
Jeffrey Steinberg

History of the SDI and Implications for Today

Thank you, Helga. It's a pleasure and an honor to be here today, on this occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Reagan SDI speech.

Thirty years ago today, President Ronald Reagan changed the world by delivering the following brief message at the close of his nationwide television address:

“In recent months, ... my advisors ... have underscored the necessity to break out of a future that relies solely on offensive retaliation for our security. Over the course of these discussions, I have become more and more deeply convinced that the human spirit must be capable of rising above dealing with other nations and human beings by threatening their existence.... Wouldn't it be better to save lives than to avenge them? Are we not capable of demonstrating our peaceful intentions by applying all our abilities and our ingenuity to achieving a truly lasting stability? I think we are—indeed we must!

“After careful consultation with my advisors, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I believe there is a

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way. Let me share with you a vision of the future which offers hope. It is that we embark on a program to counter the awesome Soviet missile threat with measures that are defensive. Let us turn to the very strengths in technology that spawned our great industrial base.... What if free people could live secure in the knowledge that their security did not rest upon the threat of instant U.S. retaliation to deter a Soviet attack; that we could intercept and destroy strategic ballistic missiles before they reach our own soil or that of our allies?... Isn't it worth every investment necessary to free the world from the threat of nuclear war? We know it is!...

"I clearly recognize that defensive systems have limitations and raise certain problems and ambiguities. If paired with offensive systems, they can be viewed as fostering an aggressive policy and no one wants that. But with these considerations firmly in mind, I call upon the scientific community in our country, those who gave us nuclear weapons, to turn their great talents now to the cause of mankind and world peace; to give us the means of rendering these nuclear weapons impotent and obsolete.... We seek neither military superiority nor political advantage. Our only purpose—one all people share—is to search for ways to reduce the danger of nuclear war.

"My fellow Americans, tonight we are launching an effort that holds the promise of changing the course of human history. There will be risks, and results take time, but I believe we can do it. As we cross this threshold, I ask for your prayers and your support."

LaRouche: Proud To Be an American

The following day, March 24, 1983, in a public statement issued from Wiesbaden, West Germany, Lyndon LaRouche offered his personal congratulations

and support to the President for his bold action. He also provided a forecast of the tough fight ahead, and the uncertainty of the outcome.

"No longer, LaRouche declared, "must Democrats go to bed each night fearing that they must live out their lives under the threat of thermonuclear ballistic terror. The coming several years will be probably the most difficult of the entire post-war period; but, for the first time since the end of the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis, there is, at last, hope that the thermonuclear nightmare will be ended during the remainder of this decade....

"Only high-level officials of government, or a private citizen as intimately knowledgeable of details of the international political and strategic situation as I am privileged to be, can even begin to foresee the Earth-shaking impact the President's television address last night will have throughout the world. No

one can foresee what the exact consequences of the President's actions will be; we cannot foresee how ferocious and stubborn resistance to the President's policy will be, both from Moscow, and from the nuclear freeze advocates in Europe and the United States itself. Whatever those reactions and their influence, the words the President spoke last night can never be put back into the bottle. Most of the world will soon know, and will never forget that policy announcement. With those words, the President has changed the course of modern history.

"Today I am prouder to be an American than I have been since the first manned landing on the Moon. For the first time in 20 years, a President of the United States has contributed a public action of great leadership, to give a new basis for hope for humanity's future to an agonized and demoralized world. True greatness in an American President touched President Ronald



Jeffrey Steinberg recounted the events leading up to President Reagan's announcement of the SDI, notably including Lyndon LaRouche's central role in bringing about that historic breakthrough.

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Reagan last night; it is a moment of greatness never to be forgotten.”

And so we're here, commemorating the 30th anniversary of those words. I think if any of you reflect on recent Presidential speeches, Obama, the Bushes, even Bill Clinton, you'll recognize that there's been, by comparison to the words spoken by President Reagan that night, nothing that has come close to a visionary idea, and certainly nobody has spoken in honest terms, about the need and idea of effecting a paradigm shift, to better the future for all mankind.

Now, only a small handful of policymakers in leading nations of the world, had even a glimpse of the significance of President Reagan's decision to announce what came to be known as the Strategic Defense Initiative. A far smaller number of people—Lyndon LaRouche, President Reagan, Dr. Edward Teller, National Security Advisor Judge William Clarke, and his deputy Richard Morris, Adm. Bobby Ray Inman, White House Counsel Edwin Meese—had *any idea* about the half-decade process of organizing that went into the decision.

Andropov's Moscow Rejects the Offer

Halfway around the world, in Moscow, President Reagan's words were greeted with shocking recognition, that the back-channel dialogue of the previous two years, involving the White House, elements of the U.S. intelligence community, LaRouche, and a select group of delegated Soviet officials, had actually come to fruition. In the course of that back-channel process, a British agent, Yuri Andropov, had come into power in the Soviet Union, and already delivered a message via LaRouche's Soviet interlocutor, Mr. Shershnev, back to the Reagan White House, that Moscow would reject Reagan's offer of collaboration on a new global missile defense shield, employing new-physical-principle technologies that both the Soviet Union and the United States had been exploring for more than a decade.

Indeed, the effort leading to President Reagan's SDI announcement, had been launched by LaRouche and others in the second half of the 1970s, when the former head of U.S. Air Force Intelligence, Gen. George Keegan, had revealed, in the May 2, 1977 issue of *Aviation Week* magazine, that Soviet scientists had made groundbreaking advances in nuclear-powered lasers that could lead to a revolution in strategic defense against nuclear weapons. The article, by Clarence Rob-

inson, was simply headlined, “Soviets Push for Beam Weapons.”

