

THE
HAWK
AND THE
DOVE

PAUL NITZE, GEORGE KENNAN,
AND THE HISTORY OF THE COLD WAR
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PROLOGUE

On February 17, 1984, Paul Nitze decided that the arms race could wait. For the past two and a half years, he had led the negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union. But on this day, he left that grave work in the early afternoon to dress in black tie and hop on a train to Princeton, New Jersey.

He was heading north to attend the eightieth-birthday party of a man who was both a close friend and a bitter rival: George Kennan. Nitze had been Kennan's deputy on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff in the late 1940s, and the two had worked together on some of the most important issues the country ever faced. They tried to reverse the partition of Germany; they helped write the Marshall Plan; they advised Harry Truman on whether to build a hydrogen bomb. And then, for thirty-five years, they had disagreed profoundly on the direction the country should take. Even at this moment, each believed that the other's desired policies could lead the United States to the ultimate catastrophe.

Nitze arrived just in time to join the sixty other friends, colleagues, children, and grandchildren at the celebration. After dinner ended, he stood up slowly and raised his glass to give a toast. "Among those born after 1904, I know of no one who has been more fortunate in his bosses than have I," he said. He then listed a series of remarkable mentors and what he had learned from each of them.

Soon he turned to the real center of attention: the taller, thinner,

balder man celebrating his birthday. Kennan had just published a long article in the *New Yorker* and was hard at work on his seventeenth book, this one about the Franco-Russian alliance of 1894. An immensely complicated individual, he was revered both as one of the men who had started the Cold War and as the one most determined to end it.

Nitze continued gracefully. "George Kennan taught us to approach the issues of policy, not just from the narrow immediate interest of the United States, but from a longer-range viewpoint that included the cultures and interests of others, including our opponents, and a proper regard for the opinions of mankind.

"George has, no doubt, often doubted the aptness of his pupil. But the warmth of his and Annelise's friendship for Phyllis and for me has never faltered," said Nitze, referring to his and Kennan's wives.

"I extend my appreciation, gratitude and thanks to George, who has been a teacher and an example for close to forty years."

The guests clinked their glasses and cheered. It was one of the tensest periods of the arms race: just three months ago, Nitze's arms talks had collapsed in a way that many people thought would invite war; one week ago, the KGB veteran who had been running the Soviet Union had died. But this was a moment for two old friends, not for the quiet but ever-present terror that colored these years.

Kennan rose to respond: the main lesson he had learned from Nitze, he said, was that, when one disagreed with government, "it may be best to soldier on, and to do what one can to make the things you believe in come out right."

That evening, another guest asked Nitze how he and Kennan had remained friends despite their vast differences on issues of national security. Nitze smiled and responded that he had never had any difference with George "except over matters of substance."

PAUL NITZE and George Kennan were the only two people to be deeply involved in American foreign policy from the outset of the Cold War until its end. They had come to prominence in the tumultuous days that followed the Second World War when Germany was divided and the Soviet Union turned from ally into enemy. They immersed themselves in the great questions and events to come: the Marshall Plan, Korea, the ever more dangerous arms race, Vietnam, détente, SALT, glasnost. They

stepped offstage only when Germany reunited and the Soviet Union dissolved.

The two men were equally influential and equally important, yet vastly different. Nitze was the diligent insider, Kennan the wise outsider; Nitze the doer, Kennan the thinker. Kennan designed America's policy for the Cold War, and Nitze mastered it. With respect to America's ability to shape the world, Nitze was an idealist and Kennan a realist. In their old age, Nitze still wanted to win the Cold War, and Kennan wanted to be done with it. Their views overlapped at strange and crucial moments; but for most of their working lives, they disagreed profoundly. In the *New Yorker* article published just before his eightieth-birthday party, Kennan had indirectly criticized Nitze—who marked the piece up vigorously and also sent a letter to a mutual friend complaining that the argument showed a "complete separation from fact and logic."

