a historic domestic mission. If there was no imperative for mobilization, there was no paradigmatic basis for an all-powerful, all-pervasive Communist nomenklatura, a command economy, a vast military establishment, or an intrusive domestic security organization. By the middle of Gorbachev's rule, the traditional status of these institutions had been undermined, and their collective role in holding the regime together began to wane.

At the same time, Gorbachev's attempt to restructure the official conception caused intensification of centrifugal forces working to force the regime

apart. Chief among these forces was the pressure of nationalism—the attitudes of national identity and national pride that had flared up periodically in isolated incidents but had been a pervasive, potential problem in the Soviet Union ever since Lenin and Stalin opted for constituent republics and smaller political entities based primarily on ethnic identity. Another centrifugal force was seemingly irreversible economic decline, intensified by the domestic impact of a drop in world oil prices, which concerned conservative nomenklaturists, alienated the general population, and helped convince radical reformers that the Soviet conception of governance could not be restructured and had to be replaced. A third centrifugal force was produced by Gorbachev's policy of glasnost, which in effect slipped out of Gorbachev's control and for the first time opened the eyes of many Soviet citizens, official and unofficial, to the realities of their past and present situation and alienated them further from the traditional conception of governance.

Gorbachev's paradigmatic blinders caused him to underestimate the centrifugal power of nationalism in the USSR as well as in Eastern Europe.<sup>59</sup> More important, when countries of Eastern Europe began to assert independence from Moscow in the late 1980s, the Soviet regime under Gorbachev lacked a programmatic basis either for insisting upon their continued subordination to the Soviet Union, or for resorting to coercive measures, as Gorbachev's predecessors repeatedly had done, to keep these nominal allies in line. Even more important, when the republics of the USSR soon thereafter began to assert national sovereignty, Gorbachev's reform of foreign and domestic policy made it impossible for him to insist that their continued status as constituent parts of the Soviet Union was essential to Soviet national security or to construction of communism. The Soviet regime's ends, as Gorbachev had redefined them, no longer justified coercive means.

Gorbachev's paradigmatic blinders also impeded his understanding of the worsening economic situation and caused him to underestimate opposition from nomenklatura conservatives, personified by KGB chairman Kryuchkov, who grew increasingly alarmed as they realized that Gorbachev's reforms were placing at risk their way of thinking and their way of life. Radical reformers, with Boris Yeltsin as their standard-bearer, asserted with growing fervor the need for total abandonment of the official conception of governance. Gorbachev occupied a shrinking middle ground, too much a captive of the traditional conception to recognize that the entire disciplinary matrix had become hopelessly outmoded and depleted of internal logic. With the failure of the August 1991 coup, centripetal forces were further weakened and centrifugal

forces were further intensified. Political momentum quickly shifted from the conservatives, as well as from Gorbachev and his dwindling group of centrist colleagues, to Yeltsin and the growing number of “radicals” he represented.

If one views the Soviet conception of governance as a Kuhnian pseudoscientific paradigm, one sees that Gorbachev destabilized the conception and in effect brought it into a revolutionary state but nonetheless fought to the end for its restructuring rather than its abandonment. The true revolutionaries, in Kuhn’s sense of the term, were the radical reformers led by Boris Yeltsin, who utilized the failed coup, the failing economic situation, and the intensifying force of nationalism to destroy the Stalinist paradigm that Gorbachev had enervated and could not revive.

As with a Kuhnian paradigm shift in the natural sciences, the Soviet paradigm shift was psychological in nature. Alexander Tsipko has vividly described the psychological reality of this “revolution” as follows:

No people in the history of mankind was ever enslaved by myths as our people was in the twentieth century. We had thought that we had tied our lives to a great truth, only to realize that we entrusted ourselves to an intellectual fantasy which could never be realized. We thought we were pioneers leading the rest of mankind . . . to freedom and spiritual blessing, but realized that our way is the road to nowhere. We thought that building communism in the USSR was the greatest deed of our people, but we were purposefully engaging in self-destruction. We thought that capitalism was a sick old man sentenced to death, but it turned out that capitalism was healthy, powerful. . . . We thought that we were surrounded by people with the same ideals, grateful to us for saving them from capitalist slavery . . . but it turned out that our friends and neighbors were only waiting for a chance to return to their old lives. We thought that our national industry, organized like one big factory . . . was the ultimate achievement of human wisdom, but it all turned out to be an economic absurdity which enslaved the economic and spiritual energies of . . . Russia.<sup>60</sup>

The policies of the United States and the West were important in several respects. The long-standing American-led strategy of containment made clear that the West rejected the Soviet view of history and was prepared to actively challenge it. That the West could maintain levels of military spending ade-

quate to its containment policy, while at the same time providing its peoples with unprecedented prosperity, highlighted the backwardness of the Soviet system, which could, with great effort and at enormous cost, build and sustain a credible military-industrial complex but was incapable of providing its citizens with a decent standard of living or even a modest level of Western-style individual freedoms.

The confrontational policies characteristic of President Reagan's first term probably heightened Gorbachev's sense of the danger and the costliness of the Cold War and, perhaps in ways Gorbachev did not fully understand, also may have added to the difficulties he encountered in trying to invigorate Soviet economic performance. It is telling, however, that Gorbachev and his close advisors retrospectively have denied that U.S. economic warfare and related hard-line policies drove him to "new political thinking" or contributed importantly to his failed domestic reforms. Seen in the broad context of Gorbachev's decision making, and in the full array of weakening centripetal and strengthening centrifugal forces caused by Gorbachev's reforms and exacerbated by the coup attempt, Reagan's initial hard line should not, in my opinion, be accorded more than a secondary role in bringing about the war's end and the empire's fall.

*Relationship Between the War's End and the Empire's Fall.* We have seen that the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet empire each consisted of a series of events, rather than one discrete, clearly defined happening. The main relationship between these two processes was that they both were set in motion and shaped by the same individual, Mikhail Gorbachev. Of course Gorbachev did not intend to bring down the USSR, but in his mind reform of foreign policy and reform of the domestic order were closely related. As a result, events in one sphere affected events in the other, and Gorbachev's personal convictions and personality traits had an impact on both arenas.

Common to his foreign and domestic policies was his conviction that remnants of Stalinism, as he understood it, had to be purged from the official conception of governance. As outlined in Chapter 8, his new thinking about international affairs gradually undercut the viability of the overall conception of governance by eliminating the foreign threat upon which the it had been premised. Disagreement by leaders of the coercive and the military nomenklatura with Gorbachev's assertion that the Cold War had lost its meaning, plus their apprehension over the implications of this assertion, combined with their concern over the destabilizing effect of Gorbachev's domestic reforms to lead to the 1991 coup, which in turn accelerated the regime's collapse. Thus,

an unintended consequence of his effort to end the Cold War was to accelerate the Soviet Union's fall.

A second aspect of the relationship had to do with the intended impact of new thinking on perestroika. Gorbachev calculated that his reform of foreign policy would bring the West to realize that the Soviet Union was no longer aggressive, no longer a military threat, and therefore the arms race was no longer justified. Second, he believed this in turn would boost domestic reform by allowing transfer of resources from the bloated and demanding military sector to the underfunded domestic civilian sector and to restructuring of the domestic order.

Gorbachev scored uneven success in the first part of this scheme but failed in the second. The image of the Soviet Union improved in Western eyes, particularly after Gorbachev's radical disarmament proposal of January 1986, his unilateral military cuts announced at the United Nations in late 1988, withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in early 1989, and his muted reactions to the fall of the Berlin Wall and to assertions of national independence in Eastern Europe later that year. But he could not persuade President Reagan to restrict development of SDI, which the Soviet side saw as having a dangerous offensive potential and therefore as a stimulus to the arms race. Although Gorbachev shifted Soviet defense doctrine from mirror-image parity to strategic sufficiency, the resultant savings could not rescue a declining economy from his hesitant, conflicted half-measures.

Third, as Vladislav Zubok has pointed out, Gorbachev's personal traits were important in both spheres—just as personality played a major role in the foreign and domestic policies of Stalin and of Khrushchev.<sup>61</sup> Gorbachev's personal aversion to the use of force applied to both realms. In addition, he seemed confident that he could establish bold new directions in policy and then muddle through—relying on his energy and intelligence, his authority as secretary general, his power of persuasion, and his broadly optimistic assessment of current historical trends—without careful advance strategic planning. This approach worked fairly well with respect to the foreign impact of his new political thinking until President George H. W. Bush and the other G-7 leaders rebuffed Gorbachev's 1991 plea for a major aid package.<sup>62</sup> However, when combined with his paradigmatic blind spots regarding the merits of Leninism, the nature of the domestic economic situation, the power of national and ethnic identity, and the force of nomenklatura opposition, this approach fell short in resolving mounting domestic problems.

A fourth connection between the war's end and the empire's fall was that

reform of Soviet foreign and domestic policy was desired as well as actively fostered by Gorbachev's American counterparts, Presidents Reagan and Bush. This was particularly noteworthy in Ronald Reagan's case, as he had long been an outspoken advocate of American exceptionalism and came to office with strong, negative preconceptions about the Soviet Union and its leadership. As will be examined in Chapter 12, belief in America's exceptional role in the world can lead one to dismiss foreign mind-sets and outlooks and revert to oversimplified stereotypes of America's enemies abroad. It is a tribute to Ronald Reagan that he was able to surmount such long-held personal attitudes, turn away from hard-line advisors, and come to appreciate that Gorbachev's reforms were sincere, significant, and in America's best interests.<sup>63</sup>

### The Need to Understand Friends and Foes

The way the Cold War concluded and the Soviet regime collapsed does not support the contention of the Project for the New American Century, present-day neoconservatives, and some present-day admirers of Ronald Reagan that U.S. military strength, economic sanctions, and moral clarity under Reagan's leadership led to the West's victory in the Cold War. Western military strength, economic successes, and moral clarity undoubtedly contributed to the failure of Soviet communism, but these factors were for the most part constant throughout the Cold War. Their emphasis by President Reagan during his first term provided neither the main motivation for Gorbachev's shift to new political thinking about foreign affairs nor the main cause of Gorbachev's unsuccessful reform of domestic aspects of the Soviet conception of governance.

To assert that President Reagan's muscular policies ended the Cold War and brought down the Soviet empire and therefore should be repeated with respect to current and future manifestations of evil is to indulge in a potentially dangerous delusion. Confrontation may be called for in a given international situation, but it cannot be justified on the grounds of Ronald Reagan's "victory" over communism. There simply was no such victory. Our reappraisal of the war's end and the empire's fall suggests that while U.S. military power and U.S. articulation of moral concerns can contribute to effective foreign policy, they should be seen as only a part of the equation for success. At least as important, as I think the Soviet case illustrates, is clear understanding of the concepts and categories, the mind-set within which key foreign



decision makers construe the world and on that basis construct and execute their policies.

This aspect of Reagan's relationship with Gorbachev does not seem to have had much subsequent impact on the thinking of the American foreign policy community. Few retrospective accounts of the Reagan-Gorbachev interaction have dealt in depth with the psychological dimension. Nor has an appreciation of this dimension characterized America's current approach to foreign affairs. United States policy regarding the invasion of Iraq and its aftermath, for instance, appears largely to have neglected actual Iraqi psychology and political culture in favor of "faith-based" assumptions about innate longings of the Iraqi populace and the peoples of the Middle East for freedom and democracy. The results of this neglect have been enormously costly.

The book's concluding chapter examines in this regard the causes and implications of a seeming U.S. reluctance to focus on the psychological dimension of foreign affairs. Before moving beyond the Soviet Union and the nature of its disintegration, however, it will be worthwhile to look briefly at today's Russia in the light of our analysis of the Soviet psychological milieu as the Cold War came to a close and the Soviet Union came to its end. This is the subject of the following chapter.

# 11

## Empire and Democracy in Post-Soviet Russia

The cognitive psychological approach to assessing the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet empire can shed helpful light on two controversial issues regarding today's Russia: is a psychology of empire likely to reemerge, and can a genuinely democratic political order supplant seven decades of Bolshevik authoritarianism?

In keeping with the typical practice of Soviet autocracy, the actions Gorbachev took to restructure the Soviet conception of governance were imposed from above on an increasingly skeptical nomenklatura and an increasingly disaffected Soviet population. The collapse of the Soviet regime was followed by almost a decade of economic and political turmoil, which many in the newly independent Russian Federation conflated with democracy, to the obvious detriment of the latter. Meanwhile, post-Soviet Russia has remained a backward land compared to its Western neighbors—rich in natural resources but still at the far edge of Europe, with few defensible borders, and an unevenly developed economic infrastructure. Perhaps the traditional conditioning factors of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality have endured, so that, in ways an outsider finds difficult to comprehend, the rulers and the ruled in today's Russia remain predisposed to yearn for historical grandeur and to slight democracy in favor of authoritarian rule. Perhaps the manifestly undemocratic conception of governance that characterized the Soviet regime and was rooted in Russia's tsarist past has fostered an enduring political culture favoring territorial expansion and statism.

Newly independent states that were part of the Soviet Union—in particular Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia—along with former members of the Warsaw Pact—notably the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland—have feared that Russia might revert to its imperial traditions.<sup>1</sup> Estonian President Lennart Mari, for example, when discussing with a senior U.S. official the importance of his country's early membership in NATO, described post-Soviet Russia as

“a malignancy in remission.”<sup>2</sup> This concern has been an important part of the desire of Baltic and Eastern European countries to join NATO, and it is an understandable motivation, given the tragic national histories of these countries vis-à-vis the Russian and Soviet empires.

Prominent Western analysts of foreign affairs have voiced similar concerns. For example, Zbigniew Brzezinski argued in a 1994 *Foreign Affairs* article that post-Soviet Russia could not be both a democracy and an empire and seemed to be choosing the latter path by pressuring the newly independent states on its borders.<sup>3</sup> Boston University Soviet/Russia specialist Uri Ra’anan wrote in 1995 that “a distinctly imperial trend in Russian acts and statements is now unmistakable, and that holds ominous implications for the future of the Russian people itself, for non-Russians within the Russian Federation, for the 14 other former Soviet republics, for the independence and sovereignty of the other former Warsaw Pact members, and thus, ultimately, for the West as well.”<sup>4</sup> In a July 5, 2001 op-ed piece, Henry Kissinger warned of “the historic Russian policy of absorbing neighbors or turning them into satellites.”<sup>5</sup> In his book *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* published in 2001, Kissinger asserted that “NATO must be maintained as a hedge against a reimperializing Russia.”<sup>6</sup>

The psychological milieu of the Soviet empire’s collapse gives us a set of criteria for judging the likelihood of reemergence in Russia of a lust for empire, as well as the prospects for democracy there. Knowledge of the structure and function of the Soviet conception of governance can help us gauge whether imperial and antidemocratic behavior in post-Soviet Russia is an ominous sign of return to the past, or an unfortunate residue of Bolshevism that impedes Russia’s transition toward international responsibility and democracy but is not an insuperable barrier to the eventual attainment of these ends.

## Empire and Democracy Under Boris Yeltsin

*Yeltsin’s Approach to Governance.* When compared to the preceding seven decades of Bolshevism, Yeltsin’s rule marked at least the initial phase of political and economic transition toward Western institutions and practices. While steadfast and energetic in demolishing the old regime, Yeltsin was unable to bring to life a comprehensive, new conception of governance. In Thomas Kuhn’s scheme of things, practitioners of a scientific paradigm who abandon

their traditional way of construing the world usually have in mind an alternative approach that they are convinced is superior. Yeltsin and his advisors recognized that the traditional Soviet conception of governance was thoroughly dysfunctional and had to be abandoned. They regarded the Western approach to governance as superior but had difficulty articulating and realizing such an approach for Russia amidst the ruins of the Bolshevik order and the turmoil caused by its collapse.

Part of the problem was the economic chaos that the Yeltsin camp inherited with the demise of the USSR. Another major difficulty was the resistance that the Yeltsin forces encountered from former nomenklaturists, communist true believers, and Russian nationalists who had not undergone the psychological transition from the Soviet conception toward a Western model. As a result, Russia soon became bogged down in the “political gray zone” between autocracy and democracy described by Thomas Carothers as typical for many such transitions—with ill-defined and often chaotic policies that resulted in a relatively liberal domestic order mixed with remnants of autocratic rule and imperial foreign policy.<sup>7</sup>

In abandoning the traditional conception, Yeltsin went further than Gorbachev in discarding the operating principle of orthodoxy. There was no apparent doctrinal foundation to Yeltsin’s approach to governance beyond a general desire to move from Soviet theory and practice to a market economy and a democratic polity. Yeltsin departed from the Bolshevik version of autocracy by ending the Communist Party’s nomenklatura system and welcoming independent political parties, although he seemed to maintain a somewhat autocratic conception of his personal role as president of Russia. He also departed from the Bolshevik approach to nationality, claiming neither mystical popular support for his reign nor a grandiose mission for the Russian people.

*The Foreign Policy Component.* Yeltsin in the main adopted Gorbachev’s view of Russia as a responsible member of the world community—a view not always shared, however, by the communists and nationalists in the Russian parliament, by conservatives in Russia’s foreign policy establishment, or by hard-liners in Russia’s security and military establishments. Yeltsin seemed to relish his first-name relationship with President Clinton, was pleased to be included in exclusive meetings of the advanced industrial countries, and appeared to enjoy playing the role of world statesman. While his foreign as well as his domestic policies were erratic, the notion of a new Russian empire did not appear to be part of his personal outlook.

At the same time, one detected during the Yeltsin years a widespread conviction within Russian officialdom that Russia had special interests, and therefore should enjoy a zone of special influence, throughout the “near-abroad,” consisting of the newly independent states along Russia’s western and southern borders that had been constituent republics of the USSR. That this represented the official Russian position was indicated by Russia’s patronizing policies toward Belarus and Ukraine as well as by active Russian involvement in Azerbaijan, the Baltic states, Georgia, Moldova, and Tajikistan. It was made explicit when Yeltsin addressed the UN General Assembly in September 1994, declaring that “Russia’s priority is . . . the countries of the former union” and that “the burden of peacemaking in the space of the former union [rests] . . . on the shoulders of . . . [Russia].”<sup>8</sup> Yeltsin’s policies toward former Soviet republics could be unseemly, and his use of brutal, indiscriminate military force against Chechnya was inhumane. Yet these measures were not intended to reestablish Soviet-era international borders or to reconstitute an empire (Chechnya for decades has been a constituent part of the Russian Federation).

Among Yeltsin’s political opponents, the idea of a revived empire figured significantly only in the thinking of flamboyant ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy and his inappropriately named Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR). Zhirinovskiy’s popularity spiked ominously at about 23 percent in 1993 but declined steadily to low single digits by the late 1990s.<sup>9</sup> The main Communist grouping, the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF), headed by Gennady Zyuganov, mourned the dissolution of the USSR and advocated its voluntary, peaceful re-creation. Zyuganov forced Yeltsin into a runoff during the 1996 presidential elections but ultimately lost by over 13 percent. Public opinion polls throughout the 1990s showed waning support for the return of communism as espoused by Zyuganov or for fascism of the sort represented by Zhirinovskiy. In the March 2000 presidential elections, Yeltsin’s hand-picked candidate, Vladimir Putin, received 52.9 percent of the vote, Zyuganov a distant 29.2 percent, and Zhirinovskiy only 2.7 percent.<sup>10</sup>

During the Yeltsin presidency, the Russian military-industrial complex and the uniformed military did not openly advocate a return to empire but did push for more vigorous assertion of Russian national interests. Strobe Talbott describes one of the most egregious cases we know about, in which a faction of senior military commanders, evidently led by Chief of Staff General Anatoly Kvashnin, authorized deployment of a large Russian military unit into Kosovo in June 1999 without the knowledge of the Yeltsin government and against the wishes of the NATO commanders in charge of the Kosovo opera-

tion.<sup>11</sup> On other fronts, individual military institutes and production facilities were involved in unauthorized transfers abroad of military technology and hardware. Western intelligence agencies strongly suspected that components of the Soviet biological weapons complex were functioning covertly and illegally in post-Soviet Russia, despite repeated assurances from President Yeltsin that such activities had been shut down.<sup>12</sup>

The powerful Ministry of Atomic Energy was engaged in the unauthorized transfer of nuclear technology to Iran during the Yeltsin years. For example, Strobe Talbott has reported that when Secretary of State Warren Christopher informed his Russian counterpart, Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev, that Minister of Atomic Energy Victor Mikhailov was offering Iran gas centrifuges capable of producing weapons-grade uranium, Kozyrev replied that "Mikhailov was 'out of control.'" Kozyrev went on to assert that Mikhailov "was exploiting lingering resentment in the Russian military-industrial complex and political elite over Russia's capitulation to the U.S. on the sale of Russian rockets to India in 1993, and that Yeltsin was unaware of what Mikhailov was up to."<sup>13</sup>

*The Domestic Order.* Yeltsin's volatile mixture of personal traits—which appeared to include a desire to dominate, an acute sensitivity to criticism, periods of deep depression, and abuse of alcohol—combined with declining physical health to thwart a consistent domestic policy line, particularly in the latter years of his rule. Yeltsin moved the Russian economy toward market-based decision making but could not control crime and corruption or establish a system of legality adequate to render private economic activity predictable. He for the most part tolerated organized political opposition, media openness, and reasonably fair elections. Yet he arbitrarily set aside the existing constitution when in 1993 he disbanded a rebellious parliament by military force.

Yeltsin also demonstrated a manipulative approach to the electoral process by relying on wealthy oligarchs to finance his 1996 presidential campaign and, three years later, by suddenly resigning to make his protégé, then-Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, acting president. This triggered a constitutional provision requiring new presidential elections within ninety days, and of course Yeltsin's resignation gave Putin the advantage of incumbency. The aroma of manipulation became stronger when Putin, in one of his first acts as newly elected president, granted Yeltsin and his immediate family a large measure of immunity from criminal prosecution amid rumors of financial improprieties.

