FOREWORD

Pavel Palazhchenko: *A Perspective from Moscow*

There is little doubt that the period we call the cold war, including the way it was waged and the manner in which it ended, will attract the keen interest of historians for many decades to come. It was a unique and unprecedented era in that the threat of a major conflict, very likely involving the use of nuclear weapons, was real, or was at least clear and present in the minds of those who ducked under tables during civil defense alerts and lived through the terror of the Cuban missile crisis. There is much that needs to be clarified and understood about the cold war's origins and causes. For example, a question that deserves serious consideration is whether the cold war was inevitable because of the nature of the Soviet regime or whether it could have been avoided with a different interpretation of the doctrine of containment. Perhaps of even greater interest is the question of why the cold war ended and whether other scenarios of its end were possible. Though the unique circumstances that brought about the cold war are unlikely to be repeated, it would be hard to deny the importance of considering such questions and thereby learning lessons for the future.

Debates about the cold war and the way it ended are inevitably clouded by the politics of the day. In Russia, the collapse of the hopes of the intelligentsia, who had expected radical changes following the breakup of the Soviet Union to result in almost overnight prosperity and a major role for Russia in a new world order, has led many to question the disengagement from the cold war. The Russian press is rife with writings accusing Mikhail Gorbachev

and his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, of having betrayed Russia's national interests, even though Russia as a separate entity under international law did not exist on their watch. In the United States during the administration of the first President Bush, the general consensus of welcoming the peaceful end of the cold war was soon replaced by the celebration of the West's—and most particularly America's—victory in the cold war. This, in turn, reinforced the feelings of inferiority and injury felt by many members of the Russian establishment, feelings that are not conducive to a sensible debate either about the past or about Russia's present foreign policy.

Depoliticizing the study of the cold war would only benefit the discussion, and although it may not be possible in current media debates, one would hope that historians would at least strive for this goal. Something else would also help: we should bear in mind that the notion of the cold war is, after all, a metaphor that captures the confrontational aspect of that period but is not, and cannot be, its full and accurate description. Much of the inaccurate and unhelpful loose talk about the cold war and its end is, in fact, the result of either unfamiliarity with the facts and the documentary record or taking the metaphor too literally. It was not, after all, a war. In fact, preventing war was perhaps the essence of that period and was of greater importance and concern to its protagonists than preparing for war or winning the various battles or skirmishes, whether in propaganda or geopolitics, that occupied so much space in the press of that time. War prevention as a substantive aspect of the cold war has only recently begun to receive sufficient attention from historians.

Contributions to the cold war's historical record by former Soviet and U.S. officials who were active during the various phases of that era are invaluable. Much credit is due to the conferences, books, and oral history interviews that aim to develop the factual basis for further study and debate. An example is the recent Cuban missile crisis conference held in Havana and attended by former U.S., Soviet, and Cuban political and military officials. We can be

grateful for the efforts to make available documents from the cold war years from both the U.S. and the Russian sides, yet it is unlikely that a large body of such material will soon become accessible to historians. A more realistic possibility is that participants in the making and implementation of policies on both sides will speak and write about their recollections, as some of them do in the present book. As a Russian, I only regret that such literature is being published more in the United States than in my own country, but in any case, the fact that a significant body of evidence is gradually emerging is positive and welcome. Much of what follows in this foreword is based on my recollections of the events that I witnessed and participated in from 1985 to 1991 and then recorded in *My Years with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze*, published in the United States in 1997.

The phrase "turning points," as used in the title of this book, is another metaphor. Though it has often served to describe the events surrounding the end of the cold war, perhaps an even better metaphor would be "going forward," for it is this relentless movement away from the past that stands out as we recall that era. There was not so much a turn in a particular direction, for the direction stayed basically the same, as a refusal to go back despite frequent temptations to do so.

Since it is often asserted, particularly in Russia, that the West alone benefited from the end of the cold war, it would be useful to consider the benefits that accrued to the Soviet Union and its successor states by first taking a look at the international position that Gorbachev inherited from his predecessors. In the early 1980s, the Soviet Union was saddled with an astounding range of foreign policy problems. It found itself in a situation that could almost be described as "us against the world." Its relations were confrontational with the United States; tense, at best, with Europe; and downright hostile with China. The unsuccessful war in Afghanistan was having a destructive effect on both the domestic situation and relations with the West and much of the rest of the world. The country was bogged down in several regional conflicts in third world nations

with little hope of extricating itself from them. The USSR had no real friends, and the Soviet elite knew only too well that the Warsaw Pact countries could not be regarded as reliable allies. The Soviet Union's negotiating position in arms control talks reflected a sense of isolation, insecurity, and pervasive hostility. In the INF talks, for example, the Soviet delegation initially asked to be allowed the same number of weapons as all its potential adversaries put together.