Nitze was the hawk. When the United States and the Soviet Union built up their terrifying weapon stockpiles soon after World War II, he argued that the best way to avoid a nuclear clash was to prepare to win one. If you want peace, prepare for war. More than any other American, Nitze gave shape to the arms race. Kennan came up with the word *containment* that was used more than any other to describe America's Cold War policy. But he saw it as a political strategy for combating a political threat. Nitze defined the word the way it was really used: as a military strategy for combating a military threat.

Nitze's strengths were his organizational skills, his commitment to logic, and his endurance. Few people knew more about weaponry and few people were able to gain as many allies in different parts of Washington. He worked for, or consulted with, every president from FDR to George H. W. Bush. He even impressed his adversaries with his ability to absorb facts and make arguments about nuclear arms. "Nitze was a god," said Aleksandr Savelyev, one of his Soviet negotiating counterparts. "Just not our god."

Nitze never, however, learned how to manage his superiors: he ended up personally alienating six of those ten presidents. Fired, demoted, or forced to resign so many times that he lost count, Nitze never became either secretary of state or secretary of defense, although he often seemed to deserve both posts. Still, no failure or rejection ever made him sulk for long or disappear. "Presidents came and went. But every year there was Paul Nitze," said George Shultz, the secretary of state under Ronald Reagan.

Kennan was the dove. For forty years, he argued that America must end its dependence on nuclear weapons. If you want peace, act peacefully. During almost every military conflict from the Korean War through the Iraq War that began in 2003, he argued for forbearance.

Kennan was a brilliant writer: his histories earned the publishing world's highest prizes, and his memoirs offer one of the finest sketches of America in the first half of the twentieth century. He objected to the arms race—and NATO, the UN, the Korean War, the Eisenhower administration, the Vietnam War, the student movement of the 1960s, the Carter administration, the Reagan administration, and American policy at the very end of the Cold War—with an eloquence that even his steadfast enemies respected.

He also had an uncanny ability to predict many of the great events of his lifetime. When the Cold War was just beginning, he foresaw how it would end. He immediately understood that splitting Germany and creating NATO would harden the division of Europe. In 1949, he astutely predicted how the nuclear arms race would unfold. He foresaw the Sino-Soviet split and grasped, very early, the flaws in America's strategy in Vietnam.

These keen powers of perception, however, were married with profound vulnerability. Minor slights sent Kennan into deep despair. His last government job ended in failure when he resigned after a trivial setback. If Nitze treated wounds as scratches, Kennan felt scratches as wounds.

Neither of these idiosyncratic and original men conformed exactly to the hawk and dove labels, of course. Yes, Nitze drove the arms race. And he always believed that the Cold War was a series of moments of urgent peril in which the United States must display strength. But if he spent 90 percent of his career raising tensions, he spent the other 10 percent—the moments when actual conflict loomed and he was helping to shape the consequential decisions—lowering them. He tried to halt the Korean War and then helped stop it from spreading. He tried, early on, to extricate the United States from Vietnam. No one worked harder during the Reagan years to broker major arms deals with the Soviets.

Kennan, for his part, was a dove with hidden talons. He helped set up the CIA and later advised it. He worked closely with the FBI. His views on social issues and the value of democracy were those of a pterodactyl. Early on, he advocated standing up firmly to the Soviets. Though terrified of nuclear weapons, he took pride in not being a pacifist and he recom-

mended declaring war against Iran after rioters seized the American embassy in 1979.

DESPITE THESE MANY differences, Kennan and Nitze were warm friends throughout the Cold War. And that lasting friendship has inspired this book.

Nitze was my grandfather, and I remember well his receipt of a letter in 1999 from his old colleague. Nitze was ninety-two years old then, Kennan ninety-five. I was a twenty-four-year-old journalist and had just moved to Washington, D.C. My grandfather was old and frail but, that November, we spent a lovely evening playing bridge and having dinner with friends of his. He, as always, dressed in a jacket and tie and enjoyed a glass or two of red wine. At some point during the evening, he said he wanted to read a letter.