*The Yeltsin Legacy.* The Yeltsin legacy was mixed. For all of his shortcom-

ings as a transitional leader, Yeltsin followed Gorbachev's lead in breaking with Russian and Soviet tradition by proclaiming neither a foreign threat nor a domestic mission that required mobilization and strict, centralized control of resources. Yeltsin in fact moved toward the other extreme. In the latter years of his rule he allowed power to slip away from his control: private business moguls acquired enormous wealth, including major media assets; regional bosses began to ignore commands from the center; power ministries circumvented Kremlin control to pursue their own institutional interests; and Yeltsin's relations with Parliament were often hostile and generally unproductive.

As George Breslauer has suggested, Yeltsin's self-conception as Russia's president seemed to involve the image of patriarch, of a "people's tsar" at the apex of power.<sup>14</sup> In the words of political analyst Lilia Shevtsova, written at the end of Yeltsin's rule: "Yeltsin meant to create a pure pyramid of power that needed no other institutions, but the emergence of pluralism in society and among the political elite and a devolution of power from the center to the regions precluded this design. The 'presidential pyramid' is in fact a false front for a ramshackle regime built of ill-fitting parts. . . . Fluidity, uncertainty, and ambiguity are becoming the mode of the regime's survival."<sup>15</sup> Stanford University's John Dunlap characterized Yeltsin's Russia as of the late 1990s as presenting an "overall dismal picture of a largely failed Russian state."<sup>16</sup> His Stanford colleague Gail Lapidus found that at the end of the Yeltsin era, Russia was confronting "an uncontrolled and seemingly uncontrollable unraveling of central power."<sup>17</sup>

## The Putin Conception of Governance

*Putin's Path to the Presidency.* Vladimir Putin differed sharply from his patron Boris Yeltsin in career background and, as president, in approach to governance. Unlike Yeltsin, and in contrast as well to Mikhail Gorbachev, Putin did not set out to pursue a career inside the Communist Party nomenklatura. He instead successfully realized his childhood dream of becoming a KGB officer, after completing university legal training in order to enhance his qualifications for admission into the intelligence service. Putin reportedly spent the first eleven years of his seventeen-year KGB career in Leningrad and Moscow, occupied primarily with low-level administrative and counterintelligence duties and with training assignments. He was then given German language

instruction and assigned to Dresden, East Germany, for approximately five years, from 1985 to 1990. Putin has indicated that in Dresden he gathered, analyzed, and reported to Moscow political intelligence on NATO countries, although he says that he did not travel to the West during this assignment. He was still on assignment in East Germany when the Berlin Wall fell, large numbers of East Germans headed west, and the East German regime began to disintegrate.<sup>18</sup>

Putin came back to Leningrad in 1990, moved to the KGB “active reserves”—at the relatively young age of thirty-eight and the relatively modest rank of lieutenant colonel—and, after a brief return to academic life and an administrative position at Leningrad University, joined the Leningrad city government of reform-minded Mayor Anatoly Sobchak, who had been the university’s rector and before that one of Putin’s law professors. Putin reports that he informed Sobchak of his KGB affiliation, was not bothered by the organization while working for Sobchak, and finally resigned from the KGB immediately after the August 1991 coup attempt against Gorbachev.

Putin rose quickly under Sobchak to the position of First Deputy Mayor of Leningrad. Following Sobchak’s defeat for reelection in 1996, Putin moved to Moscow to join the Yeltsin administration—probably thanks to his reputation as an able administrator, as well as to his work on Yeltsin’s presidential campaign in St. Petersburg (the city reverted to its original name in 1991) and his contacts with former colleagues already working for Yeltsin in Moscow.<sup>19</sup>

Putin’s rise in the Yeltsin hierarchy was remarkable. He initially served as a deputy in the General Affairs Department of the presidential apparatus, responsible for the legal division and for Russian property abroad. He subsequently was put in charge of relations with the regions of Russia, then was appointed head of the federal security service (the FSB, which essentially consisted of the domestic portion of the old KGB), and later was also named head of the Russian Security Council. In August 1999 Yeltsin selected Putin to be Russia’s prime minister. Upon becoming acting president in December 1999, following Yeltsin’s resignation, Putin was forty-seven years old—Yeltsin was sixty when first elected as Russia’s president; Gorbachev was fifty-four when selected Communist Party general secretary.<sup>20</sup>

*Putin’s Overall Conception.* Putin’s early speeches and actions as president of the Russian Federation suggest that from the outset of his presidency he had in mind the rough framework of a new, ostensibly transitional conception of governance. At the core of this conception was a declared belief—a national creed rather than an elaborate “scientific” doctrine—that it was urgently nec-



essary to develop Russia's potential and raise the country from its seriously weakened condition at the turn of the century to national well-being and to enhanced international influence and respectability. In Putin's words: "Russia is in the midst of one of the most difficult periods in its history. For the first time in the past two to three hundred years, it is facing a real threat of sliding to the second, and possibly even third, echelon of world states. We are running out of time left for removing this threat. We must strain all intellectual, physical and moral forces of the nation. . . . Everything depends on us, and us alone."<sup>21</sup> This core goal has remained constant throughout Putin's rule. In his final "state of the Federation" address in April 2007, for instance, Putin noted that despite the progress Russia had made in recent years, the country was "only at the beginning of the difficult road to . . . full and genuine recovery."<sup>22</sup>

Putin's conception also contains programmatic analysis of the current domestic and foreign situation in light of core assumptions. This analysis calls for consolidation of political and economic power into the hands of the state—meaning the president and his administration—to overcome Russia's domestic weaknesses and strengthen its international standing. Putin's programmatic view discloses no overriding foreign threat and therefore gives priority to domestic rather than foreign problems. When asked during a December 2003 TV call-in program what he saw as Russia's main threats, for instance, Putin responded that the "biggest threat is that [Russia's] economic growth will slow down."<sup>23</sup>

Putin's initial assessment of a largely benign international environment was modified during the last year or so of his reign to depict a growing challenge to Russia's revival from usually unspecified foreign sources—although clearly the United States was regarded as the chief villain.<sup>24</sup> Putin and his advisors evidently convinced themselves that the Bush administration intended to shape Russia's domestic order and foreign standing to its own liking. For example, in what appeared to be an incongruous insert to his April 2007 address to the Russian parliament, Putin declared:

To be frank, our policy of stable and gradual development is not to everyone's taste. Some, making skillful use of pseudo-democratic rhetoric, would like to return us to the recent past, some in order to once again plunder the nation's resources with impunity and rob the people and the state, and others in order to deprive our country of its economic and political independence. . . . Looking back at the

more distant past, we recall the talk about the civilizing role of colonial powers during the colonial era. Today, “civilization” has been replaced by democratization, but the aim is the same—to ensure unilateral gains and one’s own advantage, and to pursue one’s own interests.<sup>25</sup>

Viewed from within this mind-set, critical remarks by Putin and his associates about the United States, accompanied by assertive foreign affairs tactics—including suspension of Russian adherence to the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe (CFE), the flamboyant testing of a powerful new bomb, resumption of strategic air patrols, strenuous objection to deployment of limited U.S. antiballistic systems in Poland and the Czech Republic—become more understandable (although no less questionable).

*Putin’s Version of Orthodoxy, Autocracy, and Nationality.* In pursuing his central aim of attaining national prosperity and prestige, Putin has articulated something of a “neo-orthodoxy,” a set of what he seems to believe are self-evident truths about governance. He evidently feels it appropriate for the state apparatus to define national goals, to divine the Russian people’s desires, and then to determine and execute policy accordingly. Putin has not asserted that only he and his colleagues possess the truth about Russia’s present and future. However, those with differing views gradually have been shut off from media access and deprived of the political power necessary for effective opposition to Putin’s outlook, policies, and practices.<sup>26</sup>

Putin evidently sees no merit in public discussion of such matters. When a journalist asked why he had refused to participate in televised debates prior to the March 2004 presidential elections, Putin responded: “I already know exactly what my opponents wanted to say and I think it would have just been a senseless game of concessions or a game in which one of the players already knows the final score.”<sup>27</sup> He seemed oblivious to the idea that political debate might have forced him to explain his basic assumptions publicly—and that this could have advanced the cause of democracy in Russia.

Putin’s notion of being above the political process suggests an attitude of neo-autocracy, wherein power and policy properly flow from the top down, and the president should not be distracted by significant political opposition. Putin has called for “voluntary social accord” and unity based on belief in the greatness of Russia, social solidarity, and “statism.” On the latter score, Putin asserted bluntly that:

For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly which should be got rid of. Quite the contrary, they see it as a source and guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of any change. . . . We have come to value the benefits of democracy, a law-based state, and personal and political freedom. At the same time, people are alarmed by the obvious weakening of state power. The public looks forward to the restoration of the guiding and regulating role of the state to a degree which is necessary, proceeding from the traditions and present state of the country.<sup>27</sup>

Putin's version of nationality thus far has focused on renewing national pride rather than on reviving a sense of Russian exceptionalism. In 2001 the Putin government approved a five-year plan for "Patriotic Upbringing of Citizens of the Russian Federation," which aimed "at a spiritual rebirth to help reconnect Russians to their homeland even as the country continues to become integrated into the rest of the world."<sup>28</sup> As part of this effort, Putin and his colleagues reinstituted use of the red flag by the Russian army and created a Russian national anthem that retains the music, while replacing the words, of the Stalinist national anthem (although a 2005 public opinion poll showed that only 7 percent of the respondents were comfortable with the resuscitation of these symbols of the Soviet past).<sup>29</sup> The Putin regime also limited the history texts used in Russian schools, noting that textbooks should "foster a sense of pride for one's history and one's country."<sup>30</sup> On the other hand, to date Putin has given no sign of believing Russia has a unique historical destiny that sets it apart from other nations.

*The Putin Conception in Historical Perspective.* We have seen that both tsarist Russia and Soviet Russia were characterized by a similar matrix of attitudes regarding governance. An understanding of the Putin conception, along with the policies stemming from it, is enhanced when viewed in this broad historical context. While the content of the tsarist outlook was repudiated by the Bolsheviks and replaced with Marxist-Leninist pseudoscience, the overall structure and function of the new conception was similar to the old: political authority was considered as exclusive to a privileged and supposedly uniquely enlightened central leadership, and the regime's subjects were viewed mainly as instruments for achieving grandiose goals established by, and if necessary enforced by, the central leadership.

Putin has, perhaps subconsciously, resuscitated much of the structure and function of the Stalinist paradigm, although he has followed his patron, Yelt-

sin, in rejecting that paradigm's Marxist-Leninist content. In place of Stalin's imperative to mobilize for construction and defense of socialism in one country, Putin has substituted revival of the domestic prosperity and international prestige of Russia. In Putin's conception of governance, as in Stalin's, neo-orthodoxy, neo-autocracy, and neo-nationality facilitate attainment of the central goal. Putin has not called for nationwide mobilization on a scale comparable to Stalinist mobilization because, unlike Stalin, Putin has not posited a dire foreign threat. In addition, the need for mobilization has been mitigated by huge revenues from energy exports, which in turn have made possible significant domestic advance and have as well enhanced Russia's international standing.

In sum, the Russian tradition of regarding political power as properly centered on and exercised by a strong ruler still has not been effectively replaced by a conception of governance centered on the autonomous citizen, who provisionally delegates political power to a higher authority.<sup>31</sup> Gorbachev altered many basic structures and practices while trying to reform the Soviet conception of governance, but he was unable to effect substantial, lasting changes in Russian political culture. Yeltsin demolished the entire Stalinist edifice yet ruled in an autocratic fashion and did not make a concerted effort to alter the political psychology of the Russian people. Neither has his successor, who instead has recentralized political power, created a presidential nomenklatura made up largely of former members of the organs of power, and promulgated modified forms of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality.

### Putin's Approach to Empire and Democracy

*Putin and Empire.* Putin appears to have accepted the Gorbachev and Yeltsin view of Russia as a responsible member of the international community, although a number of Russia's neighbors and many observers in the West have come to question Putin's understanding of "responsibility" in this context.<sup>32</sup> Still, Putin's repeated public statements about Russia's place in the community of nations on occasion have been substantiated by specific actions, particularly during the early years of his presidency. He overruled his minister of defense on use of former Soviet republics by the U.S. military in the overthrow of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. He has indicated a willingness to cooperate with the United States, along with NATO and the European Union, on nonmilitary aspects of the U.S.-proclaimed war against global

terrorism. He agreed to closer overall cooperation with NATO, even as NATO was preparing to grant membership to the three former Soviet republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. He has called for a reinvigorated Russian diplomatic corps equipped to understand free markets, free media, and post-Cold War threats.<sup>33</sup> Russia under Putin signed the Kyoto Protocols on protecting the global environment, has played an active role in the G-8, and is seeking membership in the World Trade Organization.<sup>34</sup>

At the same time, Putin has continued his predecessor's patronizing, often heavy-handed policies toward the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union. At the level of general policy, Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov wrote in 2002 that "it is natural to suppose a pivotal role for Russia in . . . [Eurasia] . . . by virtue of its size, its population, and its economic capability." Ivanov went on to say that "the problem of creating a new system of international relations in the space of the former USSR continues to be one of the highest foreign policy priorities for the Russian leadership."<sup>35</sup> In his May 2003 annual address to the Russian parliament, Putin himself declared: "Our undoubted priority in foreign policy remains strengthening relations with the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States [the former Soviet republics, minus Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania]. These countries are our closest neighbors. We are united by centuries of historical, cultural and economic ties. . . . And, to put it directly, we see the CIS area as the sphere of our strategic interests."<sup>36</sup>

At the practical level, Putin's Russia has delayed removal of its two military bases in Georgia and of its military forces in Moldova, finally agreeing in the spring of 2005 to shut down the bases in Georgia by 2008.<sup>37</sup> It continues to support repugnant regimes in Belarus and in the separatist enclaves of Transdnistria (in Moldova), Ossetia, and Abkhazia (both in Georgia). It blatantly interfered in Ukraine's presidential elections, although when these efforts failed Putin proclaimed a willingness to work cooperatively with newly elected Ukrainian president Yushchenko. The value of this proclamation became questionable when, in early 2006, Russia suddenly reduced natural gas deliveries to Ukraine (and thus to Western Europe) to force Ukraine to pay the full market price for Russian gas. Russia employed brutal tactics against Chechen civilians as part of its prolonged effort to pacify Chechnya.<sup>38</sup> Russia's tolerance of a continuing U.S. and NATO military presence in Central Asia seems to have waned. The Putin administration has stubbornly refused to admit the fact of Soviet occupation of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia following World War II, although Putin has acknowledged that in 1989, dur-

ing Gorbachev's reign, the Soviet parliament officially denounced the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939, which led to the forcible incorporation of the three Baltic states into the Soviet Union.<sup>39</sup>

On balance, Russia's current assertions of influence, however unseemly and objectionable, do not add up to an effort to re-create an empire even remotely comparable to that mandated and justified by the Soviet conception of governance. The Putin government clearly has been concerned to protect and advance Russian interests on the other side of Russia's markedly shrunk international boundaries and beyond. However, Putin has revealed no inclination to push Russia's new borders outward toward their pre-1992 position by threat of, or actual resort to, military force.

*Putin's Theory and Practice of Democracy.* In the Putin conception, democracy is declared to be a central feature of the Russian polity but is qualified as "Russian-style" democracy. In his 2005 "state of the federation" address, Putin curiously asserted that "the ideals of freedom, human rights, justice and democracy have for many centuries been our society's determining values"—as if these ideals somehow overshadowed or were embodied in orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality under Romanov and Bolshevik rule. Putin then stated that development of democratic procedures "should not come at the cost of law and order, the stability that we worked so hard to achieve, or the continued pursuit of our chosen economic course."

Having put democracy in its place, Putin concluded that Russia did not need the advice of others on this score: "Russia is a country that has chosen democracy through the will of its own people. It chose this road of its own accord and it will decide itself how to ensure that the principles of freedom and democracy are realized here, taking into account our historic, geopolitical and other particularities and respecting all fundamental democratic norms. As a sovereign nation, Russia can and will decide for itself the timetable and conditions for its progress along this road."<sup>40</sup>

This approach indicates that in Putin's conception, Russian-style democracy is, and will remain for the indeterminate period of Russia's national recovery, an instrumental rather than an absolute value. In this light, it is not surprising that Putin's record in fostering democracy in Russia has by Western standards been uneven and often retrogressive. As has been widely reported in the West, during Putin's tenure as president independent Russian television organizations were brought systematically under regime control. Moscow's authority over Russia's provinces was reasserted. Manipulation of the electoral process by the regime caused Western monitors to criticize publicly the con-

duct of the December 2003 and December 2007 parliamentary elections, as well as the 2004 presidential elections. Wealthy Russian businessmen inclined toward political activism were subjected to harassment and in one notorious case to arrest, trial, and a lengthy prison term. The upper house of Parliament was deprived of political power, while a solid majority of the lower house, including its speaker (Putin's former minister of internal affairs, Boris Gryzlov), are reliable Putin supporters. Several foreign nongovernmental organizations working in Russia, including the U.S. Peace Corps, in effect were expelled from the country, while others came under threat for allegedly conducting subversive activities against Russia.<sup>41</sup>

### Prospects for Reassertion of Empire

The generally unanticipated impact of Mikhail Gorbachev on the course of the Cold War and the fate of the Soviet empire serves as a warning against linear thinking about current history—in this case, against offhandedly assuming that Russia's future foreign policy will look pretty much like Russia's present foreign policy. Nonetheless, it is difficult to imagine circumstances that would bring Russian leaders to attempt to rebuild a Russian empire anytime soon. For a number of reasons, Russia's leaders are unlikely to deviate from the Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and Putin pattern and attempt to reconstitute an empire.

While Russian public opinion polling discloses nostalgia for the Soviet past and acceptance of centralized political power, remobilization of Russian society would pose a daunting challenge for any Russian leader—barring a dramatic worsening of the international climate or of the domestic economic situation in the eyes of the Russian people. Absent a major new mobilization of resources, it is unlikely that a partially privatized, partially market-based Russian economy could afford to build a military establishment capable of supporting revival of an empire.<sup>42</sup> Russia obviously can pose a conventional military threat to its relatively weak neighbors, although, as the lengthy Russian military campaign in Chechnya suggests, successfully carrying out such a threat would require a revitalization of the Russian military that could not happen quickly, easily, or in secret.

We have seen that mobilization of the Soviet Union and maintenance of the Soviet empire were rationalized by the myths of a dire external threat and a historic domestic and international mission. Absent reimposition of strict censorship and tight information control—obviously difficult in the age of

the Internet, international television via satellite, cell phones, and relaxed controls on international travel—Russian society is not likely to accept the idea of an international threat comparable to the ominous, looming dangers posited by Stalin and his successors. Neither will Russian society easily accept the imposition of a new, grandiose national goal requiring personal sacrifice today for glorious benefits tomorrow, given the bitter experience of the Russian people with Soviet promises of a radiant future.

Finally, in any sober calculation, the prospective value to Russia of a renewed empire in the twenty-first century should be judged by the Kremlin as close to zero, if not well into the negative numbers. Gorbachev and his like-minded colleagues were of course right when they discarded as unrealistic the programmatic concept of a world divided into two opposing camps. From the perspective of today's Kremlin, Russian national security no longer mandates an international or internal empire, because Russia is no longer seen as confronting a grave threat from abroad. Russian economic progress no longer requires re-creation of something like the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics or the "world socialist system," because Russian leaders no longer conceive of their country as leading humanity toward a historically preordained, advanced economic order or as fostering a world revolutionary process.

Russia has ample natural resources within its present vast territory, much of which remains pathetically underdeveloped—lacking paved roads, modern sewage systems, adequate housing, and modern telecommunications. For these reasons, a Russian attempt to absorb neighboring countries would seem to be economically irrational. Russia needs capital goods, technology, and know-how from the West to raise the productivity of its existing economic plant. It needs Western markets for its energy resources and other exports, not more territory and more production units acquired by coercion. It needs to remain a part of the international system, not revert to Russia's renegade past.

It is conceivable, barely, that conservative forces might at some point become fed up with Putin-style foreign policy and succeed in forcing imperial thinking on a future Russian leadership still pursuing "Putinism" or something like it. Apprehension over this possibility, similar to earlier Eastern European and Baltic concerns, presumably feeds the present desire of Ukrainian and Georgian leaders to have their newly independent countries join NATO.

A number of factors diminish the likelihood of another right-wing coup attempt or power play. First, for at least the next decade and probably beyond,



the memory of the failed coup against Gorbachev and the subsequent humiliation suffered by its perpetrators (although they eventually were pardoned by the Russian parliament) is likely to deter a new attempt to challenge a duly elected Russian leader. Second, a defining moment of the sort that triggered the 1991 coup—the impending signing of Gorbachev’s new union treaty, which the coup plotters feared would drastically weaken Moscow’s control over the republics of the Soviet Union—is unlikely to present itself. More generally, neither Putin nor the next Russian president is likely to rile influential conservatives in the way Gorbachev and Khrushchev did. To the contrary, Putin has been increasingly outspoken in defending Russian independence and in asserting Russia’s national interests, and his successor probably will follow suit.

Third, Putin, who was working for Mayor Sobchak in St. Petersburg at the time of the 1991 coup against Gorbachev, must have been keenly aware that its leaders included the KGB chairman and the ministers of defense and internal affairs. When he was promoted from head of the FSB to prime minister in 1999, Putin designated as his successor to run the FSB its first deputy, Nikolai Patrushev, a former KGB colleague from St. Petersburg. In March 2001 Putin appointed another former KGB colleague from St. Petersburg, Sergei Ivanov, as Russian minister of defense in place of army careerist General Igor Sergeyev.

