

Where McFarlane misses the boat

by Edward Spannaus

Special Trust

by Robert C. McFarlane and Zofia Smardz
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The first part of this review, published last week, concerned Robert McFarlane's assessment of Oliver North, who was a staffer at the National Security Council while McFarlane was deputy assistant for national security affairs (1982-83), and then assistant to the President for national security affairs (1983-85).

Here we will look at a few other aspects of McFarlane's government career, which began as a second lieutenant in the Marine Corps in 1959, included service in Vietnam, and then alternated between the military and the White House, until his resignation as national security adviser in December 1985. In 1973, McFarlane became an assistant to Henry Kissinger in the Nixon White House. The fundamental problem with McFarlane's strategic perspective on foreign policy is illustrated by two points he makes. First, McFarlane says that before he went to work for Henry Kissinger, he had read every book and article Kissinger had written. It obviously affected his judgment, for he then wrote about Henry: "His work is without peer: exhaustive in its scholarship, rigorous in its analysis, elevated in its language, visionary in its thinking. He is a giant intellect, and the preeminent strategist of his generation."

Then McFarlane got to know Kissinger, by working in his office. He found Kissinger to be "demanding and dogmatic," and "a man who did not tolerate rational argument with temperance or any measure of good grace." Further, Kissinger was "distrustful, hypocritical, routinely dishonest and abusive to his friends." "He is an extremely vain man, apparently without solid spiritual anchors." Working with such a conspiratorial man, McFarlane found it hard "to maintain my moral compass."

While he found Kissinger's personality and his methods disgusting, McFarlane does not seem to ever question the British geopolitical thinking which Kissinger professes. McFarlane criticizes the British on specific issues—e.g., Margaret Thatcher for her complaining about the U.S. inva-

sion of Grenada, and for her attacks on the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI)—but he never draws any distinction between U.S. and British strategic interests.

The confines within which McFarlane tends to approach foreign policy are suggested by the following. While discussing his approach early in the Reagan administration, he comments: "History tells us that no President can expect to achieve more than one or two significant foreign policy goals in a four-year period."

Yet, to the surprise of many, President Clinton has already achieved a number of notable successes in foreign policy: the Middle East peace breakthroughs, the Northern Ireland cease-fire, and the establishment of a strategic alliance with Germany oriented toward the economic development of eastern Europe. What has made these possible is that Clinton did something that Reagan or Bush never dreamed of, and which is probably Kissinger's worst nightmare: Clinton broke the "special relationship" with the British, which has dominated and controlled U.S. foreign policy for the past three decades, if not for much longer.

Of particular interest to readers of *EIR* is McFarlane's recounting of the fight around the Strategic Defense Initiative. Whether from ignorance or by deliberately selective use of the facts, McFarlane portrays himself as initiating the discussion around the SDI during 1982. McFarlane writes that, recognizing the fallacies of the "deterrence" concept and the drawbacks of the arms-control approach, he went to John Poindexter, then the military assistant to National Security Adviser William Clark, and asked Poindexter to get an assessment of the current state of technology for strategic defensive systems. Poindexter then went to Adm. James Watkins, then Chief of Naval Operations, and came back with a highly optimistic report on advances in computational speech and directed energy systems. McFarlane says that he, Poindexter, and Watkins then launched the drive for the SDI in January 1983, which led to President Reagan's announcement of the program on March 23, 1983.

What McFarlane fails to acknowledge is that he came in on a process that had already been ongoing for some time. Much of the initiative for this came from Lyndon LaRouche and his collaborators; there are many former officials of the Reagan administration who know (if McFarlane doesn't) precisely the role played by LaRouche in catalyzing the SDI discussion, in conducting back-channel discussions with the Soviets on the issue, and in uniquely proposing what became Reagan's version of the SDI program—one based on the offer of technology-sharing and cooperation with the Soviets.

McFarlane does provide some useful details on the role played by British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher in trying to sabotage the SDI program and arm-twisting Reagan to abandon it. Among other things, Thatcher retailed the Soviet arguments that the SDI appeared to constitute a first-strike capability and was therefore "destabilizing" to the international strategic balance.