On October 28, he had published an op-ed in the *New York Times* titled "A Threat Mostly to Ourselves," in which he declared that the United States had no more need for the arsenal he had spent his life building and studying. "I see no compelling reason why we should not unilaterally get rid of our nuclear weapons," Nitze wrote. "To maintain them is costly and adds nothing to our security."

The letter in response was equally simple and heartfelt. "Dear Paul: Warmest congratulations on your recent *New York Times* article, with every word of which I agree," wrote Kennan. "In the light of our longstanding friendship and mutual respect, it is a source of deep satisfaction to me to find the two of us, at our advanced ages, in complete accord on questions that have meant so much to each of us, even when we did not fully agree, in times gone by."

Nitze smiled and laughed as he read it. Later, as we said good-bye, I remarked on the elegance of Kennan's prose. "Yes, George could always write brilliantly," reflected my grandfather, seeming to pause on the word "write" as if to suggest what it left out. "He really could."

His memory, already failing, would decline rapidly in the years ahead. I never talked in depth with him about Kennan, but I remembered that letter five years later, when both men died. Their passings came just six months apart, which seemed fitting. Soon thereafter, I began to investigate their lives and to attempt to discover how their contradictory influences shaped a struggle for the world. My research revealed two very different

men who nonetheless shared a commitment to the United States and to their very different ways of serving it. As Alexander Bessmertnykh, a Soviet foreign minister who worked across from each of them at different points during the Cold War, said to me, "They both were great in their own gardens."

What follows is a story about friends, but not about friendship. The pair attended each other's birthday parties and family weddings. They often inspired or enraged each other with their ideas. But the letter in 1999 was a rare one. There are no piles of correspondence or transcripts of personal conversations. They were good friends but not best friends; perhaps if they had been closer, they would have fallen out.

They did, however, greatly respect each other and admire each other's seriousness of purpose, demeanor, and dedication. They realized they shared an uncommon endurance. They also shared a similar fate: neither reached his ultimate ambitions, while many lesser men reached the positions of influence to which they both aspired.

Most important, they represented two great strains of American thought during the second half of the twentieth century. And perhaps they realized something I came to believe as I worked on this book: one can understand much of the story of the United States during the Cold War by examining the often parallel, and sometimes perpendicular, lives of Paul Nitze and George Kennan.

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NOW IS THE TIME TO LIVE

Surrounded by chaos, George Kennan remained calm. He stood on the balcony of the American embassy in Moscow, gazing down on the wild celebration below. Women in headscarves danced, screamed, and hugged one another. Men in big lumpy jackets raised their arms and passed each other through the air. Kennan's nine-year-old daughter, Joan, pranced about on the balcony, tossing candy down to the celebrants. Starved of sugar for the last few years, people lunged up to catch the Life Savers and Necco Wafers.

It was May 9, 1945, just after American and Soviet troops met in Berlin, together snuffing out the last noxious flames of Nazism. Four years before, invading German forces had pressed up against the very outskirts of Moscow. But the Red Army had held the city, and then gradually begun to push the Wehrmacht back. For the last two years, the Soviets had steadily marched west, with the government marking each victory by firing salutes over Moscow. The bigger the victory, the bigger the salvo. In recent months, Muscovites had followed their soldiers' progress by counting the shots exploding gloriously into the night sky.

As word of the capitulation spread, Soviet citizens had swarmed toward the American embassy, a five-story building just across Red Square from the Kremlin. By early morning on a cloudless day, thousands of people were standing out front, cheering. America had helped defeat the Germans and it had supplied wartime Russia with everything from Spam

to Studebakers. "Now is the time to live," declared a Russian officer deep in the crowd. "Boy, oh boy," mused a young American corporal, "if I'd played post office every day until I got into the army, I wouldn't have been kissed as many times as I've been kissed today."

Amid the frenzy, Kennan remained more pensive than passionate. The door now opening led to a very uncertain future. Old Europe had dominated the world for centuries. Now, two countries from beyond Europe's borders—a former British colony separated by an ocean and a neighbor long considered backward—had joined hands at the center of the continent. From this moment on, everything began anew.