In the same month Putin named yet another colleague from St. Petersburg, Boris Gryzlov—who at the time was in Moscow as the head of the pro-Putin United Russia Party in the Duma—as head of the powerful Ministry of Internal Affairs, which has a large military component as well as control over the national police force. Thanks to United Russia’s strong showing in the 2003 parliamentary elections, Gryzlov moved back to parliament as speaker of the Duma and was replaced as minister of internal affairs by Rashid Nurgaliyev, who had been Gryzlov’s first deputy (Nurgaliyev earlier had pursued a KGB and FSB career and undoubtedly had worked with Putin in that capacity).<sup>43</sup>

In February 2007, Putin announced the promotion of Minister of Defense Ivanov to first deputy prime minister—one of two, the other being Putin’s longtime protégé and aide Dmitri Medvedev. Putin gave Ivanov responsibility for overseeing the military-industrial complex and for introducing innovation into the entire Russian economy. Putin on the same occasion announced the appointment of Anatoly Serdyukov as minister of defense. Serdyukov, reportedly a close friend of Putin from the time when both men worked in St. Petersburg, directed the St. Petersburg branch of the Federal Tax Service

from 2000 to 2003, then moved to Moscow to become director of the entire tax service.<sup>44</sup>

In September 2007, Putin unexpectedly appointed another St. Petersburg crony, Viktor Zubkov, as prime minister. This appointment took Moscow Kremlin-watchers by surprise: Zubkov had been a low-profile bureaucrat in charge of investigation of money-laundering and was not regarded as a player in “big politics.”<sup>45</sup> In December 2007, just after the landslide victory of Putin’s United Russia party in the parliamentary elections, Putin made another surprise announcement, declaring that First Deputy Prime Minister Medvedev was Putin’s choice to be Russia’s next president. Shortly thereafter Medvedev, in a brief public statement accepting Putin’s suggestion that he run for president, appealed to Putin to become prime minister under the next president (virtually certain, given Putin’s endorsement, to be Medvedev).<sup>46</sup>

These developments have been interpreted by some Kremlin-watchers as reflecting a Putin balancing act between two leadership factions: the *siloviki*—Putin appointees who had been or still were associated with the KGB/FSB or other organs of power (the Russian word for power is *sila*)—and an opposing faction, rumored to be more pragmatic and open-minded, that included Medvedev.<sup>47</sup> In any event, a right-wing power play against Putin’s general approach to foreign policy seems unlikely, even if there is continuing disagreement within the Putin nomenklatura over the appropriate degree of assertiveness for Russian diplomacy and national security policy. While Russian foreign policy might become more confrontational, reassertion of imperial thinking and behavior would appear to be highly unlikely so long as Putin remains at the top of the political hierarchy, and the conditions outlined above remain in force.

## Prospects for Democracy in Russia

*The Soviet Conception’s Impact on Popular Attitudes.* We have seen that Russian and Soviet political culture has long worked against Western ideals of individual sovereignty and delegated authority, and continues to do so in its current manifestations. Russian/Soviet orthodoxy for centuries quashed freedom of expression and insisted there was only one truth, which was the monopoly of the ruling authority and which should not be challenged from below. Russian/Soviet autocracy thwarted genuine democracy by holding that power and policy must flow from the top down and by regarding independent

political parties and autonomous civic groups as superfluous and potentially dangerous. Russian/Soviet nationality worked against a sense of common destiny with the West by teaching that the Russian/Soviet people were unique and fated to pursue a mystically foreordained and glorious separate course.

Although well over a decade has passed since the collapse of Soviet rule and abandonment of the Stalinist versions of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality, one cannot expect political culture in post-Soviet Russia to have changed significantly among a people who, until the late-1980s, knew little about the realities of their own system as compared with other political and economic systems, saw Soviet mythology crumble and the regime itself falter and fall apart over the course of some three years, then experienced eight years of severe domestic turbulence under Boris Yeltsin.

Survey research in Russia in the early 1990s disclosed broad enthusiasm for democracy and liberal values, but by the end of that chaotic decade support for democracy had declined, although a majority still expressed belief in liberal concepts such as limited government, a free press, and individual liberties.<sup>48</sup> More recent polling has shown a trend toward support for individual liberties in the abstract, but indifference toward actual problems of democracy in today's Russia, together with a strong tendency to favor an authoritarian central government.

In 2000, 81 percent of the respondents in one poll preferred order over democracy, while only 9 percent said that preservation of democracy was more important than preservation of order.<sup>49</sup> Polling in 2002 and 2003 disclosed that about one-third of the respondents favored authoritarian government, one-third democracy, and the other third could not decide.<sup>50</sup> An October 2003 survey indicated that only 10 percent of the respondents felt the right to elect leaders was important to them. In a poll taken in January 2004, about two-thirds of the respondents believed there would be no significant competition in the upcoming presidential elections; of those respondents, only half felt that lack of competition was a bad thing.<sup>51</sup>

Analysis of such polling data led Michael McFaul to conclude in 2001 that "popular resistance would be unlikely should an authoritarian coalition reemerge within Russia."<sup>52</sup> This view has been corroborated by the fact that notwithstanding President Putin's consolidation of power, his suppression of media independence, his manipulation of the electoral process, and his harsh policies in Chechnya—steps that can hardly be characterized as reflecting a liberal cast of mind—Putin's public approval ratings have remained remarkably high (averaging around 70 percent).

In the December 2003 parliamentary elections, the United Russia Party, created to support Putin, won a whopping 305 seats in the lower house (the Duma), just over two-thirds of the total (67.8 percent). The three parties representing, in varying degrees, a return to the past gained a total of 126 seats (28 percent). These included the Communist Party (52 seats, or 11.6 percent), Zhirinovskiy's LDPR (36 seats, or 8 percent), and "Motherland" (38 seats, or 8.4 percent)—a new, mildly nationalistic party fostered by the Kremlin to undercut Communist Party support. Neither of the two liberal parties in the race made the 5 percent required for proportional representation.<sup>53</sup>

In the March 2004 presidential elections Putin received just over 70 percent of the vote, compared to 54 percent in 2000. In second place was the Communist Party candidate, with about 14 percent (down from about 29 percent in 2000). Liberal candidate Irina Khakamada received around 4 percent (the leading liberal candidate in 2000 got just under 6 percent), and the Zhirinovskiy candidate garnered about 2 percent, compared to roughly 3 percent in 2000.<sup>54</sup>

In the December 2007 parliamentary elections, which Putin and his colleagues portrayed as a referendum on Putin's presidency, the United Russia Party received slightly over 64 percent of the vote and increased its seats in the Duma from 305 to 315 (70 percent of the total). The Communist Party was second, the LDPR third, each with about the same number of seats as in 2003. The only other party to get over the hurdle for proportional representation, raised from 5 to 7 percent by the Putin regime, was the newly created, Putin-friendly Just Russia Party, with 7.2 percent of the vote. In short, supporters of President Putin will easily dominate the Duma for the next four years.<sup>55</sup>

These electoral outcomes, together with relevant polling data, suggest that most Russian voters accept Putin's approach to governance, have been undisturbed by his neo-orthodoxy, and have accepted his neo-autocracy as well as his version of Russian nationality. These data support Russian political analyst Lilia Shevtsova's contention that Russian society is still not accustomed to thinking in terms of oppositional politics. As Shevtsova put it:

Many people still consider that simply trying to improve upon the policies of the authorities is the optimal solution for Russia, which shows that they still look upon power as a substance that reproduces itself [at the top] rather than arises from society. The fact that ordinary citizens and the political elite calmly accepted the nomination

of Putin as Yeltsin's successor and that very few were troubled by the almost complete absence of alternative candidates shows that society still relates to power in a semi-monarchistic way.<sup>56</sup>

*The Soviet Conception and Russia's Governing Elite.* That remnants of the old conception still affect the outlook of the current Russian leadership is unfortunate but not surprising. Putin and many of his colleagues pursued much of their early careers during the Brezhnev period, when Soviet-style orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality still held sway. Many of the present ruling elite, of course including President Putin himself, were officers of the KGB, the Soviet organization with prime responsibility for maintaining orthodoxy and sustaining autocracy.<sup>57</sup>

The optimistic view of the current situation is that Putin recognizes the enormous difficulties of a successful psychological transition from a totalitarian empire to a Western form of governance and has concluded that measured amounts of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality are required to facilitate the transition.<sup>58</sup> A logical accompanying assumption would be that as Western values gradually take hold, the old values will be correspondingly reduced.

In this view, one might argue that Putin's conception of governance is more realistic than that held by Gorbachev or by Yeltsin. Gorbachev erroneously thought that the Soviet system's health could be restored by eliminating what he regarded as Stalinism from the official conception of governance. As Yeltsin acknowledged in his December 1999 resignation statement, he assumed "we would be able to jump from the gray, stagnating, totalitarian past into a bright, rich and civilized future in one go. . . . But it could not be done in one fell swoop."<sup>59</sup> By reverting to some of the old ways, Putin is implying that negation of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality by Gorbachev and Yeltsin was premature—and recent polling data and electoral returns can be interpreted as supporting this notion.

The pessimistic interpretation is that, over the longer term, the use of illiberal means will thwart realization of enlightened ends—assuming Putin and his colleagues are genuinely committed to such ends—and Putin's conception of "managed democracy" will push active public involvement and genuine pluralism ever further into the future.

In particular, Putin's emphasis on a strong central state implies a large bureaucratic apparatus. The problem, as Alexander Yakovlev and others have pointed out, is that a state nomenklatura in effect has replaced the Bolshevik

nomenklatura and engendered corruption and nomenklatura self-interest. As during the Soviet period, the new nomenklatura resists democratization and manipulates the economy to its advantage.<sup>60</sup> Russia thus for many years may continue to be a democracy and a market economy in form but not in substance.

Given the logic of Putin's conception of governance, he or a like-minded successor may choose to further strengthen the state, and correspondingly diminish individual freedoms and democracy, in an attempt to overcome domestic difficulties. The fundamental domestic problem that Gorbachev identified at the beginning of perestroika—the inability of the Soviet system to shift from extensive to intensive economic growth—still has not been resolved. As Putin underscored in his 2003 annual address to Parliament and reiterated in his 2006 address, the Russian economic system is still fundamentally weak, and most of its sectors are not competitive on the world market. The technology gap between Russia and the West continues to widen. As during the Soviet period, Russia's exports consist mainly of natural gas, crude oil, and other raw materials. Despite the huge profits Russia currently is realizing from these exports, the country suffers from the heavy legacy of its communist past: poor nationwide infrastructure, acute demographic and environmental problems, an inadequate health care system, alcoholism and drug addiction, a high crime rate, and widespread corruption.<sup>61</sup>

The Kremlin's potential vulnerability to economic and social policies that are perceived negatively by the population was indicated by the demonstrations and the roughly 10 percent dip in Putin's popular standing that followed his decision in early 2005 to reduce social benefits.<sup>62</sup> So long as world energy prices remain high, Russia's economy should be able to sustain its present robust growth. Should energy prices decline, however, the economy could falter, bringing a decline in living standards and generating popular disaffection that in turn could cause the leadership to revert to more traditional manifestations of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality.

Similarly, further incidents of terrorism stemming from continuing tensions in the North Caucasus region or other manifestations of lawlessness could cause the Kremlin to restrict democracy further in the name of heightened domestic order and security. This problem was illustrated by Putin's reaction to the fall 2004 tragedy in the southern Russian city of Beslan, where some three hundred hostages, mostly young children, were killed after terror-

ists seized a school. Putin's response was to abolish the popular election of regional governors throughout Russia, establish a more restrictive electoral system for the parliament, and create a new, powerful anti-terrorism agency. His rationale was the need to streamline the executive branch in the face of a continuing terrorist threat. But an unmistakable result was to diminish democracy in order to strengthen the state.<sup>63</sup>

All in all, Putin's record of accomplishment since assuming the Russian presidency in 1999 provides little cause for optimism about the near-term future of democracy in Russia. Given the legacy of the Soviet past, strong political leadership is needed to make Russian political culture more hospitable to individual rights and freedoms. Putin has taken Russia in the wrong direction, away from democracy. He has reinforced the Russian proclivity for orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality rather than striving to overcome these antidemocratic remnants of the past.<sup>64</sup> As analyst of Russian politics Thomas Graham has put it: "If there has been a transition at all, it has not been the hoped-for one to a free market democracy, but rather a reincarnation of a traditionally Russian form of rule that in many respects is premodern."<sup>65</sup> In the words of the Russian newspaper *Pravda* (no longer the organ of the Communist Party): "We are stuck somewhere between moldy socialism and criminal capitalism."<sup>66</sup>

One ray of hope has been created by Putin's endorsement, amounting to virtual appointment, of Medvedev as Russia's next president. Unlike Putin and many of his generational cohorts now in power, Medvedev (born in 1965) was a part of the Soviet nomenklatura for only a matter of months, in 1990 and 1991, as the Soviet regime under Gorbachev was falling apart. Also in contrast to Putin and many of his colleagues, Medvedev was not a member of the KGB or any other organ of Soviet power, and his service in the Soviet regime was too brief and too peripheral to make him a dedicated practitioner of the traditional Soviet conception of governance. His initial professional background involved the study, teaching, and practice of law. After earning a law degree at St. Petersburg University and obtaining a teaching position on the university's law faculty, Medvedev was employed by Putin as a legal advisor, when Putin was a senior official in the St. Petersburg mayor's office in the early 1990s. In 1999 Putin, then prime minister, brought Medvedev to Moscow as a key assistant.<sup>67</sup>

The hopeful aspect of Medvedev's almost certain ascension to the presidency is that as a member of the post-Soviet generation, Medvedev's mind-set may be relatively free of remnants of orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationalism.

Conceivably, but far from certainly, he may be more inclined than his patron and many others in the Putin nomenklatura to foster genuine democracy and rule of law in Russia. The extent to which Medvedev may be willing and able to do so remains, at this juncture, a matter of conjecture—along with the prospective degree of his power and the duration of his term as president.

### Implications for U.S. Policy Toward Russia

The West would be shortsighted to become complacent and passive about Russia's future. With a veto in the United Nations Security Council, with a geopolitical position and energy resources that make it a major regional power, with a domestic order that is rife with systemic problems and as yet far from democratic or governed by law, Russia has many ways to be troublesome to the United States. While Russia no longer sees itself as locked in an inevitable life-or-death struggle with the United States, the Putin conception of governance differs markedly from the American outlook, creating the basis for serious misunderstandings and miscalculations. Meanwhile, many Russian strategic nuclear missiles, staffed and maintained by an underfunded military establishment, remain on hair-trigger alert (as do many U.S. strategic missiles) and pose a real and present danger of mistaken (due to erroneous real-time intelligence), unauthorized, or accidental launch.

At least as menacing, it is no secret to terrorists and rogue states that Russia is both plagued with crime and corruption and in possession of huge stocks of weapons of mass destruction and their components, WMD know-how, as well as modern conventional weapons such as ground-to-air missile systems and shoulder-fired anti-aircraft weapons.<sup>68</sup>

On the other side of the coin, President Putin has demonstrated that Russia has numerous ways to be helpful to the United States and the West in the struggle against global terrorism and proliferation of WMD and in the resolution of other pressing international problems. Today's Russia, in short, requires our close attention.

An extended discussion of U.S. policy options toward post-Soviet Russia would be out of place here, but several policy-relevant conclusions can be drawn from our assessment of the continuing influence of tsarist and Soviet political culture on political attitudes in today's Russia.<sup>69</sup> As discussed above, the near-term prospect is that Russian foreign policy will remain both assertive and leery of U.S. intentions, and realization of Western-style democracy



and rule of law will continue to fade into the future. This suggests a two-pronged U.S. policy: one approach for the near term, while the current Putin conception of governance holds sway; another oriented to the longer-term goal of fostering foreign responsibility and internal democracy.

The first approach will have to rely upon traditional diplomacy to encourage Russian support for U.S. policies as well as to counteract “Putinism”—in the sense of an unreasonable assertion of Russian national interests in neighboring countries and beyond, and authoritarianism at home—when it clashes with U.S. interests. This will be challenging, as the United States will possess little effective leverage over resource-rich Russia as long as energy prices remain high. The Putin regime clearly does not respond well to foreign criticism or what it perceives as foreign pressure, especially when Putin and his colleagues believe the United States is hostile to their conception of Russia’s domestic order and international role.

The second approach will also be challenging, given that the United States for the foreseeable future will be preoccupied with a global struggle against terrorist organizations and the direct threats they pose, and must as well cope with a volatile Middle East, an unstable African continent, and an unpredictable North Korea. In the face of such major challenges, the United States is unlikely to spend large amounts of time and money to moderate Russian political culture. There are, at least, several broad guidelines that should inform our efforts on both policy tracks, however modest these efforts may be.

First, we should not delude ourselves into thinking that American-style democracy, rule of law, and related values are somehow destined to flourish in post-Soviet Russia. Left unaddressed, Russia’s unfortunate political heritage will continue to exert countervailing influences. We therefore should offer proven, relatively low-cost bilateral programs that help Russia to become a more responsible member of the international community and foster democratic values within Russia. Such programs include governmental, academic, and professional exchanges, measured support for indigenous nongovernmental organizations, and assistance in teaching English and with other aspects of high school and college-level education. This will not be easy, given that the Putin regime has already characterized some U.S. programs of this sort as intended to subvert Russia’s existing political order. Yet we were able to conduct similar activities with the Soviet Union during the Cold War years, and we should be able to find a way to do so with post-Soviet Russia under conditions of the Putin conception of governance.

Second, at a time when the Russian leadership asserts that Western values must be blended with Russian values under the management of a strong central state, and when the Putin regime is restricting political freedom domestically while interfering in the affairs of newly independent neighboring countries, the American president and his administration should be restrained in expressing personal praise for their Russian counterparts. This was a problem with the Clinton-Yeltsin relationship. It also has been a problem in the Bush-Putin relationship—as when President Bush told a September 2003 press conference at Camp David: “I respect President Putin’s vision for Russia: a country at peace with its borders, with its neighbors, and with the world, a country in which democracy and freedom and rule of law thrive.”<sup>70</sup> Similarly, during Putin’s September 2005 visit to the United States Bush remarked, with a bit more restraint, that Russia “will be even a stronger partner as the reforms that President Vladimir Putin has talked about are implemented: the rule of law and the ability for people to express themselves in an open way in Russia.”<sup>71</sup> Such statements create a false general impression, undermine lower-level American diplomatic and private efforts to promote Western values in Russia, and undercut indigenous nongovernmental organizations in Russia courageously advocating Western values.<sup>72</sup>

Third, in light of the continuing dangers posed by Russia’s weapons of mass destruction, weapons components, and WMD knowledge in an age of global terrorism, we should sustain and, to the degree feasible, strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperative programs—first put into U.S. law under the leadership of Senators Sam Nunn and Richard Lugar in late 1991—that aim to diminish such dangers.<sup>73</sup>

Finally, we should be mindful of an important relationship between the outlook of the American foreign policy establishment and that of its Russian counterparts as well as of Russian society generally. To minimize the unintended consequence of pushing Russia further back toward the Stalinist conception of governance, the American side needs to take careful account of contemporary Russian attitudes, at the popular as well as the leadership level, as Russia strives to restore the health of its economy, its political system, and its society. Understanding problematic Russian domestic and foreign behavior is not the same as condoning such behavior. Absent this sort of empathy, what the United States intends as constructive criticism can have a counterproductive effect because it is perceived by the Russian side as historically blinkered, condescending, and arrogant. The American side—from the specialists and the diplomats on the ground in Russia to the program managers

and policy makers back home—should never lose sight of the fact that the Russian people and their ruling elite have recently undergone a remarkable degree of political, economic, and social change; are still paying a heavy price for their communist heritage; and still have a psychological frame of reference markedly different from the American outlook.

# 12

## An Analytical Blind Spot and Its Consequences

The psychological perspective set forth in Part 2 is relevant to current U.S. foreign policy for an additional reason beyond illuminating the causes of the Cold War's end and the Soviet empire's collapse and enhancing our understanding of imperial thinking and democracy in post-Soviet Russia. A third point of relevance concerns American psychology, rather than Soviet psychology, and involves what I believe was a defect in the predominant U.S. understanding of the end of the war and the fall of the empire. This shortcoming amounted to a predisposition, shared by most but certainly not all Western analysts and policy makers, to avoid consideration of the Soviet leadership's mental universe, to avert a focus on the Kremlin's psychological construction of reality.

Seen in the broader context of U.S. foreign policy after World War II, disregard of the Soviet outlook appears to have been one manifestation of a more general American aversion to taking seriously foreign outlooks that differ substantially from our own. If the American approach to international affairs suffers from such a defect, the problem should be defined, diagnosed, and corrected. Accordingly, this chapter describes what in my view has been an enduring flaw in American thinking about foreign policy, speculates about its causes, illustrates the defect's past and present prevalence, and, finally, suggests ways the defect can be overcome.

### Working Assumptions

*The Function and Causes of the Blind Spot.* The term "blind spot" seems an appropriate label for the analytical defect I have in mind. As readers who are familiar with a visual field test (usually involving perception or nonperception of a series of computer-driven dots of light that results in a computer-

produced map of the eye's visual field) are well aware, the back of each human retina contains a blind spot, a small region incapable of registering light. Yet as we experience normal sight we are not conscious of such perceptual gaps—in our conscious visual perception of our surroundings we are unaware of the two blank areas caused by the blind spots in each retina. According to specialists in the psychology of perception, this is because in processing visual input our brain “fills in” these gaps beneath the threshold of consciousness so that our visual field seems to be continuous and whole.<sup>1</sup>

I would suggest that many American students and practitioners of foreign policy are afflicted with an analytical blind spot that functions in much the same way. Because of subconscious mental processing, this blind spot diverts attention from outlooks different from the American outlook we have internalized. It thus distorts our perception and understanding of international affairs at a level beneath our threshold of awareness so that we do not perceive a gap in our analysis.<sup>2</sup>

A general American predisposition to slight the thinking of others has been widely written about, and it would require too many pages to undertake an extended review of that literature and a thorough consideration of the predisposition's possible causes.<sup>3</sup> However, a word about my assumptions regarding the nature and causes of this predisposition, assumptions culled from the scholarship of others as well as from my experience in Soviet affairs, should help clarify what I have in mind.