As the result of his successful efforts to prevent the Trilateral Commission-led Jimmy Carter Administration from launching a nuclear war confrontation with the Soviet Union, LaRouche had been approached by leading U.S. intelligence circles, including veterans of the wartime OSS, soliciting war-avoidance collaboration.

With that backing, LaRouche commissioned the immediate publication of a report, “Sputnik of the '70s: The Science Behind the Soviets' Beam Weapon.” With that publication, LaRouche launched an international campaign for beam defense, that culminated with President Reagan's March 23, 1983 landmark announcement of the SDI.

Now, time doesn't permit me to go through a blow-by-blow account of the scores of meetings that LaRouche held with Soviet diplomats and representatives of President Reagan's National Security Council, both before and after the President's March 23 bombshell. In fact, further documentation of this will be made available on the Schiller Institute website (<http://www.schillerinstitute.org/>) as part of these conference proceedings.

In hindsight, Premier Andropov's rejection of President Reagan's offer of collaboration, to establish a system of mutually assured survival—replacing the Bertrand Russell doctrine of thermonuclear blackmail known as mutually assured destruction, MAD, very appropriately—had nothing to do with the excuses delivered by the Soviet official, who had returned to Washington from Moscow in February, profoundly upset that the Soviet Union would not enter into the kind of collaboration with the United States, which had been the subject of months and months and months of private discussions, officially sanctioned by the Reagan White House. But, it had nothing to do with deficiencies in the Soviet economic system, or with the promise by Soviet fellow-travellers and radical environmentalist elements in both the Democratic and Republican Parties in the U.S., to kill off any genuine “star wars” collaborative program.

Collapse of the Soviet Union

Andropov was a longstanding British asset, like his successor Mikhail Gorbachov; and the British imperial faction, whose policy was hell-bent on mass population genocide, and the end of future scientific progress, was

as committed to killing the SDI, as they were to killing President John F. Kennedy, when he dared to launch the Apollo program and reject the Indo-China War track. There were never any legitimate American or Soviet strategic interests jeopardized by the proposal for mutually assured survival. The collaborative scientific and technological advances that would have come about from a joint American-Soviet SDI, were, in fact, in the vital national interests of both nations, and all allied nations around the world.

This science-driver principle had been elaborated by LaRouche and associates, in a whole series of policy papers and conferences, that had taken place in the course of the several years that the official back-channel effort between the Reagan White House and the Kremlin was going on.

The Andropov rejection, seconded by Gorbachov at an October 1986 summit meeting with President Reagan in Reykjavik, Iceland, in fact, sealed the fate of the Soviet Union, a reality that LaRouche foresaw between in 1984 and 1985. Faced with the added strains of a competitive *defensive* arms race, on top of a military quagmire in Afghanistan, which lasted until the end of the 1980s, the Warsaw Pact collapsed under the strain, beginning in Poland, then in East Germany, and ultimately bringing down the Soviet Union itself by the early 1990s.

By the middle of Reagan's second term, the original LaRouche-Teller-Reagan SDI had been internally sabotaged and fundamentally altered, largely through the efforts of Wall Street factions within the U.S. military-industrial think-tank complex, who fought to reduce the SDI effort to off-the-shelf kinetic systems that could never do the job of assured strategic defense. They also sought to cut out the essence of SDI, which was strategic collaboration for a higher purpose for mankind, between the United States and the Soviet Union, which was the essence and the core commitment of both LaRouche and Reagan, and that was essential nature of SDI: war-avoidance through mutual cooperation for the benefit of all of mankind.

Now, while the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union collapsed rapidly, as the result of the rejection of SDI, the trans-Atlantic economies, including the United States, went into a prolonged process of physical-economic disintegration, and monetary hyperinflation, a process that has now reached a breaking point, that will be addressed in its own terms during the afternoon panel today.

A Strategic Defense of Earth

The kind of international Manhattan Project-style crash effort to develop and deploy a global shield against thermonuclear weapons, envisioned by LaRouche and Reagan, never materialized. But over the course of the intervening 30 years, dramatic advances have been gradually achieved in every area of strategic defense science, as the result of the 1970s and '80s LaRouche-Teller-Reagan efforts; a strategic defense shield, as envisioned at the outset, is now more within reach than ever before. The same essential technologies at the heart of SDI, are also required for the development of a Strategic Defense of the Earth, which recent asteroid and meteor events have now made an urgent matter of survival for all of mankind.

The theme of this conference, is the urgent need to change the paradigm of thinking, from one that will lead to doom, to a new thinking that can lead to centuries of peace and prosperity. Look around the world today: Look at the looming danger of a thermonuclear arms race, or worse, in North Asia; look at the threat of a confrontation over *alleged* nuclear weapons proliferation in the Persian Gulf; look at the deep conflict between Washington and Moscow over the U.S. plans to deploy a *unilateral* defense shield in Europe, exactly the opposite, of what the intentions were of LaRouche, Reagan, Teller, and others.

The Russian leadership understands that this program is directed against their own nuclear deterrent, meaning that there is a greater threat of a nuclear confrontation now, than perhaps at any point since the Cuban Missile Crisis.

Are we doomed, to continue down a path of certain conflict and potential extermination? Or, can we, at this late date, reach back to a moment of great opportunity 30 years ago, when the potential for mutually assured survival offered mankind a way out of the present path to Hell? Can we reach into the humanity of key leaders, in Washington and Moscow and other world capitals, and revive the great vision spelled out by an American President 30 years ago today? Can the power of ideas, and the principles of mankind's creative gift, bring about the paradigm shift that is an urgent order of business that brings us here, today? I believe the answer is yes, and I believe it's going to take an enormous amount of hard work to achieve it. But that we're at a critical moment now, where the future of civilization depends on our being able to affirmatively demonstrate that principle. Thank you.