Kennan, a student of history, understood that the future depended on who won the peace, not only on who had won the war. The communists in Russia had been a small, isolated group of pamphleteers before grabbing power in the mayhem of 1917. "The aftermaths of wars are the decisive moments of foreign policy," he had written his sister two years earlier.

It is here, in the fields of broken ice, that the lines are drawn which endure—depending on the wisdom with which they are selected—anywhere from a generation to a century. And it is naturally the victors to whom these opportunities present themselves. This is the second great chance we have had. We muffed the first. If we muff this, too, can we be sure that we will be given a third?

With the ambassador away, Kennan, the deputy chief of mission, was the most senior diplomat present. Terrified that the masses might carry him off on their shoulders or toss him in the air, he eventually began waving from the balcony. Then, as the crowd continued to surge and grow, he decided he really had to do something more. He walked downstairs and stepped gingerly out onto the pedestal of one of the great columns in front of the building.

FORTY-ONE YEARS OLD in the spring of 1945, George Frost Kennan stood about six feet tall. He dressed in a gray or black three-piece suit, wore a felt fedora, and stood straight. He had already lost much of his hair, which helped to give him a dignified and weathered look. When deep in contemplation, which was much of the time, he would draw his eyebrows

together narrowly. The feature everyone noticed first was his eyes: a bright but pale blue—to many friends, an index of the intensity of the thought behind them.

He liked to take long walks through the countryside, and he liked to sketch, always in black and white, because he was colorblind. Everything in his life was ordered and neat: he kept every tool he owned in exactly the right place and always wrote his thank-you notes on Christmas Day. He enjoyed making things with his hands, and he loved telling stories to his daughter, Joan, the nine-year-old on the balcony. At night, he would regale her with tales about two pixies named Tim and Bell and their droopy-eared cocker spaniel, Uncle Zachariah. He made up these stories as he went, always ending in a way that made her want to hear more.

He felt deeply; he observed deeply; he saw every event as an opportunity to train his mind. Disciplined in the extreme, he believed that outward order, created by staying in control of his actions and his attire, could offset inner turmoil. And of the latter there was much. Kennan despairing for his country and for himself. To his friends, he appeared perpetually worried. Throughout his life, he kept a dark and somber diary, entering a world of literary self-flagellation even on days when he appeared cheery. When traveling alone, instead of calling ahead to find a good restaurant, he would wait until the last minute, rush out to the most miserable-looking place in the neighborhood, and then complain about the food.

Kennan felt an almost karmic connection to the Soviet Union. An older relative, also named George Kennan, had explored Russia in the late nineteenth century and written popular books criticizing the czarism and describing life in Siberia. The younger Kennan would often say that he felt like a reincarnation of the traveler: his birthday, he would point out, February 16, 1904, fell fifty-nine years to the day after his namesake's.

Soon after joining the Foreign Service, Kennan had begun to study the Soviet Union. He began working in the American embassy in Moscow when it opened in 1933, after the United States normalized relations with the Communist government. He stayed until 1937 and returned in 1944. He traveled extensively, studied the Soviet economy, and read much of Russia's classical literature. He started writing a book on Chekhov, though he never finished it. He spoke better formal Russian than Stalin, whose thick Georgian accent was hard for many Muscovites to understand.

Living abroad, Kennan missed the events that transformed America during his early adult years: the Great Depression, the New Deal, and the mobilization for World War II. His distance from his homeland was matched by his closeness to this new place. "As always Russia seems something poignantly familiar and significant to me—as though I had lived here in childhood, and I react intensely to everything I see and hear," he wrote upon his return to Moscow in 1944. "It gave me an indescribable sort of satisfaction to feel myself back again in the midst of these people—with their tremendous pulsating warmth and vitality. I sometimes feel that I would rather be sent to Siberia among them . . . than to live on Park Avenue among our own stuffy folk."