I referred at the outset of this book to the emphasis Clifford Geertz has placed on gaining familiarity with the frames of meaning within which other peoples live their lives. This was the broad approach used in Part 2, which explored the evolution of Russian and Soviet frames of meaning with respect to governance. The question here is whether there is a distinctive *American* frame of meaning that tends to predispose our view of international affairs.

I agree with the many specialists in U.S. intellectual history and culture who believe there is such an American outlook. Canadian scholar Sacvan Bercovitch has expressed this idea in a striking way—one that reminds me of my first direct exposure to the Soviet outlook. Describing his initial trip into the United States from Canada, Bercovitch writes:

My first encounter with American consensus was in the late sixties, when I crossed the border into the United States and found myself inside the myth of America. Not of North America, for the myth stopped short at the Canadian and Mexican borders, but of a country

that despite its arbitrary frontiers, despite its bewildering mix of race and creed, could believe in something called the True America, and could invest that patent fiction with all the moral and emotional appeal of a religious symbol. . . . Nothing in my Canadian background had prepared me for that spectacle. It gave me something of an anthropologist's sense of wonder at the symbols of the tribe. . . . To a Canadian skeptic, a gentile in God's Country, it made for a breathtaking scene: a pluralistic, pragmatic people openly living in a dream, bound together by an ideological consensus unmatched by any other modern society.<sup>4</sup>

In contrast to its Soviet counterpart, the "American consensus" does not involve a conception of governance that is regarded as scientific. As social scientist Seymour Martin Lipset and others have pointed out, the American outlook is characterized by a widely shared national creed, a "civil religion" that is unique to the United States and stems from faith in general religious values rather than from belief in a body of knowledge that claims to be scientific. In his book *American Exceptionalism*, Lipset describes the American creed as including "liberty, egalitarianism, individualism, populism, and laissez-faire." He adds that America is exceptional among all nations "as the most religious, optimistic, patriotic, rights-oriented, and individualistic." Lipset highlights American uniqueness by pointing out that "[b]eing an American . . . is an ideological commitment. It is not a matter of birth. Those who reject American values are un-American."<sup>5</sup> In contrast, Lipset notes that in Europe nationality is seen as stemming from community, not from ideology, so that notions of "un-English" or "un-Swedish" have little meaning.

It seems to me that from within this broadly faith-based American worldview, which typically is regarded by those who hold it as reflecting the natural and proper order of things, one tends to assume uncritically that the American way, including American foreign policy, is uniquely enlightened and blessed by our Creator, that our critics abroad do not understand our true nature and thus are basically misguided, and that our foreign enemies are unrealistic as well as evil. From this set of assumptions, it follows that there is little we can learn from the views of others, particularly from the views of our enemies, and therefore minimal benefit is to be gained from analyzing such views.

It also follows that as one's belief in the American creed and American exceptionalism intensifies, the masking effect of the blind spot grows, and

one's interest in the outlook of others, whether allies or enemies, correspondingly diminishes.<sup>6</sup> The problem is not that we suffer from a culturally induced inability to understand how foreigners think, once we put our minds to it. The crux of the matter is that we seem to have a culturally induced disinclination to pursue this line of analysis—that is, we are averse to putting our minds to it.

Parenthetically, this disinclination may have a genetically induced basis that is typical of all humankind. Harvard University psychologist Steven Pinker draws upon his study of the psychology of language to argue that we are born with a set of predispositions, in the form of neural structures, that shape our perception of the world and our linguistic description of it. These predispositions, Pinker suggests, lead us instinctively to regard other humans holistically, as unthinking causes of events rather than as entities whose thought processes are similar in structure and function to our own.<sup>7</sup> In a somewhat similar vein, Emory University specialist on primate behavior Frans de Waal argues, on the basis of his study of apes, that we have inherited a predisposition to be wary of alien-seeming strangers. As he puts it: "Our evolutionary background makes it hard to identify with outsiders. We've been designed to hate our enemies, to ignore people we barely know, and to distrust anybody who doesn't look like us. Even if we are largely cooperative within our communities, we become almost a different animal in our treatment of strangers."<sup>8</sup> If Pinker and de Waal are correct, these "hard-wired" traits probably are amplified in the American case because of our relatively strong civil religion, which serves to magnify our sense of a gulf between "us" and "them" and diminish our interest in understanding "them."<sup>9</sup>

*The Problem of Hindsight Bias.* As a logical prelude to surveying manifestations of the blind spot in the Soviet field and other areas of postwar U.S. foreign policy, we should consider briefly the danger inherent in assuming that what appears obvious in hindsight was in fact also obvious as the events in question were taking place.<sup>10</sup> In the case of the demise of the Cold War and the Soviet empire, perhaps what seems clear about the causes of these happenings to an outside observer well after the fact—now that numerous Soviet participants and other insiders have written memoirs, and new documentary evidence has become available—may not have been visible at the time to Western analysts who were doing their best to make sense out of events as they were happening. If the evidence available in real time was insufficient to allow the sort of cognitive psychological analysis discussed in earlier chapters, criticism of Western observers for having failed to understand this

psychological dimension of the war's end and the empire's fall surely would be unjustified. Emphasis on an American analytical blind spot regarding the Soviet outlook would be questionable.

However, pertinent evidence *was* available to the outside analyst in a timely fashion. To recap briefly, one of the first indicators of pivotal psychological change in the Soviet Union was Gorbachev's reconsideration, at the Twenty-seventh Party Congress in 1986, of the concept of international class struggle, along with the related notion of the division of the world into two antagonistic socioeconomic systems. The significance of this reconsideration became increasingly obvious with publication of Gorbachev's book *Perestroika* in the fall of 1987, followed by a Shevardnadze speech at the Soviet Foreign Ministry in the summer of 1988 and Gorbachev's address to the UN General Assembly in November of that year. It was corroborated by Gorbachev's benign reaction to assertions of independence in Eastern Europe leading to the November 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, followed by his remarkable agreement in 1990 to the membership of a reunited Germany in NATO and his support for U.S. policy toward Iraq in 1990 and 1991.

Gorbachev's inability to revive the Soviet domestic order, due in large part to his paradigmatic blinders, was even more apparent in real time. His initial reliance on glasnost and economic "acceleration" plainly was inadequate to reverse the regime's deeply rooted economic ailments. His subsequent attempts to reform the economic mechanism and restructure the political system, while maintaining party rule and pursuing an ill-defined goal of "democratic socialism," were no more promising and no more successful. The related weakening of traditional Soviet orthodoxy, autocracy, and nationality also took place in plain sight. It seems to me what was lacking among Western observers was not observable, relevant facts. As earlier suggested, I believe what was missing was an analytical framework, a set of categories that would have facilitated appropriate assessment of these facts.

No doubt the task of the outside analyst during the Gorbachev years was difficult. Gorbachev himself was sometimes inconsistent and indecisive in his actions and utterances. Even in the final phase of his rule, he stubbornly insisted upon compromise with conservatives in the party apparatus. And there was the real possibility that Gorbachev and his reforms would be replaced or co-opted by regime conservatives, as my writer friend feared in the summer of 1987, as Shevardnadze publicly predicted when he suddenly resigned as foreign minister in December 1990, as Yakovlev and others subsequently warned, and as almost happened in August 1991.



On balance, though, I am convinced that we should have done a better job of anticipating the timing and nature of the war's end and the empire's fall on the basis of the evidence then available. This was an analytical shortcoming that clearly should not be repeated. It is therefore important to consider how and why we tended to slight the psychological dimension.<sup>11</sup> It is also important to consider the implications of this shortcoming for our ongoing approach to foreign affairs.

## Understanding the Soviet Union in Decline

*Perspective of the Reagan Administration.* An American disinclination to consider empathetically and in depth foreign mind-sets was relatively pronounced during the first Reagan administration and was particularly evident in its understanding of the Soviet Union. Two mundane but typical examples come to mind from my experience in the Department of State during those years. I was present when a senior, noncareer department official, appointed by the Reagan administration, was asked during a public appearance before a large American audience in the early 1980s for his view of Soviet motivations in pursuing détente. He answered without hesitation that his job was to create objective circumstances to which the Soviet leadership would have to respond, not to engage in psychiatry. From my observation of this official on the job, his answer accurately described his approach to policy making and policy execution: I found this appointee and numerous others in the upper reaches of the Reagan administration to be obsessed with the operational milieu and dismissive of the psychological milieu.

On another occasion, I was working on the Soviet Desk when word came down, also during the early days of Ronald Reagan's presidency, that our written analyses of arms control issues henceforth must not deal explicitly with "negotiability"—that is, with the likely degree of Soviet acceptance or rejection of a given U.S. position—because this would open us to charges of sympathy for the Soviet point of view. The clear implication was that we should not signal that we were taking the Soviet viewpoint seriously because this would displease the senior levels of the administration.

The historical record suggests that President Reagan came to accept the sincerity of Gorbachev's reforms only after hearing the Soviet leader explain his views in person.<sup>12</sup> This, I believe, was due largely to Reagan's sound common sense, plus the fact that Gorbachev actually was a dedicated reformer,

came across as such in face-to-face encounters, and thus was able to surmount Reagan's preconceptions about Soviet expansionism, revolutionary intent, and mendacity.

We have seen that by the presidential campaign of 1984 President Reagan had decided to try to engage the Soviet leadership as constructively as possible. Until that time, Reagan's personal inclination had been to rely more on his long-held convictions about communism than on consideration of a representative spectrum of informed viewpoints about the Soviet Union and its leadership. To be sure, Reagan was assisted in his reappraisal by National Security Assistant Robert (Bud) McFarlane, who, for example, reportedly arranged for the president to meet on numerous occasions with Suzanne Massie, a specialist on Russian history. Reagan was also assisted by NSC Advisor on European and Soviet Affairs Jack Matlock, who was well versed in Russian and Soviet history and culture, fluent in Russian, experienced in practical dealings with the Soviet nomenklatura, and well aware of the importance of Soviet leadership psychology.

In addition, Secretary of State George Shultz played a major role in Reagan's reassessment of Soviet policy under Gorbachev. My direct experience with Secretary Shultz, in Washington and in Moscow, indicated that his personal inclination was to analyze the Soviet viewpoint with an open, inquiring mind. As director of the Office of Eastern European and Yugoslav Affairs, I attended several meetings that Shultz conducted at the State Department with his Eastern European counterparts and saw his keen interest in obtaining their views of Kremlin thinking. A few years later, as DCM in Moscow, I accompanied Secretary Shultz to a meeting with Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov. Shultz questioned Ryzhkov closely about his and Gorbachev's plans for reform of the Soviet economy, listened carefully, and immediately after the meeting instructed us to draft a personal telegram from Shultz to President Reagan reporting Ryzhkov's remarks and underscoring that Ryzhkov and Gorbachev seemed genuinely committed to making meaningful changes in the Soviet system.

The broad importance of Gorbachev's revised approach to world affairs seemed to dawn gradually on Shultz and Reagan toward the end of Reagan's second term—although they evidently did not see it at the time as undermining the rationale for the Soviet regime itself. Meanwhile, Secretary of Defense Weinberger, CIA Director Casey, and other senior Reagan administration officials remained dubious throughout the Reagan presidency that Gorba-

chev's statements signaled any meaningful change in Moscow's approach to foreign affairs.<sup>13</sup>

*Perspective of the George H. W. Bush Administration.* The initial months of the George H. W. Bush administration, in 1989, were devoted to a thorough but inconclusive review of U.S. policy toward the Soviet Union, amid charges from conservative Republican activists and commentators that Shultz and Reagan and perhaps President Bush himself had gone wobbly on communism.<sup>14</sup> George Will, for example, wrote of President Reagan: "How wildly wrong he is about what is happening in Moscow. Reagan has accelerated the moral disarmament of the West—actual disarmament will follow—by elevating wishful thinking to the status of political philosophy. . . . The mind boggles and the spirit sags at the misunderstandings—of Soviet history, of the twentieth century."<sup>15</sup>

President Bush appeared to begin to take Gorbachev seriously as a result of the Bush-Gorbachev meeting at Malta in December 1989. Vice President Dan Quayle, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, and, initially, NSC Advisor Brent Scowcroft were highly dubious.<sup>16</sup> Scowcroft later acknowledged that at first he felt the Reagan administration had "rushed to judgment about the direction the Soviet Union was heading." Scowcroft also acknowledged that during 1989 and most of 1990 he remained personally suspicious of Gorbachev's motives and skeptical about his prospects.<sup>17</sup>

Bush administration Secretary of State James Baker has disclosed in his memoir *The Politics of Diplomacy* that he became convinced of Gorbachev's sincerity thanks to Baker's many discussions of perestroika and new thinking with his Soviet counterpart, Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, as well as by Gorbachev's concrete actions, particularly his decision to join the United States in condemning Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.<sup>18</sup> Baker writes that he regarded himself as a "realist," a man of action rather than of reflection or contemplation. He recalls a roundtable discussion he held in the State Department with outside Soviet specialists in April 1989 that tended to focus on "arcane issues of Sovietology" such as the significance and durability of perestroika. The more hawkish analysts thought perestroika was just a means to gain breathing space, Baker relates, while the more dovish analysts argued that perestroika marked a fundamental shift in Soviet policy. Baker sums up the meeting as follows: "To me, this seemed mainly academic theology. At that point [the spring of 1989], both views had analytical strengths and weaknesses. What mattered to me were what actions we could take in the face of

these two different possibilities, in order to maximize our diplomatic gains while minimizing risks.”<sup>19</sup>

I was one of the participants in this roundtable—my colleagues included former ambassador to Moscow Arthur Hartman, Dimitri Simes of the Nixon Foundation, Berkeley political scientist George Breslauer, and Steven Sestanovich of the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I was probably the most “dovish” of the group, by then convinced that Gorbachev was a dedicated reformer of domestic as well as foreign policy and that U.S. policy should reflect this reality. I don’t recall precisely what I said, but evidently it did not make much of an impression on Secretary Baker, who, in his book, listed only three roundtable participants, leaving out Hartman, Simes, and me. I do recall that the only interest Baker revealed during the ninety-minute session came when Sestanovich mentioned the possibility of a U.S. deal with Gorbachev (the details of which I have forgotten).<sup>20</sup>

In sum, throughout most of Gorbachev’s rule the senior levels of the U.S. foreign policy and national security establishment were deeply divided over the significance of Gorbachev’s revision of the Soviet conception of governance and slow to realize the implications of his reforms for the end of the Cold War and the sustainability of the Soviet empire. While some were more inclined to take Gorbachev at his word than others, as a rule little careful attention was paid by senior members of the Reagan and Bush administrations to the substance and the internal logic of Gorbachev’s thinking.

*The Role of the Department of State and the CIA.* To the best of my knowledge, the bureaucracies of the State Department and the CIA did little to assist the Reagan and Bush administrations in understanding the Soviet conception of governance and the increasingly perilous surgery Gorbachev was attempting to perform on it. A preference for “hard” facts over “soft” psychology permeated the formal system for decision making in the State Department during the years I served there. Decision memoranda for the department’s senior officials were structured in a pragmatic format established and enforced by the department’s executive secretariat in an understandable effort to streamline decision making at the top of the bureaucracy. The mandated components of a decision memorandum included a terse statement of the problem; a summary, in a paragraph or two, of its background; three or four options for its solution, with pros and cons for each option; and a recommendation. The whole thing was supposed to be rendered in a few pages—appendices could be attached, although the bureaucracy resisted putting bulky

documents in the usually overloaded in-boxes of the secretary and his senior aides.

It was possible to send less structured “information” memoranda to the upper levels of the department, but these documents were expected to be brief, factual, and directly relevant to current policy issues. Unless the secretary or his senior staff were known to be interested in mind-sets and motivations abroad—and the default assumption was that they were not—the working levels of the bureaucracy usually were discouraged from providing this sort of analysis to the department’s senior levels.

In my observation, this bias was also reflected in the analysis of Soviet affairs at the CIA. The agency appropriately focused on Soviet military capabilities and Soviet activities around the world that appeared to have direct implications for U.S. national security interests. CIA analysts also specialized in various aspects of the Soviet domestic scene, particularly the Soviet economy. Leadership developments were followed closely, but chiefly from the perspective of Kremlinology—that is, who was up and who was down in terms of political power. The CIA office handling biographical reporting on Soviet and other world leaders was separate from the office of Soviet analysis and the other regional offices. We used the output of the biographical unit extensively in the State Department and in Moscow and found it very helpful. However, the unit evidently did not have the mandate to study in depth the worldview and related attitudes of Kremlin leaders, nor was this done systematically in the office of Soviet analysis. As a result, I believe the psychological dimension was inadequately represented in the CIA’s assessments of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev.

This conclusion is corroborated by a review of recently declassified CIA documents analyzing the Gorbachev period. In the 1970s the CIA produced two excellent reports dealing with Soviet leadership outlooks: one on long-time Politburo member Mikhail Suslov (July 1978), the other a lengthy essay “Changing Soviet Perceptions of World Politics and the USSR’s International Role” (September 1975). However, the perspective of these two studies evidently was not applied to analysis of Gorbachev’s political outlook, judging from the over two hundred pertinent studies of the Gorbachev period currently available on the CIA Web site.<sup>21</sup>

This conclusion is also corroborated by a review of recently declassified U.S. National Intelligence Council (NIC) “estimates,” as they are termed, of developments during the Gorbachev years (the NIC was under the director of Central Intelligence but separate from the CIA analytical bureaucracy; it drew

from all components of the intelligence community). The impression one gets from reviewing these documents, which cover the period from 1986 through 1991, is that while the NIC did not ignore the psychological dimension, in the main it treated this factor as of secondary importance in understanding Gorbachev and his policies.

For example, a September 1986 estimate characterized Gorbachev's new thinking about foreign affairs as "verbiage" that was more instrumental than determinative. A November 1987 estimate took a similar line, stating that Gorbachev's "more pragmatic approach to ideology" was a means to his end of increasing the USSR's global influence and competitiveness with the West. In April 1989 the NIC warned that "for the foreseeable future the USSR will remain the West's principal adversary" and disclosed that some analysts believed Gorbachev's reforms were largely tactical. A November 1990 estimate, while correctly predicting that "the Soviet Union as we have known it is finished," incorrectly asserted that "the military and security services did not pose a serious challenge to Gorbachev's leadership" and indeed were "the most reliable institutional assets remaining at Gorbachev's disposal." This finding obviously underestimated the negative impact of Gorbachev's reforms on the mind-set of senior leaders of the military and the security establishments, whose attempted coup against Gorbachev took place less than a year after publication of the November 1990 assessment.<sup>22</sup>

As former CIA deputy director for intelligence Douglas MacEachin has pointed out, CIA analysts got most things right about the Soviet Union under Gorbachev.<sup>23</sup> I believe, however, that historian of the Cold War Raymond Garthoff, in summarizing the results of his retrospective study of CIA analysis of Soviet intentions and capabilities, was correct to conclude that perhaps the greatest shortcoming was a failure to recognize the radical changes in Soviet outlook, doctrine, policy, and military strategy.<sup>24</sup>

### Earlier Manifestations of the Blind Spot: FDR, JFK, LBJ

*Roosevelt and Stalin.* Other examples of the U.S. aversion to consideration of foreign outlooks are not difficult to find in the postwar record of American foreign policy, and these merit brief review. Career diplomat and Soviet specialist Charles "Chip" Bohlen, in his 1973 memoir *Witness to History, 1929–1969*, describes President Roosevelt's general approach to foreign affairs as relying on Roosevelt's instinctive grasp of the subject and his genius for

improvisation, but, Bohlen also noted, Roosevelt also lacked deep knowledge of history or an understanding of the outlook of his foreign interlocutors. Bohlen also records that Roosevelt tended to disregard the position papers prepared for him, to ignore the details, and to adopt the “American conviction that the other fellow is ‘a good guy’ who will respond properly and decently if you treat him right.”<sup>25</sup>

Regarding Roosevelt’s involvement with Soviet affairs, Bohlen writes:

I do not think Roosevelt had any real comprehension of the great gulf that separated the thinking of a Bolshevik from a non-Bolshevik, and particularly from an American. He felt that Stalin viewed the world somewhat in the same light as he did, and that Stalin’s hostility and distrust, which were evident in the wartime conferences, were due to the neglect that Soviet Russia had suffered at the hands of other countries for years after the Revolution. What he did not understand was that Stalin’s enmity was based on profound ideological convictions. The essence of a gap between the Soviet Union and the United States, a gap that could not be bridged, was never fully perceived by Franklin Roosevelt.<sup>26</sup>

*Kennedy, Johnson, and Vietnam.* A compelling example of the extent and impact of our aversion to taking careful account of foreign outlooks can be found in David Halberstam’s classic book *The Best and the Brightest*, which chronicles high-level U.S. decision making regarding American involvement in Vietnam. Halberstam argues that the Kennedy administration made the most critical of decisions on Vietnam “with virtually no input from anyone who had any expertise on the recent history of that part of the world, and it in no way factored in the entire experience of the French Indochina War.” In Halberstam’s view, the Kennedy team believed that “sheer intelligence and rationality could answer and solve anything.”<sup>27</sup>

Halberstam focuses on Kennedy’s secretary of defense Robert McNamara as “the last man to understand and measure the problems of a people looking for their political freedom . . . [but] very much a man of the Kennedy Administration,” a symbol of the conviction that one could “manage and control events in an intelligent, rational way.” Halberstam portrays McNamara as “American through and through, with the American drive, the American certitude and conviction.”<sup>28</sup> During McNamara’s numerous fact-finding trips to Vietnam, writes Halberstam, McNamara “epitomized booming American technological success; he scurried around Vietnam, looking for what he

wanted to see; and he never saw nor smelled nor felt what was really there, right in front of him. He was so much a prisoner of his own background, so unable, as indeed was the country which sponsored him, to adapt his values and his terms to Vietnamese realities.”<sup>29</sup>

As for the administration of Lyndon Johnson, Halberstam relates that President Johnson and his advisors were similarly unwilling to look to and learn from the past and were swept forward by their belief in the central importance of anti-communism as well as by the potential political cost of appearing to neglect it, and “by the sense of power and glory, [the] omnipotence and omniscience of America in this century.”<sup>30</sup>

As noted, a number of U.S. analysts and decision makers who dealt with the Cold War and the Vietnam War did demonstrate deep interest in outlooks and motivations other than their own. Such individuals included Under Secretary of State George Ball during the Vietnam years; George Shultz during the Reagan administration; and numerous senior Foreign Service officers such as Charles Bohlen, George Kennan, and Jack Matlock, who had studied foreign languages and cultures, served extensively abroad, and thus were directly exposed to foreign outlooks. On balance, however, the bias on the American side was pervasive and was significant even when it was muted. Blatant or subdued, its result was essentially the same: little attention was paid to considering foreign problems in the light of existing psychological perspectives other than the U.S. perspective.

