

Russian officials: We couldn't keep up with SDI

On Feb. 26, as the tenth anniversary approached of President Ronald Reagan's announcement of the Strategic Defense Initiative on March, 23, 1983, officials of the former Soviet Union came to a Princeton, New Jersey conference and admitted that the Soviet Union's attempt to match the SDI was the primary cause of collapse of the Soviet Union.

Former Foreign Minister Aleksandr Bessmertnykh told the gathering: "We were told, even before SDI, the U.S. had suddenly changed course and begun an enormous buildup. SDI made us realize we were in a very dangerous spot."

According to the *Washington Post* of Feb. 27, "The officials said Gorbachov was convinced any attempt to match Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative, launched in 1983 to build a space-based defense against missiles, would do irreparable harm to the Soviet economy."

Also featured at the Princeton conference was the release, after a decade of being classified "top secret," of American intelligence agencies' August 1982 report on "Soviet Capabilities for Strategic Nuclear Conflict, 1982-1992." This assessment, used by President Reagan in preparing his SDI announcement, documents the fact that Soviet military training exercises and buildup were shifting toward a nuclear first-strike capability, as the "warning times" got shorter and shorter for one superpower to fire back after nuclear bombardment, especially in the European military theater.

The study, however, never mentioned the possibility of a new American strategic defense doctrine, which was to be announced by Reagan only months later. Indeed, the SDI did not originate with the Pentagon. As late as one week before President Reagan's televised bombshell, representatives of Lyndon LaRouche met at the Pentagon with 10 officers of the Air Force and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, and were told point blank that no such new strategy was being contemplated. Former Secretary of State George Shultz, speaking at the Princeton conference, said the Joint Chiefs of Staff "were floored" by the President's speech on March 23, 1983.

himself sent a KGB delegation, partly dressed in Russian Orthodox attire, to Minneapolis, Minnesota, to the University of Minnesota campus there, and to the Hubert Humphrey Institute. They were hosted by [Donald] Fraser, then the mayor of Minneapolis and the key machine man on locale for presidential candidate Walter Mondale. Walter Mondale did not visibly participate in the floor session there, but was on the premises, and later adopted what Burlatsky et al. proposed as the form of rejection of my proposals to the Reagan administration as reflected by the Reagan speech of March 23, 1983. This became, then, the official policy of the leadership of the Democratic Party, through Charles Mannatt, the chairman of the Democratic Party, in August 1983.

Through the "Bush-league" part of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party, the issue of the SDI was kept out of the 1984 primary and general election campaigns, except for my televised and other addresses as a candidate during that period, until the second so-called debate between Reagan and Mondale in 1984. And after that, generally, after 1984, though Reagan remained committed to some version or approximation of the SDI, the creature was essentially dead as an active option thereafter, even though some development was going on.

But the Soviet government, which had already been assured by the Democrats and others that there was no chance of my proposal being adopted by the Reagan administration in the first place, was convinced that there was a large-scale

secret program for the SDI's development and progress, and that I was the evil genius behind this. To judge from the Soviet press accounts, they refused to believe any disclaimers from the U.S. State Department and others to the effect that I was *not* on the inside, somehow, of the U.S. intelligence or military or whatever circles.

That is the sum and the substance of the matter. That is how I came to jail. There were many other factors involved, many other issues, but they all cohere with this one, and this was the reason why I went to prison.

Certain things ought to be learned about the present circumstances from this particular bit of history. First of all, we are dealing with a situation where, according to the Soviet press and others, my imprisonment represented a situation in which one person, as the representative of a movement, but one person otherwise, had become virtually classified as a potential *casus belli* in the relationship between two thermo-nuclear superpowers. That in itself says something about the nature of the history of the 1980s, and also history today. This tells us, implicitly, that we must search for an explanation and a complete re-thinking of recent politics, of recent relations among states, to reflect this fact.

In what kind of a universe could this occur? What is the nature of the universe? What is *so significant* in my personal functioning as the *primus inter pares* of a small movement, that could give me such global importance as this? What was really going on, globally, behind the scenes (or should I say,