By mid-1991, the Soviet Union had worked out its relations with both the West and China. The arms buildup had been stopped, and two treaties, INF and START, calling for real and deep cuts in nuclear weapons had been signed. Steps had been taken toward the Soviet Union's acceptance by and eventual admission to the Group of Seven industrialized nations. The Charter of Paris proclaimed a Europe without dividing lines. Gorbachev's visit to China, in the words of Deng Xiaoping, closed the book on the past and opened the future. Soviet troops had left Afghanistan, and conflicts in Cambodia, Central America, and Angola were being defused. Iraq's invasion of Kuwait had been rejected and reversed, with the United States and the Soviet Union taking a stand against the aggression and working through the United Nations to put an end to it. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the changes in Central and Eastern Europe benefited the Soviet Union by ending an unsustainable relationship in a peaceful manner without the burden of long-term bad blood.

As Henry Kissinger said to Gorbachev in Moscow in February 1992, "As a result of your policies, Russia is more secure than ever before." This is important to bear in mind since Gorbachev's critics assumed that his policies had the opposite effect.

The years from 1985 to 1991 can be divided into two distinct periods in international politics. Each period saw changes in the direction of ending the ideological, political, and military confrontations between East and West and the Soviet Union's reintegration into the world community, but the pace of this process was relatively slow during the first period and extremely fast during the

second, which began in early 1989. The quickening of the pace was the result of internal developments in the Soviet Union and Central Europe that could be controlled, in my view, only by sacrificing the process of change itself and turning back. Gorbachev bore the brunt of decision making at that time; had he yielded to the temptation to reverse course, history would have taken a different and, most likely, a much more dangerous path.

Working with Gorbachev and Shevardnadze during those years, I recall the difference in the psychological makeup and the political agendas of the two periods. During the first three years (1985–1988), there was a feeling that history had given us sufficient time to disengage from confrontation and build a sound basis for new international relations. This was a time when Gorbachev engaged the West on arms reduction and proposed the adoption of ''the new thinking,'' a set of non-ideological, commonsense, international law–based principles in which he profoundly believed. During the second period, there was a feeling that events were running ahead of the Soviet Union and, increasingly, that the best thing to do was manage change and assure its peaceful character without prejudging the outcome. It was a humbling experience, but I believe that the new thinking greatly facilitated the Soviet Union's adaptation to and acceptance of both the pace of change and its eventual outcome.

The new thinking was based, above all, on the understanding that much of the old, ideology-driven agenda of international relations had become obsolete. The words ''the new thinking'' had been used before, of course, and the substance of the concept was not totally new. Indeed, in the early 1980s, the Palme Commission had presaged many tenets of the new thinking such as, for example, the concept of common security as opposed to security at the expense of others. And in his essay, Oleg Grinevsky reviews Kremlin decisions and events in the early 1980s that provided background conditions for the new thinking in the Gorbachev era. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union under Gorbachev was the first state to declare and elaborate these principles, setting in motion a major

revision of, and shift in, the international agenda. As David Holloway points out in his perceptive essay, the new thinking "provided a vision of the Soviet Union's place in the world that reassured the Soviet public as well as foreign leaders and publics. It thereby exercised a calming influence on the process of change."

In addition to the influence of the new thinking in facilitating change in the nature of international relations was the conscious application of the human factor by the leading protagonists of the end of the cold war. While recognizing the role of Margaret Thatcher, François Mitterrand, and Helmut Kohl, I believe most of the credit should go to Mikhail Gorbachev and Ronald Reagan. During their interaction from 1985 to 1989, I could see them persevere to build a personal rapport. They regarded this rapport as an important political goal despite Gorbachev's "dogmatic Communist heritage," as noted in Anatoli Cherniaev's essay, and Reagan's strong ideological views about the Soviet Union as an evil empire.

Unlike their predecessors, Reagan and Gorbachev did not allow inevitable setbacks, such as the death of U.S. Army Major Arthur Nicholson, killed by a sentry at a Soviet military base in the GDR, or the arrest of U.S. reporter Nicholas Daniloff in response to the arrest of Soviet UN official Gennadi Zakharov in New York, to distract them from the pursuit of their goal. Many fascinating details of the relationship between the two leaders, and much of what was happening behind the scenes, are described by Ambassador Jack Matlock both in this book and in his other writings.