It should be acknowledged that several decades after his resignation as secretary of defense, Robert McNamara himself came to this realization. In trying to understand what went wrong in his and his colleagues’ thinking about America’s involvement in Vietnam, McNamara concluded that among other things he and other senior decision makers misjudged the geopolitical intentions of the adversary; mistakenly viewed the people and leaders of South Vietnam in terms of American experience; were profoundly ignorant of the history, culture, and politics of the people in the area; and failed to recognize that the United States did not “have the God-given right to shape every nation in our own image or as we choose.”<sup>31</sup>

## Post–Cold War Manifestations: U.S. Policy Toward the Russian Federation

*Approach of the George H. W. Bush Administration.* Despite U.S. assistance programs for Russia following the Soviet regime’s collapse, we have seen that



neither genuine democracy nor a law-governed market economy has flourished there. The effectiveness of U.S. assistance was hindered, I believe, by our slowness to appreciate the psychological environment in Russia following the empire's fall. This obtuseness impeded the foreign policy of both the Bush and Clinton Administrations.

Economist Anders Aslund has argued convincingly that because of undue caution in the immediate aftermath of the empire's collapse, the Bush administration missed a unique opportunity to influence Russia's reform effort in early 1992.<sup>32</sup> Yegor Gaidar, who was in charge of that effort at the time, has been more assertive about the failure of the United States and the West to assist Russia when it most needed our help. In his memoir *Days of Defeat and Victory*, Gaidar writes: "There was no leader capable of filling the sort of organizing and coordinating role that Harry Truman and George C. Marshall played in the postwar restoration of Europe. The United States, on which, logically, the burden of coordinating Western efforts should have fallen, was paralyzed at the time by the standoff between the Republican administration of George Bush and the Democratic majority in Congress, and by the upcoming presidential elections."<sup>33</sup>

In Gaidar's view, the coordinating role was essentially handed over by the United States and its allies to the International Monetary Fund, which, by its very nature, was "absolutely unsuited to the resolution of large-scale political issues." In any event, by the time Russia completed the paperwork required to join the IMF—formal membership was a prerequisite for receiving any financial assistance from the organization—the period of most critical need had passed.<sup>34</sup>

Had the Bush administration understood more clearly the psychological obstacles to economic reform as well as to the establishment of democracy and rule of law in Russia, perhaps the United States could have played a more effective role in assisting the Yeltsin government. At that time (late 1991 and early 1992), as *Washington Post* commentator Charles Krauthammer pointed out, the president's men seemed "serenely indifferent to Yeltsin's prospects in Moscow" and were "far more concerned about Bush's prospects in New Hampshire."<sup>35</sup> It took direct public criticism from Richard Nixon, supplemented by more gentle prodding from Senators Sam Nunn, Richard Lugar, and Jeff Bingaman—who, in their report following an early 1992 visit to Russia, recommended a much more robust U.S. support effort—to focus the Bush administration on the need to respond to Russia's urgent needs.<sup>36</sup> Mean-

while, Gaidar was dismissed, the Communists dominated the Russian parliament, and Yeltsin's reform program sputtered and stalled.

*Clinton Administration Policy.* The Clinton administration's well-intentioned but largely ineffective effort to assist Russia in its difficult transition to democracy and economic health also suffered from a dim awareness of Russian outlooks and motivations. Former Clinton administration economic advisor, senior World Bank official, and Nobel Prize laureate Joseph Stiglitz has reported observing personally a blindness to Russian realities similar to our blindness to the realities of American involvement in South Vietnam:

As time went on, and the problems with the reform strategy and the Yeltsin government became clearer, the reactions of people both in the IMF and the US Treasury proved not unlike those of officials earlier inside the US government as the failures of the Vietnam War became clearer: to ignore the facts, to deny the reality, to suppress the discussion, to throw more and more good money after bad. Russia was about to "turn a corner"; growth was about to occur; the next loan would enable Russia finally to get going; Russia had now shown that it would live up to the conditions of the loan agreements; and so on and so forth.<sup>37</sup>

An underlying cause for this remarkable optimism probably was a combination of American exceptionalism and American pragmatism.<sup>38</sup> We assumed there was one linear path from communist totalitarianism to something like the American model of democracy and a market-based economic system.<sup>39</sup> We were, after all, the "shining city on the hill" for the rest of humanity. We understood how democracies and markets functioned. It did not seem to matter that the Russian historical experience and resultant political culture were fundamentally different from our own. Russia was in transition, we knew where she was headed, and our task was to point the way and facilitate the journey.

Strobe Talbott's book *The Russia Hand: A Memoir of Presidential Diplomacy* indicates that President Clinton's attitude toward U.S.-Russian relations was strikingly similar to that attributed by Chip Bohlen to President Roosevelt: the fundamentals of the relationship were determined by Clinton himself, were dependent upon Clinton's instinctive grasp of the subject and gift for improvisation, but were hampered by his poor understanding of the Russian psychological environment and historical setting. As Roosevelt tended to

see the Soviet position from what he thought was Stalin's perspective, Clinton tended to see the Russian position from what he assumed was Yeltsin's view. Like Roosevelt, Clinton was prone to disregard position papers and expert briefings and assume that his Russian counterpart was essentially a decent fellow who could be persuaded to do the right thing.<sup>40</sup>

Despite repeated advice from Talbott (who was himself an experienced Russia hand) and others to focus on the broad processes of democratization and economic marketization under way in Russia, Clinton steadfastly insisted that Yeltsin was Russia's best hope and Clinton's prime task therefore was to support "Ol' Boris." President Clinton effectively used his interpersonal skills, in Talbott's view, to bring President Yeltsin around to the U.S. position on several important issues—including cessation of the sale of Russian rocket technology to India, facilitating shipment of strategic nuclear warheads from newly independent Ukraine to Russia, improvement of Russian-NATO relations, and withdrawal of Russian military units from the newly independent Baltic countries.<sup>41</sup> However, as Clinton himself acknowledged in retrospect, he was overly optimistic about Russia's transition to a market economy and should have done much more to assist this difficult process. As Talbott later acknowledged, the Clinton administration should have been more critical of Yeltsin's use of brutal military force against Chechnya—a failing that in effect weakened the hand of democratic forces within Russia.<sup>42</sup>

## U.S. Policy Toward Global Terrorism

The response of the George W. Bush administration to the threat of global terrorism following the September 11, 2001 tragedies provides a current example of the blind spot in operation. Setting aside the controversies surrounding the Bush doctrine of preventive war and the administration's rationale for applying this doctrine to Iraq, the Bush approach to waging war against terrorism has assumed that our new enemy in global conflict is evil and is opposed to God-given values of liberty and freedom. The Bush administration has argued that Iraq has become the main front in this larger, elemental conflict, in which it is America's providential task to confront and defeat the evil of terrorism. As President Bush put it in his June 2002 commencement address at West Point, and has repeated in many subsequent statements: "Our nation's cause has always been larger than our nation's defense. We fight, as we always fight, for a just peace—a peace that favors human liberty. . . .

Building this just peace is America's opportunity, and America's duty. . . . We are in a conflict between good and evil, and America will call evil by its name. . . . And we will lead the world in opposing it."<sup>43</sup>

*Heightened Aversion to Foreign Outlooks.* Pursuit of this policy under the banner of assertive American exceptionalism—the conviction, plainly put, that America uniquely represents God's plan for humanity and therefore is obligated to spread freedom abroad—has had several negative consequences. First, by accentuating our conviction that America should lead the world in opposing evil, the Bush administration also heightened our disinclination to examine and understand the psychology of those whose outlooks differ from our own. President Bush indicated this shortly after 9/11, when, instead of trying to comprehend hatred toward the United States among Islamic fundamentalists, he said at an October 2001 news conference: "I'm amazed. I'm amazed that there is such misunderstanding of what our country is about, that people would hate us. I am, I am—like most Americans, I just can't believe it. Because I know how good we are, and we've got to do a better job of making our case. We've got to do a better job explaining to the people in the Middle East, for example, that we don't fight a war against Islam or Muslims. We don't hold any religion accountable. We're fighting evil."<sup>44</sup>

This uncomprehending attitude toward our enemies led the Bush administration initially to slight the fact that—as *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman, the 9/11 Commission, and many others have underscored—acts of terror are manifestations of a warped doctrinal mind-set.<sup>45</sup> These commentators have pointed out that while thoroughly reprehensible, terrorism is a symptom of our real problem, which in essence is a matrix of concepts in the minds of men and women featuring extremist religious doctrine at its core, derivative, simplistic, but lethal programmatic analysis and programmatic goals, and secretive instrumental institutions and practices to accomplish these goals.

It was important during the Cold War to understand the psychological dimension of Soviet totalitarianism. It is no less important in our current attempt to combat global terrorism to understand the psychological dimension of Bin Laden-style religious totalitarianism. Yet Bush administration officials, including the president himself, have repeatedly asserted that Bin Laden and his followers hate the United States primarily for our freedom and democracy—for what we are, rather than for what they believe we are doing with respect to Islam.

This was one of the main criticisms made by former chief of the CIA's

Bin Laden unit Michael Scheuer, who, before resigning from the CIA, wrote anonymously two books urging U.S. policy makers to take the time to understand Bin Laden and the threat he posed to us. Scheuer used the concept of “imperial hubris” rather than the notion of analytical blind spot to explain our psychological aversion to alien mind-sets. But the essence of the two concepts is the same: rather than trying to understand how Bin Laden and his followers see the world, we tend to fit their behavior into our conceptual framework, into a context with which we are familiar and comfortable. We are largely oblivious to the way this proclivity can distort reality.<sup>46</sup>

Some three years into his war against terrorism, President Bush began to acknowledge—perhaps in reaction to criticism from the 9/11 Commission and others—that our enemy was not terrorism but the individuals who practice it. In August 2004, in answer to a journalist’s question about America’s mission in Iraq, Bush said: “We actually misnamed the war on terror. It ought to be the struggle against ideological extremists who do not believe in free societies and who happen to use terror as a weapon to try to shake the conscience of the free world.”<sup>47</sup>

In August 2005, President Bush spoke of “a war against people who profess an ideology and use terrorism as a means to attain their goals,” in addition to repeating the phrase “war on terror.”<sup>48</sup> In October 2005 Bush, I believe for the first time in public, focused specifically on the mind-set of terrorists, noting that their attacks “serve a clear and focused ideology, a set of beliefs and goals that are evil but not insane.” He went on to compare terrorist ideology to “communist” ideology in such dimensions as elitism, willingness to sacrifice the lives of innocent individuals, pursuit of “imperial domination,” disdain for those who “live in liberty,” and affliction with “inherent contradictions that doom it to failure.”<sup>49</sup> While this sort of sweeping comparative analysis of ideological thinking is open to question, it at least goes beyond the amorphous, value-soaked concept of “evil-doers” to an assessment, however problematic, of concepts and categories in the terrorist mentality.

Judging from the public record, the emphasis of the Bush administration remains more on communicating effectively with overseas Muslims and other foreigners regarding the American message than on understanding in depth Muslim and other foreign attitudes about America and the world. For example, President Bush, in a January 2006 speech to college and university presidents that introduced a National Security Language Initiative, called for a greater effort to train students in languages critical to U.S. national security, noting briefly that language skills can lead to a better understanding of foreign

cultures. He went on to underscore that such understanding was important in demonstrating to foreigners that America cared about their respective ways of life but did not mention that understanding foreign cultures also was a vital ingredient in sound U.S. policy toward those cultures. In his words: "In order for this country to be able to convince others, people have got to be able to see our true worth in our heart. And when Americans learn to speak a language, learn to speak Arabic, those in the Arabic region will say, gosh, America is interested in us. They care enough to learn how we speak."<sup>50</sup>

There are indications, it should be added, that key figures in the Bush administration's intelligence community have been mindful of the importance of the psychological dimension in foreign affairs. For instance, former National Security Agency director and current director of the Central Intelligence Agency Michael Hayden told *New Yorker* journalist Jeffrey Goldberg during a 2003 interview that he felt the failure of the intelligence community to anticipate September 11 was largely a failure of empathy: "We failed to see how absolute their [i.e., al Qaeda's] world view is. A signals-intelligence agency gets inside the head of an adversary, if you're doing your job at all. You get to know the inside of a target. But I don't think we properly appreciated how capable and how different, how evil, that mind-set is."<sup>51</sup>

In the same article, Goldberg quotes former CIA director George Tenet as saying, "We spend a great deal of time encouraging analysts to get out of their own skins, to try to think the way the enemy thinks."<sup>52</sup> The *Washington Post's* David Ignatius attended an April 2004 international conference on intelligence analysis, sponsored by CIA, at which one guest speaker warned, "Too few analysts know enough about Islamic culture to penetrate the mind of a jihadi terrorist." Another pointed out that to understand today's threats, "we need more tolerance for views that are not our own."<sup>53</sup>

There are also indications that the U.S. military has become more aware of the importance of the psychological factor in combating terrorism. According to the *New York Times*, a February 2006 classified counterterrorism strategy signed by the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff calls upon military personnel "to be aware of the culture, customs, language and philosophy of affected populations and the enemy, to more effectively counter extremism, and encourage democracy, freedom and economic prosperity abroad."<sup>54</sup> The *New York Times* has reported an innovative new program to enhance the military's understanding of Afghans and Iraqis by embedding U.S. anthropologists and social scientists with deployed combat units.<sup>55</sup>

*The Problem of Intelligence Analysis.* A second negative consequence of our

assertive exceptionalism in the Bush administration's war against terrorism concerns analysis of intelligence within the executive branch. The president sets the tone. If the chief executive is known to be focused on his own convictions and largely uninterested in the psychological outlook of friends and foes abroad, his NSC and intelligence community briefers are unlikely to spend much time on this subject during their limited access to him. The word regarding presidential preferences quickly permeates the executive branch bureaucracy, so that intelligence and policy analysts are inclined to concentrate on areas they believe will be of interest to, and appreciated by, the president and his senior staff. They spend correspondingly little time on analysis they deem unlikely to have a positive impact at the top.

For instance, the intelligence and foreign affairs communities in Washington doubtless are well aware of widespread reporting about President Bush's belief that he is on a mission from God, relies on his instincts more than on analysis of relevant facts, and is intellectually incurious. This awareness surely would not encourage them to provide him with careful analysis of the psychological milieu of current foreign policy challenges.<sup>56</sup>

This can be a delicate balancing act for those reporting to the president and his senior advisors. In my experience, working-level analysts as a rule do their best to present an accurate, comprehensive view. Yet they and their superiors know that they risk becoming irrelevant to the policy process if they are perceived by policy makers to be out of step with the administration's approach to a given situation. In discussing this problem with respect to the U.S. invasion of Iraq, former CIA analyst and national intelligence officer for the Near East and South Asia Paul Pillar has written: "It was clear that the Bush administration would frown on or ignore analysis that called into question a decision to go to war and welcome analysis that supported such a decision. Intelligence analysts—for whom attention, especially favorable attention, from policymakers is a measure of success—felt a strong wind consistently blowing in one direction. The desire to bend with such a wind is natural and strong, even if unconscious."<sup>57</sup>

In addition to concerns about the relevance of their work to the policy process, analysts know that they and their superiors can come under fierce political attack if they are perceived as resisting administration policy. Foreign service officers and intelligence analysts in the State Department—who by selection, training and experience tend to regard foreign mind-sets as important to the formulation and execution of foreign policy—are particularly vulnerable. The problem can become acute when an incoming administration

departs from the foreign policy of its predecessor by asserting more forcefully American exceptionalism abroad. A paradox is created: at a time when effective implementation of foreign policy should be accompanied by heightened attention to the outlooks of America's foreign friends and enemies, the innate American aversion to the psychological dimension of foreign policy becomes more pronounced and often more politicized.

This paradox was evident during the early years of the Reagan administration, when political appointees in the executive branch and supporters of President Reagan in Congress as well as outside of government castigated the State Department for its alleged proclivity to seek compromise with Moscow and pursue other "soft" policies not in keeping with President Reagan's strong sense of American exceptionalism and his correspondingly confrontational approach toward the Soviet Union. In the words of political appointee Richard Pipes, recalling his experience as senior Soviet specialist on the Reagan NSC staff: "Whenever I visited 'Foggy Bottom' [i.e., the Department of State] on business I had the feeling I was entering a gigantic law firm that abhorred confrontation with any foreign government and firmly believed that all international disagreements could be resolved by skillful and patient negotiation. Resorting to force is to its staff a mark of failure. They do not believe in irreconcilable differences nor attach importance to ideology."<sup>58</sup>

The paradox also has been evident with respect to President George W. Bush's assertive approach to foreign affairs since 9/11. For instance, exuberant exceptionalists David Frum and Richard Perle wrote in 2003 that the State Department's spine should be stiffened by abolishing or downgrading regional bureaus, expanding the number of political appointees, and placing all policy-making jobs in the hands of people who support the policies of the administration then in office.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, former House Speaker Newt Gingrich charged in the same year that "the State Department needs to experience culture shock, a top-to-bottom transformation that will make it a more effective communicator of U.S. values around the world, place it more directly under the control of the president of the United States, and enable it to promote freedom and combat tyranny. Anything less is a disservice to this nation. . . . Key to transforming the State Department's culture is the adoption of the right vision—President Bush's vision."<sup>60</sup>

*Slighting Religious Belief.* Another negative consequence of heightened American exceptionalism is neglect of religious belief abroad. In particular, against the backdrop of general antipathy in our policy making and intelligence communities toward analysis of the views of others, our cultural aver-



sion to mixing religion and political affairs has hindered our understanding of the terrorist threat. In describing the general attitude of the Clinton and Bush administrations to terrorism prior to 9/11, Daniel Benjamin and Steven Simon, based on their experience as terrorism specialists on the Clinton administration's National Security Council staff, depict a government bureaucracy slow to cast aside an outmoded understanding of terrorism as a sporadic nuisance and to realize it had become a strategic threat. They suggest the verdict of history regarding America's preparedness for terrorist attacks will be that "a civilization unused to thinking about religion as a powerful, potentially violent force in world events was profoundly surprised when a religious ideology erupted violently, taking some three thousand lives."<sup>61</sup> They conclude that we must come to grips with the mind-set that motivated 9/11, although in their view (as of 2002), "This education has only begun."<sup>62</sup>

After her retirement as a senior CIA analyst of Middle Eastern affairs, Ellen Laipson addressed this problem as she personally had experienced it. In her words:

US government officials face many constraints, formal and informal, in addressing religion as a threat. Norms of tolerance and multiculturalism discourage the analysis of religion and culture. . . . Many good civil servants, fearing political incorrectness, are uncomfortable openly assessing foreign cultures on the basis of religious or cultural beliefs. In the late 1990s, for instance, when the National Intelligence Council (NIC) embarked on its unclassified exploration of the "drivers" of international politics, culminating in the publication of *Global Trends 2015*, analysts debated whether religion should be identified as a principal driver. . . . [I]n the end, the NIC shied away from focusing sharply on the issue out of concern that such analysis might be considered insensitive and unintentionally generate ill will toward the United States.<sup>63</sup>

Secretary of State Madeleine Albright made much the same point when she acknowledged that only after the terrorist attacks of 9/11 did she realize that religion had become a critical aspect of foreign affairs and U.S. national security. As former secretary of state, and earlier as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, she says she was inclined to avoid religion, in effect extracting it from world politics out of a desire to deal rationally and realistically with foreign policy issues. "Like many other foreign policy professionals," she

writes, "I have had to adjust the lens through which I view the world, comprehending something that seemed to be a new reality but that had actually been evident for some time."<sup>64</sup>

If many in the American foreign affairs community were not already averse to the study of outlooks different from the American outlook, if, in other words, it were broadly accepted among policy makers and intelligence analysts that understanding the psychological dimension of foreign affairs is essential to sound analysis, and if contemporary American foreign policy were less self-assured and self-contained, I believe Laipson, Albright, and their colleagues more readily could have overcome their reluctance to take seriously religious views beyond those that permeate the American outlook.

*Misreading Saddam Hussein.* A final example of our intensified blind spot is the Bush administration's badly flawed analysis of Saddam Hussein's thinking on the eve of our invasion of Iraq. The still partially classified post-invasion, Pentagon-sponsored study of Saddam's regime, based on interrogation of regime officials and review of primary documents, makes clear that Saddam was keenly aware he had no weapons of mass destruction but wanted to maintain a degree of international doubt on this score to deter his regional enemies, chiefly Iran and Israel. The study describes Saddam's worldview as a virtual universe in which the Iraqi military was capable of defeating a U.S. invasion (and for this reason Saddam evidently decided not to destroy his oil fields or flood southern Iraq as the invasion began), in which domestic and regional threats overshadowed the threat from the United States and its allies, and in which his despotic grip on all levers of national power was fully justified by his mystical, historic mission.<sup>65</sup>

One cannot say, on the basis of information currently available, that the U.S. intelligence community totally misread Saddam's thinking. Perhaps some analysts had developed a good understanding of it—we will have to wait until the relevant documents are declassified. It nonetheless seems reasonable to ask why the Bush administration as a whole got it so wrong. Of course, given Saddam's paranoia and secrecy, real-time evidence of his personal convictions was difficult to obtain. Yet surely it was obvious from Western media reporting that Saddam had enveloped Iraq in a Stalin-like cult of personality, that he had a warped view of the outside world and did not tolerate challenges to his preconceptions from his subordinates.

It seems highly likely that our analysis suffered because of our analytical blind spot: we knew Saddam was an evil dictator and were not greatly interested in the details of his thinking. As Michael Scheuer pointed out with

respect to Bin Ladin and his followers, we tended to view Saddam in our conceptual framework without trying to penetrate and comprehend his unique outlook. In addition, analysts knew that senior policy makers were convinced Saddam possessed WMDs and badly wanted corroboration of this conviction—to use Paul Pillar’s metaphor, analysts knew which way the wind was blowing.

Hence, one suspects that if the intelligence and analytical communities had been encouraged to focus on the psychological milieu as well as the operational milieu, if careful study of key alien mind-sets were an accepted, integral part of the analytical process, it would have occurred to some analysts that Saddam’s role in Iraq was in many ways analogous to Stalin’s role in the Soviet regime, and that Stalin’s despotism, paranoia, and warped psychology provided a useful template for comprehending Saddam’s bizarre thought processes.

### Counteracting the Defect

The American aversion to foreign outlooks can be mitigated without great effort or expense because the problem entails a disinclination rather than an inability. It involves recognizing and surmounting a subconscious psychological barrier to a path of inquiry that seems to run contrary to conventional wisdom—it does not involve ineptitude for pursuing fruitfully an analytical path, once that path has been entered upon. How can this defect be overcome? Steven Pinker suggests this can be accomplished through the use of metaphor and other forms of creative thinking that “pry our mental models free of the domains they were designed for and apply them metaphorically and in new combinations to the business at hand.”<sup>66</sup> To this end, Pinker thinks education is needed, the ultimate goal of which should be “to make up for the shortcomings in our instinctive ways of thinking about the physical and social world.”<sup>67</sup>

In addition, as pointed out in preceding pages, the problem is far from all-pervasive. American students and practitioners of international affairs have produced excellent accounts of foreign mind-sets—even though, as Madeleine Albright has suggested, the predominant trend in the academic study of international relations has been “realism,” which sees power relationships among nations as the primary factor in foreign behavior and regards ideas as derivative, unscientific, and therefore of secondary interest.<sup>68</sup> The United

States possesses qualified specialists and plentiful teaching material for the understanding of foreign thought systems. The key is to overcome the conventional wisdom that seems to deflect many academics, students, analysts, and policy makers away from this approach.

*Institutional Fixes Within the Executive Branch.* Perhaps the most obvious remedy is targeted training of career intelligence analysts and policy makers. The director of national intelligence should see to it that the basic and advanced training programs of all concerned agencies focus on the importance of the psychological milieu. This training segment should include examination of the role of systematic analysis of foreign outlooks in the formulation of effective foreign and national security policy. It should also include techniques of such analysis, as well as study of cultural conditioning and the resultant mind-set of the U.S. intelligence collector, analyst, and policy maker. Consideration of the findings of cognitive psychology regarding other sources of misperception, such as cognitive dissonance, should also be part of the curriculum.<sup>69</sup> This sort of training also should be obligatory for personnel throughout the executive branch involved in foreign policy making and implementation.

Mechanisms for bringing knowledge of foreign outlooks and motivations to high-level intelligence community supervisors and senior decision makers should be made an integral part of bureaucratic routine. Past presidents and secretaries of state have met with informal groups of area specialists, usually when a change in policy is under consideration or on the eve of important occurrences, such as meetings with foreign counterparts. As noted, I participated in one such gathering with Secretary of State Baker. I also had the dubious honor of playing the role of Soviet foreign minister Gromyko for Secretary of State Haig and later for Secretary Shultz in warm-up sessions prior to their respective initial encounters with their Soviet counterparts, where I attempted to convey the substance as well as the tone of Gromyko's approach to foreign affairs.

The CIA's Directorate of Intelligence (DI) has organized academic conferences and informal meetings with outside specialists to consider foreign affairs issues, as has the CIA's Center for the Study of Intelligence. For instance, I took part in a fascinating, DI-hosted conference in the early 1980s on the likelihood of the disintegration of the Soviet empire, and on another occasion played the role of Soviet ideologue Mikhail Suslov in a simulated Soviet Politburo meeting convened by the DI.

So the practice of exposing analysts and policy makers to nongovernmental

area expertise is far from novel. The need is to ensure that such exposure takes place routinely, that emphasis is placed explicitly on foreign mind-sets of relevance to U.S. foreign policy, and that this input makes its way, at least in summary form, to the highest levels of government. If the U.S. military has found it worthwhile to assign anthropologists and social scientists to combat units, to seem to me that the U.S. government should consider similar arrangements for its intelligence analysts and policy makers involved in establishing the missions of such units.

In addition, it would be a simple matter for the secretary of state and the secretary of defense to require that decision memoranda contain an attachment concisely describing the psychological setting of the problem under review—at least making clear what is known, what is assumed, what is disputed, and what is not known about the views and motivations of the key foreign players. The director of national security could mandate a similar requirement for the analytical work of the various intelligence organizations that the director oversees.

It should also be easy to establish panels of well-qualified area-specialists from outside the government—although not so easy to decide exactly whom to invite in order to strike a fair balance among differing points of view—to brief periodically each regional bureau of the State Department on the outlooks of key foreign leaders and groups. Panels of area specialists could also meet periodically with the regional analytical units in the CIA and other components of the intelligence and policy communities. Highlights of these consultations could be provided to the president and other senior administration officials as addenda to their regularly scheduled intelligence briefings.

*The Role of Congress.* In times of war as well as in times of peace, the Congress can play a major role in the making and the execution of foreign policy. However much a given administration may try to resist, in the end only Congress can make law and appropriate funds necessary to operate the U.S. government, and these powers apply to all executive branch functions, including foreign affairs, national security, and intelligence. How these powers are exercised of course varies widely over time, depending upon such factors as the political coloration of the two houses of Congress and the presidency, the nature of the political leadership in Congress and particularly in the key authorizing, appropriating, and oversight committees. Individual legislators can play significant leadership roles on foreign policy issues, although this tends to be more difficult for House members—because of the size of the

body and its correspondingly restrictive rules and traditions—than it is for members of the Senate.

During my tenure as a professional staff member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, for instance, committee chairman Sam Nunn conducted numerous fact-finding trips abroad, instituted an exchange program between the Senate Armed Services Committee and the Defense Committee of the Russian Duma, and, together with Senator Richard Lugar, established annual meetings between a representative group of U.S. legislators and a similar group of Russian parliament members.

Senate Select Intelligence Committee chairman David Boren was deeply engaged in foreign affairs during that period, traveled abroad frequently, and initiated the National Security Education Act, signed into law by the first President Bush in 1991, the prime purpose of which was to promote through education better U.S. competence in foreign languages and cultures. At about the same time, Senator Bill Bradley, in his capacity as an individual senator, spearheaded enactment of legislation to fund a large-scale exchange program involving high school students from the post-Soviet states, with the purpose of increasing mutual understanding between their respective countries and the United States.

A more recent example has been provided by Representative Frank Wolf, chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Departments of Commerce, Justice, and State. In June 2003, Chairman Wolf, recognizing that the executive branch was not doing an effective job conveying America's message to Muslims abroad, included in a supplemental appropriations bill a directive to the Department of State to establish an advisory group on U.S. public diplomacy in the Arab and Muslim world. Secretary of State Colin Powell promptly set up such a group, chaired by retired foreign service officer Edward Djerejian, who had been U.S. ambassador to Israel and to Syria. The group's report, issued in October 2003, argued that the war of ideas was vital to our larger war against terrorism and that the United States was doing a poor job communicating with Arab and Muslim audiences. The report urged that our knowledge of Arab and Muslim societies be "dramatically enhanced," asserting that "we have failed to listen and failed to persuade. We have not taken the time to understand our audience, and we have not bothered to help them understand us. We cannot afford such shortcomings."<sup>70</sup> The report also urged the direct involvement of the White House in this undertaking, with the president appointing a new "Special Counselor to the President for Public

Diplomacy” and issuing a directive giving the effort high priority in all relevant departments of the executive branch.<sup>71</sup>

The Bush administration’s primary response to U.S. difficulty in communicating with the Muslim world evidently was to name former presidential advisor and confidant Karen Hughes as undersecretary for public diplomacy in the State Department. Hughes, who was appointed to this position in August 2005 and resigned some two years later, consulted with Ambassador Djerejian upon assuming office but subsequently chose to emphasize description of the virtues of American life and rapid U.S. response to inaccurate news stories over greater understanding of and empathy with Arab and Muslim audiences. The assessment of her performance by Robert Satloff seems apt: she may have succeeded in improving America’s public relations capacity, but she failed to focus on answering the vital question of how the United States can most effectively empower anti-radical Muslims around the world to combat the spread of Islamic extremism. As Satloff points out, “the ‘battle of ideas’ is not a popularity contest about us; it is a battle for political power among Muslims, in which America’s favorability rating is irrelevant.”<sup>72</sup>

On balance, there are grounds for hoping that our national aversion to comprehending the views of others, and to taking the time to consider the world as they see it, will be recognized and countered from within the Congress, as happened in the instances I have cited, and could happen within the executive branch along the lines I have suggested. The inherent complexities of the challenge posed to the United States by extreme jihadist ideology should signal, for the Congress as well as for the executive branch, a national imperative, beyond learning Arabic, to take careful account of the outlook and motivation of both our friends and our foes abroad.

The issue is not whether traditional American attitudes of exceptionalism will continue to influence the American approach to foreign affairs—they surely will. The issue is what impact these attitudes will have on the formulation and the conduct of our national security and foreign policy. Will we continue to assume that our outlook is superior and sufficient? Or will events—such as uneven and costly outcomes in Iraq and Afghanistan, further turmoil elsewhere in the Muslim world, and low American prestige abroad—make us more conscious of our analytical blind spot and encourage American analysts and policy makers, in the words of professor of religion Richard Hughes, “to learn to see the world through someone else’s eyes, perhaps even through the eyes of their enemies”?<sup>73</sup>

With his usual eloquence, George Kennan put this issue into its broader foreign policy context as follows:

Smaller nations, weaker nations, nations less exposed by the very proportion of their physical weight in the world, might be able to get away with exclusiveness and provincialism and an intellectual remoteness from the feelings and preoccupations of mankind generally. Americans cannot. It will never be forgiven if we attempt to do it. If this is the path we go, we shall never succeed in projecting to our neighbors and partners, not even to the best of our friends and partners, those bridges that will have to be projected if the pounding, surging traffic of the future world is to be carried.<sup>74</sup>





# Notes

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

1. See Herrmann and Lebow, *Ending the Cold War*, and Wohlforth, *Cold War Endgame*. For an analysis of the causes for this diversity of views, see Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 322–23.
2. Wohlforth, introduction, 12.
3. Herrmann and Lebow, “What Was the Cold War?” 1, 22.
4. Kennan, “Witness to the Fall,” cited at the beginning of chapter 1 of Hollander, *Political Will*, 1.
5. Figes, “‘Armageddon Averted.’”
6. Gates’s comment is contained in Powers, “Who Won the Cold War,” 20, and cited in Hollander, *Political Will*, 7. Defense of CIA analysis can be found at Berkowitz and Richelson, “The CIA Vindicated,” and MacEachin, CIA Assessments.
7. Cox, “Whatever Happened to the USSR?” 15.
8. See, for example, Perle, “Why Did Bush Blink on Iran?” in which Perle argues that the State Department is thwarting a tough U.S. policy toward Iran, as it attempted unsuccessfully to do with President Reagan’s winning political, economic, and moral assault on the Soviet Union.
9. Milosz, *Captive Mind*, 219–21.
10. Berlin, *Concepts and Categories*, 140.

## INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

1. Geertz, *Available Light*, 16.
2. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 9.
3. Ibid., 5.

## CHAPTER 2

1. Custine, *Letters from Russia*, 622.
2. Dobson, Grove, and Stewart, *Russia*, 12–13.
3. Gaddis, *We Now Know*, 289–90.

## CHAPTER 3

1. The controversial aspects of Gamsakhurdia’s personality came into full view some years after his confession aired on Soviet television. In a remarkable reversal of fortune, by appealing to Georgian nationalism he won the presidency of Georgia by a landslide in mid-1991, then was deposed by his political opponents in the fall of that year but escaped to a stronghold in western Georgia. Ironically, Gamsakhurdia’s forces entered into armed conflict with supporters of Eduard

Shevardnadze in 1992, about fifteen years after Gamsakhurdia told us in Moscow that he was prepared to overthrow the same Shevardnadze. During a confused, bloody civil war, Gamsakhurdia was killed—according to some reports, by his own hand.

2. For a riveting account of Orlov's ordeal, see his book *Dangerous Thoughts*.
3. Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin*, 282.
4. Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 397–98.
5. Raisa's strong views on contemporary culture and her tendency to correct Yakovlev's work are discussed by Gorbachev assistant Valery Boldin in his *Ten Years That Shook the World*, 85, 90–91.
6. Director Arbatov managed to persuade the Foreign Ministry to allow him to station a representative of his institute at the Soviet Embassy in Washington. One of the duties of that individual was to purchase and send selected publications to the institute in Moscow. But the institute's supply of dollars was limited and its staff therefore was always grateful to receive free material from us.
7. Richard Pipes, for instance, has characterized Arbatov as "loathsome" and his institute as an organ of the KGB. See Pipes's autobiography, *Vixi*, 127. By contrast, world-class Soviet space scientist Roald Sagdeyev, a man of liberal views who now resides in the United States, has described Arbatov as a close friend and colleague. See Sagdeyev's memoir *The Making of a Soviet Scientist*, 266, 269, 293.
8. "Nomenklatura" refers to the large body of regime officials whose appointment required formal Communist Party approval. The classic description of this group can be found in Michael Voslensky's book *Nomenklatura*. Voslensky estimates the senior nomenklatura (i.e., people holding positions requiring senior party approval) to have numbered about a hundred thousand.
9. For a similar view of the role of Soviet ideology, see Heller and Nekrich, *Utopia in Power*, 655–57.

## CHAPTER 4

1. Robert Gates reports that NPPD had been noticed and collected from time to time in Moscow beginning in 1976 but was not considered a health hazard until laboratory tests in 1984 showed potential harm. According to Soviet defector Vasili Mitrokhin, the American side first learned about spy dust from a Soviet source in late 1963. See Gates, *From the Shadows*, 369, and Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield*, 185.
2. This episode and other aspects of the Daniloff case are described in detail in Daniloff, *Two Lives, One Russia*.
3. *Ibid.*, 218–19.
4. *Ibid.*, 257–59. For the CIA's perspective on this case, see Bearden and Risen, *The Main Enemy*, ch. 5.
5. For details of Secretary Shultz's involvement in the Daniloff case, see Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, chap. 35.
6. *Ibid.*, 739.
7. *Ibid.*, 900.
8. Details of the Lonetree case can be found in Kessler, *Moscow Station*. Kessler remained convinced that the KGB got into the embassy because of Lonetree, subsequent evidence to the contrary notwithstanding. In addition, Kessler's book portrayed Ambassador Hartman in dark colors that were, in my view, totally unjustified (I told Kessler as much in an interview as he was writing the book, to no apparent effect).
9. See Wise, *Nightmover*, 156, and Weiner, Johnson, and Lewis, *Betrayal*, 101–2.
10. Gorbachev, "Politichesky doklad Tsentral'noy Komiteta KPSS," 3:199.
11. That this was indeed the case has since been well documented by Robert D. English in his book *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 209–11.
12. Combs, "U.S.-Soviet Relations," 396–97.

13. Gorbachev, *Perestroika*. According to Gorbachev's foreign policy assistant, Anatoly Chernyaev, material for the book was compiled by staff from notes of Gorbachev's meetings with foreign leaders. Chernyaev also discloses that Gorbachev saw the book as setting forth "the philosophical foundations of our reform policies" and personally dictated and redictated the contents three times. See Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 126.

14. Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 12.

15. *Ibid.*, 145–47.

16. *Ibid.*, 13, 152–57.

17. *Ibid.*, 231.

18. *Ibid.*, 18, 38–42.

19. Gorbachev records in his memoirs that Shevardnadze's Foreign Ministry speech set off a nasty public debate over international affairs, with conservatives like Yegor Ligachev arguing that "we must assume the class character of international relations." See Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 261–62.

## INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

1. Shapiro, "Problems, Methods, and Theories," 80–83, and Lynch, "The 'R' Word," 160–61.

## CHAPTER 5

1. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, 13.

2. In the interest of full disclosure, Gates and I were colleagues in the early 1970s, when he was a junior NSC staff member working on Soviet affairs on loan from the CIA and I was a junior FSO on State's Soviet Desk. I met with him in the mid-1980s, when he was acting director of the CIA and I was being considered for the job of national intelligence officer for the Soviet Union. Later, and somewhat ironically, I was a member of the Senate Intelligence Committee team that investigated his suitability for Senate confirmation as CIA director in the early 1990s.

3. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 264–66, 569. A similar view has been expressed by Richard Pipes, who was the senior Soviet specialist on the initial Reagan NSC staff. See his essay "Misinterpreting the Cold War." See also Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, 572. Hosking attributes Gorbachev's "new thinking" about foreign affairs to "advances made by the United States in computer-guided weapons." See also Leebaert, *The Fifty-Year Wound*, in which he argues that Reagan administration policies caused the Soviet system to crack and the Cold War to end on America's terms.

4. Gates, *From the Shadows*, 556.

5. In a similar vein, Pipes, in "Misinterpreting the Cold War," describes Gorbachev as "a typical product of the Soviet nomenklatura, a man who to this day affirms his faith in the ideals of communism."

6. Schweizer, *Reagan's War*, 4.

7. *Ibid.*, 4.

8. Hough, *Democratization and Revolution in the USSR*, 495.

9. *Ibid.*, 15–16.

10. *Ibid.*, 499–500.

11. Alex Pravda discusses this problem in his "Ideology and the Policy Process."

12. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 199.

13. *Ibid.*, 207.

14. *Ibid.*, 219–20.

15. Kuhn, *The Road since Structure*, 221.

16. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 208.

17. Particularly useful in this regard is Jervis's book *Perception and Misperception*. See also Charny, *Fascism and Democracy in the Mind*, and Kahneman and Renshon, "Why Hawks Win."
18. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 11, 42, 109, 175, 182.
19. *Ibid.*, 177.
20. *Ibid.*, 209.
21. *Ibid.*, 53, 64, 78.
22. *Ibid.*, 84, 90, 144.
23. *Ibid.*, 25.
24. *Ibid.*, 77, 65, 102.
25. Berlin, *The Sense of Reality*, 168.
26. Kull, *Burying Lenin*, 17.
27. See Fitzpatrick, *Everyday Stalinism*, 3–4.
28. See Wolin's chapter, "Paradigms and Political Theories," 183.
29. Charny, *Fascism and Democracy*, 19, 79.
30. *Ibid.*, 24.
31. See Kuhn, *The Road since Structure*, 104.
32. Malia, "To the Stalin Mausoleum," cited by Walker, "Sovietology and Perestroika," 240.
33. See Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield*, 554–57. See also Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 21–23, 131–32, 269, 393, 397, 471.
34. Arbatov, *The System*, 299.
35. Volkogonov, *Lenin*, 458.
36. Volkogonov, *Stalin*, 6–7.
37. Pollock, "Stalin as the Coryphaeus of Science," 272.
38. *Ibid.*
39. Gould-Davies, "Rethinking the Role of Ideology," 92, cited in Brown, *Seven Years That Changed the World*, 249.
40. Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, 55.
41. Chernyaev is quoted in Wohlforth, *Cold War Endgame*, 133.
42. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 31, 43.

## CHAPTER 6

1. This dimension of Marxism is discussed by Isaiah Berlin in his essay "Benjamin Disraeli, Karl Marx and the Search for Identity," which can be found in Berlin's book *Against the Current*, 283–84.
2. Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World*, 66.
3. Nicholas Riasanovsky notes that even prior to Peter the Great's reign, the major characteristics of Muscovite Russia "all fitted into the picture of a great people mobilizing its resources to defend its existence and assert its independence." See his *A History of Russia*, 216. Martin Malia makes the same point in *The Soviet Tragedy*, 58.
4. Regarding the overall importance of mobilization prior to 1917, see D. Lieven, *Empire*, 159, and Hosking's *Russia and the Russians*, 181–82, 198, 355, and 611.
5. Astolphe de Custine, *Letters from Russia*, 106. For further discussion of de Custine's description of Russia, see Szamuely, *The Russian Tradition*, 3–6.
6. Florinsky, *Russia*, 2:797–99. See also Riasanovsky, *A History of Russia*, 359. For an extensive, thoroughly researched analysis of "nationality," see Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality*.
7. Florinsky, *Russia*, 2:799.
8. For a survey of the West's perception of Russia during the Romanov period and beyond, see Malia, *Russia under Western Eyes*. For a more detailed discussion of Russia's pre-1917 political culture, see White, *Political Culture*, chaps. 1–3.
9. Richard Pipes notes that "[a]fter the old, westernized elite had been overthrown and

dispersed, the ruling class which had replaced it consisted largely of peasants in their various guises: farmers, shopkeepers, and industrial workers." See his *Russia under the Old Regime*, 141, 274.

10. Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 813.
11. See Volkogonov, *Lenin*, and Yakovlev, *A Century of Violence*, 15, 20–22.
12. Lenin, "On Cooperation" (first published in *Pravda* on May 26 and 27, 1923), 722.
13. See Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 788–93.
14. Cohen and Vanden Heuvel, *Voices of Glasnost*, 102.
15. For a comprehensive account of Bukharin's political career, see Cohen, *Bukharin and the Bolshevik Revolution*.
16. Volkogonov, *Stalin*, chaps. 13 and 23. Fascinating details about Volkogonov's own career can be found in Remnick's *Lenin's Tomb*, 401–11. Richard Overy points out that Stalin objected to the term "Stalinism," insisting that he be regarded as the true interpreter of Lenin. See Overy's *The Dictators*, 114–15.
17. Stalin, *Economic Problems of Socialism*, 27–30.
18. Stalin, "The Tasks of Business Executives," 13:40–41.
19. Volkogonov, *Stalin*, 121.
20. Volkogonov estimates that Stalin caused the deaths of 21.5 million Soviet citizens from 1929 to 1953. Western estimates range from 25 to 40 million deaths; Alexander Solzhenitsyn believes human losses in the USSR reached 60 million, as does Alexander Yakovlev. See Volkogonov, *Autopsy for an Empire*, 139; Heller and Nekrich, *Utopia in Power*, 511; and Yakovlev, *A Century of Violence*, xi.
21. Gaddy, *The Price of the Past*, 2.
22. Montefiore, *Stalin*, 139, 177.
23. See Voslensky, *Nomenklatura*, for a full description of the nomenklatura system.
24. Deutscher, *Stalin*, 293. Leon Trotsky, who had worked more closely with Lenin during the early years of Bolshevik rule than Stalin, rejected Stalin's theory of socialism in one country as Russocentric nonsense. Socialism could not be built in just one country, Trotsky insisted, and the Bolsheviks therefore should concentrate on stimulating a worldwide, revolutionary breakdown of the capitalist order. See, for example, Trotsky, *The 3rd International after Lenin*, chaps. 2 and 3.
25. Gorbachev and Mlynar, *Conversations with Gorbachev*, 149.
26. Tsipko, *Is Stalinism Really Dead?* 60.
27. During the socialist phase, the key economic principle is "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his work." Eventually, when the communist phase is reached and production relations are in harmony in production forces, the principle is to become "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs."
28. For a concise review of Soviet doctrine as of the Stalinist period, see R. Hunt, *Theory and Practice of Communism*. The standard Soviet account during the Stalinist period can be found in chapter 4 of the notorious *History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union*, written under Stalin's personal guidance. For the standard Soviet account as of the late Khrushchev period, see Kuusinen, *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism*.
29. This formulation is drawn from Yakovlev's *Fate of Marxism*, 108–16.
30. The classic account of the structure and function of the Soviet regime is Merle Fainsod, *How Russia Is Ruled*. For a more recent historical account of Soviet rule, see Heller and Nekrich, *Utopia in Power*.
31. See Towster, "The Conditioning Factors."
32. See Varga's book *Ocherki*, 78–85. A general account of Varga's career can be found in Wohlforth, *Elusive Balance*.

## CHAPTER 7

1. See S. Khrushchev, *Khrushchev on Khrushchev and Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower*. See also Talbott, *Khrushchev Remembers* and *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last*

*Testament*, and Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*. Khrushchev advisor Fedor Burlatsky paints a similar picture in his *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring*, 145–50, 152–54, 267.

2. An informed, firsthand portrait of Khrushchev can be found in Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 524–26. For a well-researched, thorough biography, see Taubman, *Khrushchev*.

3. The best example is Kuusinen, *Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism*.

4. Yakovlev, *A Century of Violence*, 7.

5. Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 254–55.

6. Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, 20–21.

7. Gorbachev and Mlynar, *Conversations with Gorbachev*, 25, 27.

8. *Ibid.*, 21.

9. This possible motivation is alluded to in Taubman, *Khrushchev*, 276.

10. These changes, announced in Khrushchev's official report to the 20th Party Congress, are summarized in Heller and Nekrich, *Utopia in Power*, 562–63.

11. *Ibid.*

12. Khrushchev, "O Programme Kommunisticheskoi partii Sovetskogo Soyuza," 224–25, 257. In the new party program that Khrushchev introduced, communism was defined as "a classless social system with one single form of public ownership of the means of production and full social equality of all members of society; under it, the all-round development of people will be accompanied by the growth of the production forces through continuous progress in science and technology; all the springs of collective wealth will flow more abundantly, and the great principle 'From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs' will be implemented" (165).

13. Gorbachev and Mlynar, *Conversations with Gorbachev*, 37.

14. S. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower*, 447–48.

15. His son records that Khrushchev was extremely proud that true to the spirit of the Twentieth Congress his defeated political opponents were not subjected to Stalinist repression. See S. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower*, 244–45. See also Medvedev and Medvedev, *Khrushchev*, 76–79, and Burlatsky, *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring*, 95.

16. S. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower*, 494–501. See also Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb*, 414–17.

17. S. Khrushchev, *Nikita Khrushchev and the Creation of a Superpower*, chap. 6, and Fursenko and Naftali, *One Hell of a Gamble and Khrushchev's Cold War*. See also Talbott, *Khrushchev Remembers*, chap. 20, and *Khrushchev Remembers: The Last Testament*, 509–14. Burlatsky believes that Khrushchev had two objectives: to protect Cuba, and to tilt the strategic balance in favor of the Soviet Union. See his *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring*, 173–74.

18. Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Sword and the Shield*, 180, 182. Andrew and Mitrokhin also report (p. 182) that the Kremlin received similar intelligence assessments in March 1962.

19. Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, chaps. 17–19.

20. See, for example, Taubman, *Khrushchev*, chap. 19.

21. Shakhnazarov, *S vozhdymy i bez nikh*, 74–78.

22. Burlatsky argues, for example, that the overthrow was orchestrated by a group headed by Central Committee Secretary Alexander N. Shelepin, who co-opted Brezhnev but planned to use him only as a figurehead. See Burlatsky, "Brezhnev and the End of the Thaw," 13–14, and *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring*, 207–8. Arbatov makes a similar argument in *The System*, 104–6, 115.

23. Volkogonov, *Lenin*, 458.

24. Arbatov, *The System*, 119–36; 185–86; 237–42.

25. Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 552.

26. Regarding Brezhnev's supervision of the military sector, see Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 202.

27. See *ibid.*, 200–203, 205–7, 209, 213–15, and 223–26.

28. Klyamkin, "Why It Is Difficult to Speak the Truth," 50.

29. Tony Judt points out that as of the early 1980s, Warsaw Pact forces included some 50 infantry and armored divisions, 36,000 tanks, 26,000 fighting vehicles and 4,000 aircraft. See his *Postwar*, 590.
30. Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, xxvi, 10–24.
31. For a detailed analysis of the role of intellectuals in Soviet political life during the Brezhnev period, see Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power*.
32. Volkogonov, *Lenin*, 458.
33. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 114.
34. *Ibid.*, 148.

## CHAPTER 8

1. Khanin, “Economic Growth in the 1980s,” 79–80. Khanin notes that good weather, allowing decent agricultural performance, was also a factor in this turnaround.
2. McGwire, *Perestroika and Soviet National Security*, 115–32, 159–73; Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, chaps. 2 and 3.
3. Firth and Noren, *Soviet Defense Spending*, 108–9.
4. Arbatov, *The System*, 279.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 45.
7. See Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 42–43. See also English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 181–82.
8. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 102–3.
9. Gorbachev and Mlynar, *Conversations with Gorbachev*, 6.
10. *Ibid.* This self-portrait as a critic of Soviet backwardness is corroborated by Len Karpinsky and Tatyana Zaslavskaya in Cohen and Vanden Heuvel, *Voices of Glasnost*, 118, 288.
11. Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, 23.
12. *Ibid.*, 26.
13. *Ibid.*, 37.
14. Yakovlev is quoted in Kaiser, *Why Gorbachev Happened*, 112.
15. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 165.
16. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, 297–300.
17. Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 435.
18. See Tishkov, “Between the Past . . . and the Future?” 34.
19. *Ibid.*, 25, 27.
20. “Draft CPSU Program,” 37.
21. Gorbachev, “On the Draft New CPSU Program,” 28.
22. Detailed accounts of this evolution in Gorbachev’s outlook can be found in English, *Russia and the Idea of the West* and in Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*.
23. Gorbachev later told Jonathan Steele of the *Guardian* that his access to closed materials, while not unrestricted, increased after his move to Moscow in November 1976. This interview is cited in Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 53.
24. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 6.
25. Shakhnazarov is quoted in English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 177–78.
26. Korchilov, *Translating History*, 35. In Politburo meetings following the Reykjavik summit of October 1986, Gorbachev characterized the Reagan administration as “class enemies” and “political scum” and referred to Reagan as a representative of “our class enemy, who exhibited extreme primitivism, a caveman outlook, and intellectual impotence.” See [www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB203/Document21.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB203/Document21.pdf) and [/Document28.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB203/Document28.pdf).
27. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 51. In the official Soviet jargon of the time, “proletarian internationalism” referred to the CPSU’s obligation to assist the proletariat in capi-



talist countries, while “socialist internationalism” referred to the CPSU’s obligation to support countries in the socialist camp.

28. See Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 237–42.

29. Gorbachev is cited in Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 289.

30. *Ibid.*, 292.

31. Chernyaev, cited in Wohlforth, *Cold War Endgame*, 20–21.

32. See Medvedev, *V kommande Gorbacheva*, 30, 32, 60–61; Shakhnazarov, *Tseni svobody*, 10, 317–18; Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, chap. 2; Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 241–43, 486. See also Shevardnadze, “Doklad E. A. Shevardnadze.”

33. These senior party positions were clear indicators of political power. The best one could do, short of becoming general secretary, was to be both a full Politburo member and a member of the Central Committee Secretariat.

34. Gorbachev, “On the Draft New CPSU Program,” 24.

35. *Ibid.*

36. *Ibid.*, 25.

37. For details, see Levada, “Social and Moral Aspects of the Crisis,” and Khanin, “Economic Growth in the 1980s.”

38. Martin Malia makes a similar point in an impersonal sense, arguing that “the economic decline discredited the claims of the ideology, and ‘glasnost’ made it possible to proclaim this fact, thereby delegitimizing the system and, ultimately, depriving it of the will to survive.” See Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy*, 492–93.

39. Chernyaev, *Diary of an Assistant to the President*.

40. Chernyaev noted in a December 1986 diary entry that Gorbachev saw glasnost as a tool for the party in carrying out reform, not as “free speech” that operates on its own logic. See Chernyaev, *Diary*, 1986, 39, available at [www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB220/Chernyaev\\_1986.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB220/Chernyaev_1986.pdf).

41. Jonathan Steele points out that the first scholarly criticism of Lenin published in the Soviet Union was a historical essay written by Vasily Selyunin in the prestigious journal *Novy Mir* in the summer of 1988. See Steele’s book *Eternal Russia*, 41–42.

42. Volkogonov, *Autopsy for an Empire*, 520. On Lenin’s relationship with Inessa Armand, see Volkogonov, *Lenin*, 35–49.

43. For an analysis of the flowering of intellectual life during the Gorbachev period, see Shlapentokh, *Soviet Intellectuals and Political Power*, chap. 9.

44. See Kaiser, *Why Gorbachev Happened*, 225–26.

45. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 279.

46. Gorbachev and Mlynar, *Conversations with Gorbachev*, 84–85.

47. Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 143, 148.

48. This process is carefully analyzed in Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization*.

49. Yeltsin claims that the nuclear transfer took place during his December 24 meeting with Gorbachev. As Gorbachev describes it, Yeltsin refused to take part in the transfer, scheduled for December 25, because he was angered by Gorbachev’s just-delivered resignation address. CIS Defense Minister Shaposhnikov and Gorbachev aide Grachev independently corroborate Gorbachev’s account. See Yeltsin, *Struggle for Russia*, 122; Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 671; Odom, *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, 371–73; and Grachev, *Final Days*, 190.

50. Vershbow, “Reflections of the U.S. Ambassador to Moscow,” 2.

51. Firth and Noren, *Soviet Defense Spending*, 100, 108–9. Newly available documents indicate that in the aftermath of Reykjavik, Gorbachev came to advocate a policy of strategic sufficiency, in the sense of an assured deterrent capability, as opposed to numerical equality with the United States. See “Anatoly Chernyaev’s Notes from the Politburo Session,” May 8, 1987, cited in Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 307, and June 20, 1988, at [www.wilsoncenter.org/cwihp/document/readers/eotcw/8806220.pdf](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/cwihp/document/readers/eotcw/8806220.pdf). See also Neef, “Diary of a Collapsing Superpower.”

52. Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 592.

53. Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, 410.

54. Gorbachev, "Doverie," 5, quoted in English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 211.
55. See Chernyaev, *Diary*, 1986, 40, at [www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB220/Chernyaev\\_1986.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB220/Chernyaev_1986.pdf).
56. Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World*, 85–86, 90–91, 114–16.
57. English, *Russia and the Idea of the West*, 212n113.
58. Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, 144–45.
59. Gorbachev, *On My Country*, 230, 276–77.
60. Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 478–79. Yakovlev's observation accords with cognitive psychologists' findings that people often do not understand the impact of their beliefs on their interpretation of new information, and that predispositions can be so deeply ingrained that people do not realize the possibility of alternative interpretations. See Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, 182, 283.
61. Gorbachev, "I Will Not Be a Dictator," 23–24.
62. Gorbachev and Mlynar, *Conversations with Gorbachev*, 49.
63. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 250.
64. Cognitive psychology reminds us that in considering belief systems, one should not neglect the centrality of the believer's view of his or her role. See Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, 299.
65. Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World*, 298.
66. Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 476.
67. *Ibid.*, 478, 500, 584.
68. Shakhnazarov, *S vozhdymi i bez nikh*, 503, 510.
69. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 244.
70. *Ibid.*, 293–95.

## CHAPTER 9

1. Garthoff, *The Great Transition*, 41. Cost categories other than procurement included operations and maintenance, personnel, and research and development.
2. Brooks and Wohlforth, "Economic Constraints and the End of the Cold War," 277–78.
3. For a fascinating inside account of these developments, unfortunately out of print and available only in Russian, see Medvedev, *V komande Gorbacheva*, 20–23.
4. Shakhnazarov, "The Renewal of Ideology," 8.
5. Kryuchkov, *Lichnoe delo*, 91.
6. Yumashev, "Poezdka," 30–31, quoted in Aron, *Yeltsin*, 328. I am confident that Yeltsin was not exaggerating the deep emotions stirred by his supermarket experience. Even for my wife and me, well aware of the gap between Soviet and western standards of living, the first several visits to our local supermarket in Northern Virginia following a tour of duty in Moscow were awe-inspiring events.
7. Sukhanov, *Tri goda s El'tsinym*, quoted in Aron, *Yeltsin*, 329.
8. This section draws heavily on Gaidar's *Collapse of an Empire*, a carefully researched study of the economic causes of the Soviet empire's collapse.
9. Gaidar, *Collapse of an Empire*, 131, 139.
10. *Ibid.*, 114.
11. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 46. See also Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 47–52, and FitzGerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*, 284. Brown points out that Gorbachev also enjoyed the support of Politburo members Kulakov, who was from Gorbachev's region, and Suslov, who had been party chief there in the early 1940s and who also vacationed there during Gorbachev's tenure as party chief. Brown also notes that Andropov was born in the Stavropol region. So, by coincidence, Gorbachev had regional ties with three members of the senior party leadership.
12. See Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 67–68. See also Shakhnazarov, *Tsena svobody*, 36–37.

13. See Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 166–67; Volkogonov, *Lenin*, 467–68; Volkogonov's *Autopsy for an Empire*, 435–36; and Ligachev, *Inside Gorbachev's Kremlin*, 32–34, 67–80. The transcript of the March 11, 1985, Politburo meeting that elected Gorbachev is available at "Session of the Politburo of the CC CPSU."

14. Korniyenko, *Kholodnaya voina*, 356. Yakovlev is cited in Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 107. Yakovlev himself describes the incident in his *Sumerki*, 459–61.

15. Gorbachev aide Vladimir Boldin suggests that Gromyko and Gorbachev discussed this exchange of favors face-to-face in advance of Gorbachev's election. See Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World*, 60–63. Chernyaev and Grachev expressed similar views during interviews with Archie Brown. See his *The Gorbachev Factor*, 334n115.

16. Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World*, 44–54.

17. "Session of the Politburo of the CC CPSU."

18. Shakhnazarov, *S vozhdymy i bez nikh*, 291–92.

19. "Session of the Politburo of the CC CPSU."

20. Yakovlev, *A Century of Violence*, 9.

21. Yakovlev, *The Fate of Marxism*, 227. See also *Sumerki*, 22–24, 253–56, 373–74.

22. Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, 37.

23. Yakovlev's leading role regarding new thinking is described in Medvedev, *V kommande Gorbacheva*, 32.

24. Shevardnadze, *The Future Belongs to Freedom*, 47–48.

25. Shakhnazarov recalls that during his stay in Prague "we freely discussed sharp issues confronting Soviet society; we considered change inevitable, and believed this was not a matter for the distant future." See his *S vozhdymy i bez nikh*, 95.

26. *Ibid.*, 286.

27. For a definitive biography of Yeltsin, see Aron, *Yeltsin*. A detailed analysis of Yeltsin's role in reforming the Soviet regime can be found in Ellison, *Boris Yeltsin*.

28. Yeltsin, "We Broke Through."

29. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 322–23.

30. Project for the New American Century, "Statement of Principles."

31. Wills, *Reagan's America*, xv.

32. See Pipes's autobiography, *Vixi*, 194–202.

33. Casey's activities are described in Schweizer's book *Victory*. See also Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 90, 92–93, 103–4; and Reed, *At the Abyss*.

34. For documentation of the Soviet assessment of U.S. détente policy, see Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The World Was Going Our Way*, 471. The Mitrokhin archive of KGB documents, upon which this book is based, includes the transcript of a 1980 meeting in which KGB chairman Andropov explains to a senior Vietnamese official: "Why did the USA and other western countries agree on détente in the 1970s and then change their policies? Because the imperialists realized that a reduction of international tension worked to the advantage of the socialist system. During this period Angola, Mozambique, Ethiopia and Afghanistan were liberated."

35. Reagan's attitudes toward the Soviet Union and communism are clearly expressed in his autobiography *An American Life*, especially 265–66, 294, 316, 551. On the Scowcroft Commission, see Gartoff, *The Great Transition*, 40.

36. For details of these and similar programs, see Kengor, *The Crusader*, and the books by Schweizer cited in chapter 5, *Reagan's War* and *Victory*.

37. Gartoff, *The Great Transition*, 143.

38. *Ibid.*, 155.

39. *Ibid.*, 161.

40. *Ibid.*, 167.

41. Reagan, *An American Life*, 588.

42. In response to the continuing debate over U.S.-Soviet relations between Shultz on the one hand and Weinberger and Casey on the other, Reagan wrote in his diary in November 1984 "[the dispute] is so out of hand George [Shultz] sounds like he wants out. I can't let that happen.

Actually George is carrying out my policy. I'm going to meet with Cap [Weinberger] and Bill [Casey] and lay it out to them." See Reagan, *An American Life*, 606.

43. See Lettow, *Ronald Reagan and His Quest*. See also Fitzgerald, *Way Out There in the Blue*.

## CHAPTER 10

1. Kryuchkov, *Lichnoe delo*, 219–20, 233, 245, 293, 346. Cognitive psychology teaches that it is not unusual for true believers resort to conspiracy theories to preserve core convictions. Kryuchkov's view of Yakovlev's evil influence over Gorbachev, who like Kryuchkov was an Andropov protégé, would seem to be a case in point. See Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, 300–301.

2. Korniyenko, *Kholodnaya voina*, 219–20, 233, 245.

3. Odom believes, on the basis of interviews with senior military personnel, that many at the very top of the Ministry of Defense and General Staff quickly realized the significance of "new political thinking." See his *Collapse of the Soviet Military*, 113–14.

4. These data are drawn from Gaddy, *Price of the Past*, 50–56, and Brooks and Wohlforth, "Economic Constraints and the End of the Cold War," 275–82.

5. McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution*, 96.

6. Levada, "Social and Moral Aspects of the Crisis," 65, 69.

7. Sheehy, "A Bankrupt System," 13–14.

8. Teague and Tolz, "The Collapse of the Soviet Union," 31.

9. The full text of the letter can be found in Dallin and Lapidus, *The Soviet System*, chap. 22.

10. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 252–53, 261. Levada argues that nomenklatura opposition to reform began as early as 1987, in the form of quiet resistance to Gorbachev's initiatives. See Levada, "Social and Moral Aspects of the Crisis," 63.

11. Vorotnikov, "Debate Speech," 61.

12. Shabanov, "Debate Speech," 71.

13. Brovnikov, "Debate Speech," 73–74.

14. Kull, *Burying Lenin*, 53.

15. *Ibid.*, 56.

16. Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 429–30. Kryuchkov describes this session in his memoir *Lichnoe delo*, 295–301.

17. The entire text can be found in Dallin and Lapidus, *The Soviet System*, 574–77.

18. While leaders of the "power" ministries and the military-industrial complex were at the forefront of the coup attempt, it should be noted that many of their colleagues did not take part. This became clear, and proved an important factor in the coup's failure, when several senior military commanders declared their support for Yeltsin, and military units deployed in Moscow refused to use their weapons against coup opponents and their supporters.

19. Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 430–31, 494.

20. *Ibid.*, 500, 534.

21. Shakhnazarov makes essentially the same argument in his *Tsena svobody*, 179.

22. Ellison, *Boris Yeltsin*, 44.

23. See Gaddy, *The Price of the Past*, chap. 2.

24. Firth and Noren, *Soviet Defense Spending*, 136–37, 197.

25. Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, 9.

26. *Ibid.*, 5. This point is emphasized by Dallin in his "Causes of the Collapse of the USSR," 674.

27. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 121, 136, 147, 215.

28. Gorbachev, *Izbrannye rechi i stat'i*, 1:292.

29. *Ibid.*, 1:298, 351, 397–99, 442.