To add to the recollections and accounts contained in this volume, I first saw Ronald Reagan in person in September 1985 when I was interpreting at his White House meeting with Eduard Shevardnadze. From that first encounter, he struck me as a warm and forthcoming person anxious to engage and even please his guest. The reason, in retrospect, seems to be that Reagan, though deeply conservative, was not dogmatic or aggressive. The view of Ronald Reagan presented in Kiron Skinner's essay is consistent with my impression. This is what Gorbachev has often emphasized in his recollections of Reagan, including his interesting letter on the occa-

sion of the ceremony at which Ronald Reagan was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. He wrote, "While adhering to his convictions, with which one might agree or disagree, Ronald Reagan was not dogmatic. He was ready to negotiate and cooperate. That is what enabled us together to take the first steps toward ending the Cold War."

For both Reagan and Gorbachev, intuition played an important role in shaping their attitudes and actions. Of particular interest in this regard is the remark Mitterrand made to Gorbachev in the summer of 1986, quoted by Cherniaev: "Reagan is among those leaders who intuitively want to put an end to the existing status quo." I think intuition made Reagan support the inclusion, in the final communiqué of the Geneva summit in 1985, of the phrase, "Nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought," although at least the first part of it contradicted the views of some of his advisers. Gorbachev is usually regarded as a politician for whom instincts were less important, but I believe that without trusting his instincts he would not have been able to accomplish as much as he did.

Another important factor in building his rapport with Reagan and other Western leaders was Gorbachev's healthy respect for people elected through a democratic process. I remember how, in Geneva, when one of his advisers began to over-eagerly criticize Reagan, Gorbachev said rather curtly that Reagan was the elected president of the United States and we had to deal with him.

The relationship between the two men was, of course, often bumpy, but it was always respectful and equal. I must disagree with the assertion by some Russian scholars, such as Dr. Anatoli Utkin of the Institute of U.S. and Canada Studies, and Vladislav Zubok, in this book, that Soviet leaders developed some kind of psychological dependence on their U.S. counterparts and therefore became almost subservient to them. My view is also held by my U.S. Department of State colleagues with whom I shared interpretation duties.

Trust was the product of both human rapport and the new polit-

ical direction, and it gradually became a significant factor in U.S.-Soviet relations. Surprisingly to some observers, the idea of trust has now been revived in the relationship between George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin, and both presidents have encountered some criticism for being naïve in this regard. But trust is not the same as blind faith. While the latter is something no statesman can afford, the former is indispensable to relations between civilized nations.

The new thinking in the Soviet Union, reciprocated by the West's willingness to engage and negotiate, and the gradually emerging trust in relations between the leaders of the great powers, set the stage for a new relationship between the world's major power centers. In this new context, many of the things that seemed all-important at the height of the cold war gradually lost their value. This devaluation was related to the importance of ideology in international relations, third world alliances, and the value of the nuclear arsenals conceived and built in a confrontational environment.

In his essay, Professor Georgi Mirski recalls a conference at the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1987, convened at Shevardnadze's initiative in order to hear from non-MFA thinkers on foreign policy issues. It was an eye-opener for many in the ministry and was one of the first times that the concept of de-ideologizing international relations was discussed openly and favorably. In such a context, the struggle for influence in the third world no longer appeared to many in the Soviet foreign policy establishment as the "moral as well as . . . strategic opportunity" that it was for much of the cold war, as Peter Rodman writes in his essay. Working in the Soviet foreign ministry, I witnessed this "third world fatigue" and the declining interest in third world influence among officials at all levels in the second half of the 1980s. The Soviet Union made a serious effort to resolve or disengage from the conflicts in the third world, and, as Rodman points out, the Reagan and Bush administrations accepted Gorbachev's good faith and sought negotiated outcomes to the conflicts then raging in various parts of the world.

It is clear that no country, and certainly not the Soviet Union, could bear indefinitely the burden of the geopolitical obligations assumed under Stalin, Khrushchev, and Brezhnev. The Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan may be seen as a good, though by no means perfect, example of the art of letting go with dignity. In hindsight, a more cooperative attitude on the part of the United States both in the negotiating process and in the post-withdrawal period would have served the best interests of everyone. When the United States showed little interest in such cooperation, Gorbachev suggested to Secretary of State James Baker in May 1989, "Perhaps we should let the Afghans stew in their own juices for some time." Later, however, Afghanistan's fate was left largely in the hands of Pakistan's military intelligence service, a course chosen by two U.S. administrations with well-known consequences. The lesson to be learned from this is that neglecting the third world agenda may be dangerous.

Of even greater importance than the disengagement from regional conflicts was the decline in the importance of the superpowers' nuclear arsenals. Indeed, as Robert Hutchings observes in his essay, "The vast U.S. and Soviet nuclear arsenals" were becoming "increasingly irrelevant" even "to the realities of the late cold war," and certainly, one might add, to the post–cold war environment that both sides were looking forward to at that time. The negotiations on arms control produced two seminal agreements that are still in effect: the INF and START treaties. Even this achievement, however, is often disputed today in Russia, for reasons that are described cogently by Alexei Arbatov in his commentary on Jack Matlock's essay. In fact, however, the two treaties constitute a legacy that Russia has found to be fully consistent with its best interests; it successfully insisted on the reaffirmation of the START I treaty in the nuclear disarmament agreements concluded by Presidents George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin in May 2002.