30. Gorbachev, *Izbrannye rechi i stat'i*, 2:71–72, 111–16. Gorbachev's speeches and articles

during this period do not specifically mention Ronald Reagan, probably for two reasons: Gorbachev was not personally involved in U.S.-Soviet relations until becoming general secretary; and prior to his assuming the top job he likely accepted the doctrinal view that U.S. "ruling circles" were more important than individual U.S. presidents, including Reagan.

31. Chernyaev, *My Six Years with Gorbachev*, 88.
32. Arbatov, *The System*, 313.
33. Reagan, *An American Life*, 551, 558.
34. Gaidar, *Collapse of an Empire*, 61.
35. Schweizer, *Victory*, 32, 52–53, 97–101, 154–55, 179–81, 202–5, 217–20, 232–33. The quotation is from p. 242.
36. See, for example, Dermot Gatley, "Lessons from the 1986 Oil Collapse," *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity*, 2:1986, 237–38, 251–53, 260; "Ahmed Zaki Yamani," *Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia*, at <http://en.wikipedia.org>; and John Greenwald, "Saudi Arabia a Wild Goodbye to Mr. Oil," *Time*, November 10, 1986. Available at [www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,962817,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,962817,00.html). See also Jeffrey Robinson, *Yamani: The Inside Story* (London: Simon & Schuster, 1988), 270–71, 279.
37. Kengor, *The Crusader*, chap. 17. The quotation is from p. 251.
38. Reagan, *An American Life*, 708.
39. Matlock, *Reagan and Gorbachev*, 149, 259, 269, 292–94, 326.
40. *Ibid.*, 251.
41. *Ibid.*, 318. Yegor Gaidar argues, in this regard, that Gorbachev's agreement on issues of interest to the United States was caused more by his growing need to obtain financial assistance from the West than by a desire to reduce Soviet military spending through arms control agreements with the United States; see Gaidar, *Collapse of an Empire*, 169–71, 218.
42. Gorbachev and Mlynar, *Conversations with Gorbachev*, 143.
43. *Ibid.*, 138.
44. Gorbachev, *Memoirs*, 406–9.
45. *Ibid.*, 448.
46. *Ibid.*, 457.
47. Firth and Noren, *Soviet Defense Spending*, 108–9.
48. Kryuchkov claims that Gromyko soon came to regret his support for Gorbachev. Kryuchov also reports that toward the end of Gromyko's life, he lamented that he had been deceived by Gorbachev, who had set in motion processes dangerous for the Soviet state and Soviet society. If Kryuchkov is correct, such attitudes are not evident in Gromyko's 1989 memoir, which praises Gorbachev highly. See Kryuchkov, *Lichnoe Delo*, 218, and Gromyko, *Memoirs*, 340–48.
49. Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World*, 42–58.
50. Schweizer, *Victory*, xi. (I have omitted Schweizer's endnote numbers, which appear in the original after each citation.)
51. See Remnik, *Lenin's Tomb*, 354–56. Kalugin did return briefly to the KGB as deputy director shortly after the August 1991 coup and the replacement of KGB Chairman Kryuchkov by reformer Vadim Bakatin. See Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor*, 302. See also Kalugin's autobiographical *The First Directorate*, which discusses the Soviet system's collapse but does not mention the impact of American policy.
52. Novikov and Bascio, *Gorbachev and the Collapse*, 3, 191.
53. Kengor, *The Crusader*, 46.
54. *Ibid.*, 301.
55. The Remnick/Yakovlev interview, which appeared in the *New Yorker* of November 1992, is cited in Talbott, *The Russia Hand*, 455–56.
56. Palazchenko, *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze*, 370–71.
57. Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 611.
58. Boldin, *Ten Years That Shook the World*, 296.
59. Beissinger points out, for example, that Gorbachev incorrectly assumed that the Soviet

regime had “solved” the nationality issue and created a stable national order. See Beissinger, *Nationalist Mobilization*, 20, 53–55.

60. Tsipko, *Novy Mir*, 173–204, cited in Dallin and Lapidus, *The Soviet System*, 283–84.
61. Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, chap. 10.
62. Matlock, *Autopsy on an Empire*, 524–59.
63. Historians of the Cold War Melvyn Leffler and Vladislav Zubok independently reach similar conclusions regarding Reagan’s role. See Leffler’s *For the Soul of Mankind*, 341, 422, 448, 464; and Zubok’s *A Failed Empire*, 343.

## CHAPTER 11

1. For an extensive discussion of these fears, and Russian behaviors that feed them, see Bugajski, *Cold Peace*.

2. Talbott, *The Russia Hand*, 94. See also Hoagland, “The Great Divide over Putin”; and Erlanger, “Learning to Fear Putin’s Gaze.”

3. Brzezinski, “The Premature Partnership.”
4. Ra’anan, introduction, viii.
5. Kissinger, “Giving Europe’s Leaders Something to Think About.”
6. Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* 79–80.
7. Carothers, “The End of the Transition Paradigm,” 9–10. For a more positive view of Yeltsin’s reform efforts, see Ellison, *Boris Yeltsin*.

8. Cited in Ra’anan, “Imperial Elements in Russia’s Doctrines and Operations,” 25.

9. McFaul, *Russia’s Unfinished Revolution*, 256, 360.
10. *Ibid.*, 256, 360–61.
11. Talbott, *The Russia Hand*, chap. 13.
12. I saw U.S. intelligence reports on these activities in connection with my work for Senator Nunn on cooperative threat reduction with Russia. Some of these reports are described in Talbott, *The Russia Hand*, 65–67, 158–59, 265–66.

13. *Ibid.*, 158–59.
14. See Breslauer, “Boris Yeltsin as Patriarch.”
15. Shevtsova, *Yeltsin’s Russia*, 277.
16. Dunlap, “Sifting through the Rubble,” 69.
17. Lapidus, cited in Huskey, “Overcoming the Yeltsin Legacy,” 95.
18. Putin, *First Person*, parts 4 and 5. See also Herspring, *Putin’s Russia*, 1–3.
19. Putin, *First Person*, part 6.
20. *Ibid.*, part 7.
21. Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium.”
22. Putin, “Address to the Federal Assembly,” 2007, 1.
23. See Putin, “Excerpts.”
24. The Russian Federation constitution requires Putin to step down from the presidency at the end of his second consecutive term, in March of 2008.
25. Putin, “Address to the Federal Assembly,” 2007, 2. See also Mendelson and Gerber, “Young Russia’s Enemy No. 1.”

26. See, for example, Lipman, “Preempting Politics in Russia.” See also Remnick, “Letter from Moscow.”

27. Putin, “Press Conference at Election Campaign Headquarters,” 7.
28. Putin, “Russia at the Turn of the Millennium.”
29. P. Baker, “Russians to Feel a Patriotic Push.”
30. See “Russian Government Suddenly Worries about the Lack of Patriotism.” Yakovlev reports that the new Russian anthem was widely opposed by Russian intellectuals and many other Russian citizens, who objected to paying tribute to post-Soviet Russia with Bolshevik music. See his *Sumerki*, 674.

31. Lipman, "Rewriting History for Putin." See also Baker and Glasser, *Kremlin Rising*, 362, 364–67; and Finn, "New Manuals Push a Putin's-Eye View."

32. The traditional Russian approach to the political order is by no means unique to Russia. Geertz points out that the "Western conception of the person as a bounded, unique, more or less integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment, and action . . . is, however incorrigible it may seem to us, a rather peculiar idea within the context of the world's cultures." See Geertz, "From the Native's Point of View," 59.

33. For example, in the fall of 2004 a group of 115 European and American leaders released a statement charging that Putin's foreign policy was increasingly marked by "a threatening attitude towards Russia's neighbors and Europe's energy security, the return of rhetoric of militarism and empire, and by a refusal to comply with Russia's international treaty obligations." See "The Truth about Russia."

34. Charlton, "Putin Cements Pro-Western Stance."

35. Rahr and Petro, "Our Man in Moscow."

36. Igor Ivanov cited in Gvosdev, "The Sources of Russian Conduct."

37. Putin, "Annual Presidential Address," 2003.

38. Finn, "Russia, Georgia Agree."

39. See McFaul, "Russia's Transition to Democracy."

40. For a detailed, critical account of Russia's policies toward Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, see Bugajski, *Cold Peace*, chap. 5.

41. Putin, "Annual Address to the Federal Assembly," 2005.

42. See, for example, Glasser and Baker, "Putin Allies Gain Control,"; Myers, "What Chance Justice Is Done?"; Colton and McFaul, "Russian Democracy under Putin"; and Saradzhyan and Schreck, "FSB Chief: NGOs a Cover for Spying."

43. See Gaddy, *The Price of the Past*, chap. 10.

44. Associated Press, "Putin Makes Cabinet Changes."

45. Putin, "Meeting with Defense Ministry Senior Officials"; and Abdullaev, "Ivanov and Kadyrov Promoted."

46. Finn, "In Surprise Move."

47. Levy, "Putin Backs Deputy Prime Minister," and Finn, "After Endorsement, Medvedev Recommends Putin."

48. See, for example, "Putin's Phoney Election." On the general phenomenon of factional conflict under Putin, see Shevtsova, *Russia—Lost in Transition*, 53, 57, 63, 183, 237, 281.

49. This paragraph draws on McFaul's analysis of Russian polling data. See his informative section on "Attitudinal Indicators of Democratic Fragility in Russia" in *Russia's Unfinished Revolution*, 331–35. See also Fleron and Ahl, "Does the Public Matter for Democratization in Russia?" 287–327.

50. McFaul, Petrov, and Ryabov, *Between Dictatorship and Democracy*, 286

51. Gerber, Mendelson, and Shvedov, "Listen to the Russians."

52. The 2003 and 2004 polls are cited in Shlapentokh, "Anti-Liberal Perestroika."

53. McFaul, *Russia's Unfinished Revolution*, 333.

54. "Deputatskie ob'edineniya."

55. Baker and Glasser, "Reelection No Contest for Putin."

56. Levy, "Party's Triumph Raises Question."

57. Shevtsova, "From Yeltsin to Putin," 92–93. Pipes draws similar conclusions from his reading of public opinion polling in Russia. See his article "Flight from Freedom."

58. Kissinger takes a darker view of Putin's KGB background, arguing that the mentality of the KGB "leads to a foreign policy comparable to that during the tsarist centuries, grounding popular support in a sense of Russian mission and seeking to dominate neighbors where they cannot be subjugated." See Kissinger, *Does America Need a Foreign Policy?* 75.

59. This essentially is the view asserted by Putin supporters, who argue that a stable political culture that will support true democracy must be established slowly, primarily via improved living standards. See Finn, "Putin Will Host G-8."

60. Yeltsin, "Resignation Statement." For an argument that "a semiauthoritarian present is Russia's best hope for a liberal future," see A. Lieven, "The Essential Vladimir Putin," 72–73.
61. Yakovlev, *Sumerki*, 5, 655–77. See also Politkovskaya, *Putin's Russia*, 112. For further elaboration of this pessimistic view, see Aslund, "Talking Tough to Stay in Power."
62. Putin, "Annual Address to the Federal Assembly," 2005 and 2006. See also Specter, "The Devastation," 58–64.
63. See Myers, "Putin Reforms Greeted by Street Protests."
64. See Myers, "Putin Gambles on Raw Power." See also Baker and Glasser, *Kremlin Rising*, chap. 1 and epilogue.
65. For assessments of Putin's record that support this general view, see Baker and Glasser, *Kremlin Rising*, and Politkovskaya, *Putin's Russia*. See also Edwards and Kemp, et. al., *Russia's Wrong Direction*.
66. Graham is cited in Goldgeier and McFaul, *Power and Purpose*, 321.
67. "Russian Government Suddenly Worries about the Lack of Patriotism."
68. Kramer, "Dmitri A. Medvedev." See also Levy, "Putin's Chosen Successor."
69. Former chairman of the Senate Armed Services Sam Nunn has warned repeatedly, in his capacity as co-chairman of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, that we are in a race between cooperation to secure nuclear weapons and materials and catastrophe, and that the threat is outrunning our response. See [www.nti.org/c\\_index.html](http://www.nti.org/c_index.html).
70. A useful discussion of U.S. policy toward Russia can be found in Edwards and Kemp, et al., *Russia's Wrong Direction*.
71. Cited in McFaul, "Russia's Transition to Democracy."
72. President Bush is quoted in Hiatt, "Silent on Putin's Slide."
73. It should be noted that in 2006 and 2007, senior Bush administration officials, including the president himself, publicly criticized Russian domestic and foreign policies in response to criticism of the United States by Putin and his colleagues. See, for example, O'Neil, "Cheney Criticizes Russia on Human Rights," and Bush, "President Bush Visits Prague."
74. For accounts of what has been accomplished in this field, see [www.lugar.senate.gov/nunn\\_lugar](http://www.lugar.senate.gov/nunn_lugar), and Lugar, "Committed to Containing Nukes." See also the website of the Nuclear Threat Initiative, at [www.nti.org](http://www.nti.org), for assessment of the need for intensified effort.

## CHAPTER 12

1. See Koch, *The Quest for Consciousness*, 53–67.
2. For discussion of other subconscious psychological biases, see Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*, and Kahneman and Renshon, "Why Hawks Win." See also Heuer, *The Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*.
3. Recent studies of this phenomenon and its causes include A. Lieven, *America Right or Wrong*; Pei, "The Paradoxes of American Nationalism"; and Prestowitz, *Rogue Nation*. Classics in this field include Anderson, *Imagined Communities*; Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America*; M. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*; Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*; and Richey and Jones, eds., *American Civil Religion*. For recent media commentary on the problem, see Brooks, "The Art of Intelligence," Kaiser, "Trapped by Hubris, Again"; and Hoffman, "We Can't Win If We Don't Know the Enemy."
4. Bercovitch, "The Rites of Assent," 5–6.
5. Lipset, *American Exceptionalism*, 17–21, 26. The quotation is on page 31.
6. For an extensive discussion of the distorting effect of the American outlook, see M. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, chap. 6.
7. Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought*, 433–35. See also the analytical review of Pinker's book by McGinn, "How You Think."
8. De Waal, *Our Inner Ape*, cited in Restak, *The Naked Brain*, 113. The notion of inherited brain structures that affect human perception is widespread in the fields of cognitive psychology



and neuroscience. See, for example, Damasio, *Descartes' Error*; Edelman, *Wider Than the Sky*; and Kandel, *In Search of Memory*.

9. Because Soviet exceptionalism was pronounced throughout the Cold War, creating a Kremlin blind spot regarding U.S. thinking, this also would help explain why genuine U.S.-Soviet understanding was so difficult to achieve and sustain during those years.

10. This problem is discussed in Heuer, *The Psychology of Intelligence Analysis*, chap. 13.

11. I use the qualifying phrase "tended to" advisedly, because analysis from the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, together with some parts of CIA analysis, did focus on the official Soviet mind-set and Gorbachev's attempt to modify it. But I think it is fair to say that the U.S. intelligence and policy communities overall paid inadequate attention to the conceptual dimension, and that this inadequacy impeded our understanding of Gorbachev's reforms and their consequences.

12. Reagan notes in his diary that when Armand Hammer told him in June 1985 that one could work with Gorbachev, who was different from past Soviet leaders, Reagan felt "I'm too cynical to believe that." See Reagan, *The Reagan Diaries*, 337.

13. See Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph*, 159, 490, 739, 598–99.

14. See Brock, *Blinded by the Right*, 44, 48.

15. George Will, quoted in Wills, *Reagan's America*, xvi.

16. Bush and Scowcroft, *A World Transformed*, 44, 154–55.

17. *Ibid.*, 12–13.

18. Baker with DeFrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy*, 1–2.

19. *Ibid.*, 69.

20. *Ibid.*

21. See [www.foia.cia.gov](http://www.foia.cia.gov). This problem was not confined to the United States analytical community. In discussing estimates of the Soviet military threat, Rodric Braithwaite, who was British Ambassador in Moscow from 1988 to 1992, writes that "Western analysts seemed unable or unwilling to make the imaginative effort of putting themselves in their opponents' shoes." See his *Across the Moscow River*, 41.

22. These and similar documents are available at CIA's website, [www.foia.cia.gov](http://www.foia.cia.gov). See also Fischer, *At Cold War's End*.

23. MacEachin, CIA Assessment of the Soviet Union, available at [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov).

24. Garthoff, "Estimating Soviet Military Intentions and Capabilities," available at [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov).

25. Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 220.

26. *Ibid.*

27. Halberstam, *The Best and the Brightest*, xiv, 44.

28. *Ibid.*, 214–15.

29. *Ibid.*, 248.

30. *Ibid.*, 655.

31. McNamara, *In Retrospect*, 321–23.

32. Aslund, "Why Russia Is Not Dead," 25.

33. Gaidar, *Days of Defeat and Victory*, 152.

34. *Ibid.*, 151–53.

35. Krauthammer is quoted in Kalb, *The Nixon Memo*, 65.

36. On Nixon's role in this matter, see Kalb, *The Nixon Memo*. It should be noted that James Baker's account of Bush administration aid to Yeltsin's Russia, discussed in chapter 32 of his memoir *The Politics of Diplomacy*, is incomplete and misleading. Baker does not mention initiatives by Senators Nunn, Lugar, and Boren in the fall of 1991 and implies that Russian assistance programs they established were his idea. Baker also says nothing about the major roles played by Nixon and the senators in urging President Bush to put together a major aid package for Russia. Judging from my direct involvement in these events, a much more accurate account is given in Kalb's book.

37. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents*, 168–69.

38. Hartz has written of these elements, whose disparate nature might seem to make their combination unlikely: "American pragmatism has always been deceptive because, glacierlike, it has rested on miles of submerged conviction [that America's norms are self-evident]." See his *The Liberal Tradition in America*, 58–59.

39. As noted, this theme is developed by Carothers in his article "The End of the Transition Paradigm."

40. Talbott, *The Russia Hand*, 10, 44, 56, 103–4, 115, 154, 204, 237.

41. *Ibid.*, 9.

42. *Ibid.*, 150, 407–8. Clinton administration policy toward Russia is also detailed in Goldgeier and McFaul, *Power and Purpose*, chaps. 4–12, 14.

43. Bush, "President Bush Delivers Graduation Speech."

44. Bush, "October 11, 2001 News Conference," in Ambrosius, *Wilsonianism*, 16.

45. Friedman, "The Real War." See also Friedman's column "War of Ideas"; Keller, "Digging Up the Dead"; Packer, "A Democratic World," 105; and Kean, Hamilton, et al., *The 9/11 Commission Report*, 362–63.

46. Anonymous, *Through Our Enemies' Eye*, and *Imperial Hubris*. See, in particular, *Through Our Enemies' Eyes*, xv, 4–5, 16, 25, 27, 30, and *Imperial Hubris*, 8–9, 105, 165–66, 168, 176.

47. Froomkin, "War."

48. See Stevenson, "President Makes It Clear."

49. Bush, "Speech to the National Endowment for Democracy."

50. Bush, "President's Remarks." See also Janofsky, "Bush Proposes Broader Language Training."

51. Goldberg, "The Unknown," 42.

52. *Ibid.*, 44.

53. Ignatius, "The CIA's Dissidents," A21.

54. Shanker, "Pentagon Hones Its Strategy."

55. Rohde, "Army Enlists Anthropology."

56. For examples of such reporting, see Suskind, "Without a Doubt," and *The One Percent Doctrine*, 72–73, 225–26, 294–95, 307–10. See also Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 86, 379, 420, and *State of Denial*, 11, 334.

57. Pillar, "Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq," 22.

58. Pipes, *Vixi*, 154. Pipes's disdain for the State Department's "insipid" recommendations for Reagan administration policy toward the Soviet Union was noted in chapter 9.

59. Frum and Perle, *An End to Evil*, 226–28.

60. Gingrich, "Rogue State Department," 42–44, 47. On ill will between Bush administration policy makers and the CIA regarding the Iraq war, see Pillar, "Intelligence, Politics, and the War in Iraq."

61. Benjamin and Simon, *The Age of Sacred Terror*, 384.

62. *Ibid.*, 385.

63. Laipson, "While America Slept," 147.

64. Albright with Woodward, *The Mighty and the Almighty*, 8–10, 75 (the quotation is on pages 9 and 10).

65. The study is described in Gordon and Trainor, *Cobra II*, chap. 4. The unclassified portions of the study are outlined by its authors, Woods, Lacey, and Murray, in "Saddam's Delusions," 2–26.

66. Pinker, *The Stuff of Thought*, 438.

67. *Ibid.*, 439.

68. For a discussion of the realist school in the context of analyzing the Cold War's conclusion, see Wohlforth, "Realism and the End of the Cold War." More generally, Robert Bellah has suggested that much of American social science "has lapsed into the positivist utilitarian idiom, in which only 'hard and realistic' assumptions about human nature are allowed." See his *Beyond Belief*, 241. At the same time, the "constructivist" school, which focuses on cognition and belief, seems to be gaining popularity among academic specialists in international relations. See

Peterson, Tierney, and Maliniak, "Inside the Ivory Tower," 61. See also Snyder, "One World, Rival Theories."

69. CIA training may currently include such matters. In 2000 the agency established the Sherman Kent School for Intelligence Analysis and has for some years had a Center for the Study of Intelligence (CSI), which publishes a journal and specializes in academic outreach. Posted on the CSI Web site (at [cia.gov](http://cia.gov)) are several studies of the psychology of intelligence analysis, although there is no indication of a focus on the specific blind spot discussed in this chapter. On the other hand, former CIA analyst Richard Russell has written that the CIA "needs a strong bureaucratic culture of education and learning that does not exist today." See his *Sharpening Strategic Intelligence*, 145.

70. Djerejian et al., *Changing Minds, Winning Peace*, 9–10, 24.

71. *Ibid.*, 69.

72. See Weisman, "Bush Confidante Begins Task"; Rieff, "Their Hearts and Minds?"; and Satloff, "How to Win the War of Ideas."

73. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By*, 195.

74. Kennan, *Realities of American Foreign Policy*, 110.

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