The story of the arms control negotiations has been told many times, with little disagreement among serious scholars as to its main turning points and achievements. I would note in this regard

a statement by George Shultz that has received far less attention than it deserves. At a conference at Princeton University in 1993, Shultz expressed regret that, mostly because of the resistance of hard-liners within the U.S. administration, it had proved impossible to sign the START treaty in 1988. The fact remains that the agreements achieved by Gorbachev, Reagan, and Bush, including the unprecedented exchange of letters between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev on the elimination of many of the two countries' shorter-range nuclear weapons, were equitable and beneficial.

It may be argued that Europe was the centerpiece and the focus of the process that led to the end of the cold war. The most dramatic and potentially the most explosive developments in Europe at the time were taking place in Germany. The leaders who had to manage that process are often accused of lacking foresight and failing to anticipate events. It is questionable whether the kind of prescience that the critics seem to call for was possible. The essay by Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice contains numerous excerpts from statements by Soviet, U.S., and European leaders that make it clear that no one expected German unification to happen as fast as it did. This includes the amazing comment made in December 1989 by Helmut Kohl on Henry Kissinger's supposition that East and West Germany might unite within two years: "This [is] obviously impossible." In any case, it is doubtful that a better forecast would have done much good. What mattered more was the attitude of the main players toward the prospect of German unification. The material provided by Zelikow and Rice is consistent with my own impressions at the time based on what I heard during talks on the issue and discussions among Soviet leaders.

Margaret Thatcher manifested herself as most suspicious of a unified Germany and she was viscerally antagonistic to the prospect of unification. During a meeting with Shevardnadze in London in November 1989, she did not bother to disguise that antagonism. I recall her expression of barely suppressed fury combined with resignation. Certainly neither during that meeting nor, to my knowledge, in subsequent discussions and communications

with Soviet leaders did she propose any measures capable of slowing down the process. Rather, she seemed to be trying to probe the depth of the Soviet leaders' apprehensions about German unity and their willingness and ability to act against it. It appears from what we know now that Mitterrand's attitude was similar to Thatcher's, though perhaps less furious. Yet my conversations with French diplomats in Moscow and my familiarity with diplomatic cables from Paris suggest that, having no plan to counteract the process, Mitterrand rather quickly resigned himself to the outcome.

The pivotal factor in speeding up German unification was the explosive expression of the Germans' desire for it. Zelikow and Rice emphasize the "judicious splashes of gasoline" applied by Kohl and Bush "instead of . . . a fire extinguisher." Yet the breakdown of public order in the GDR began in December 1989 when Bush's position, as expressed at a NATO meeting, still left open the possibility of a slow process with an uncertain outcome: "We should not at this time endorse nor exclude any particular vision of unity." My impression, from some of Bush's remarks made at Malta and even later, was that he might have preferred a slower process. Yet, once the people of East Germany began to show their ability to impose their will, all leaders had to adjust, and a more welcoming attitude was only natural for Kohl and for Bush, as the Western world's leader.

As for the attitude of the Soviet leaders, I recall no expressions of panic, either about the prospect of German unification itself or about the domestic consequences of it in the Soviet Union. It is notable that although experts on German affairs in the foreign ministry and the Communist Party Central Committee called for maximum possible resistance to unification, a poll commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 1990 indicated a generally positive attitude toward a united Germany among all strata of the population including, surprisingly, the military. Credit for the general acceptance of unification should be given to the Russian people, who both then and later showed themselves to be much more level-headed and realistic than many members of the Russian elite,

and to Gorbachev, whose calming influence played an important role. In subsequent conversations, Gorbachev confirmed to me that at no point in the process was the use of force to prevent unification proposed as a possible course of action either by himself, by other members of the Soviet leadership, or by the military.

The study of the history of the cold war and the events that brought it to a peaceful end will continue to produce new factual material and new interpretations of the actions and motives of the main players. In order to better understand what happened and why, historians may both question the wisdom of the decisions taken by the leaders and speculate on various "what if" and "what might have been" scenarios. In fairness, however, they should try to put themselves in the shoes of the decision makers who had to contend with forces often beyond their control in an environment changing at a breathtaking pace. The counterfactual points proposed for consideration mean little if they reflect policy options not even contemplated at the time. Contributors to this volume give priority to the deep mining of facts, thus making this book a valuable resource for readers and historians alike.