These warm feelings extended only to the people and the landscape, and only to the boundaries of Russia proper. For the Soviet government, and for communism, Kennan had nothing but contempt. Having worked as Ambassador Joseph Davies's interpreter during the purge trials of the 1930s, Stalin's first effort to exterminate everyone who might have ever had an independent or counterrevolutionary thought, Kennan saw through the dictator's madness and demonic suspicion. Stalin, in turn, was aware of the young American and his opinions.

During World War II, Kennan watched Moscow squeeze its supposed allies whenever it could. In the months leading up to the exultation in Red Square, he tried desperately to warn Washington that the Soviet Union was gobbling up eastern Europe and absorbing lands with every right to independence. Poland—an ally of the United States and Russia and an early victim of the Nazis—was a particular concern. Kennan was certain that the Soviet Union was behind the massacre of nearly five thousand Polish officers in the Katyn Forest early in the war. In 1944, the Soviets had refused to give aid after the Polish resistance rose up against the Germans in Warsaw; more frustratingly to Kennan, Moscow even refused to allow the United States the use of a base in Ukraine to help deliver arms to the resistance. It seemed clear to Kennan that Moscow intended to turn postwar Poland into a communist vassal state, not one run by democrats or friends of the West. "Soviet political aims in Europe are not, in the main, consistent with the happiness, prosperity or stability of international life on the rest of the continent," Kennan wrote his friend Charles Bohlen, then Franklin Roosevelt's interpreter, in January 1945.

No matter how anxious he felt as delight engulfed the Moscow streets on May 9, Kennan was still the ranking American in the capital. He had

to respond to this outpouring somehow. He stood upon the pedestal: deeply hostile to the government, devoted to the people, and terrified that some epic clash was looming between a country he had learned to love and the country he served. The crowd quieted and looked up; his daughter stopped tossing the candy and peeked over at her father.

"Congratulations on the day of victory," shouted Kennan. "All honor to the Soviet allies." The crowd screamed riotously, and he darted back inside.

THAT SAME DAY, another fast-rising student of international affairs sat in his office in Grosvenor Square, London. He was exhausted, having spent the previous days racing around the German front. But the winding down of the war meant the acceleration of his job. And he would soon get an urgent message—to his mind, the best he could possibly receive.

Thirty-eight-year-old Paul Henry Nitze was one of the directors of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey, an organization charged with investigating the effectiveness of the Allied bombardment of German industry. Ground troops had dominated past wars, but many people believed that airpower would win the wars of the future. Nitze's job was to draw the strategic lessons from this conflict.

Nitze stood a wiry five foot nine and three-quarters. What everyone noticed first was his intensity: the pencil ripping through paper as he took notes, the constant motion, the desire to break every problem apart and reassemble it as a series of neatly ordered lists. He grasped concepts quickly; he gave orders well and carried them out exactly; he seemed to need little sleep. Even when ostensibly relaxing at home, he would stay up late talking, eating, and drinking but then get up at four A.M. to read. He delighted in the origin of his last name. "Nitze," he liked to assert, comes from the same root as the Greek word *nike*, "and the Greek word *nike* means 'victory.'"

He dressed with haste, but always in a fine suit and often in elegant suspenders. Although he was perpetually a bit ruffled, he gave the impression of a man with excellent taste who had more important things on his mind. (A burglar once cleaned out his closet and passed up everything else in the house.) When at home, he would begin his days by practicing Bach on the piano. After work, he would return and mix a martini for himself, judging the gin and vermouth ratio according to, he claimed,

a finely calibrated sense of sound. He loved to meet new people. "PHN collects people," his wife wrote, "as some collect butterflies."

An economist by training, Nitze had spent the 1930s working as an investment banker (and learning that one can make money even when an economy collapses). He had moved from Wall Street to Washington as the Panzers rumbled through France in the early summer of 1940. He spent much of the next five years at the State Department, mainly working to obtain strategic minerals from South America. But in May 1945, as the cease-fire sounded, he was flying back and forth between London and the front lines, carrying a pistol. His noncombatant ID for that period shows a haggard figure, bow tie slightly askew.

He had come to the USSBS through a back door. In the fall of 1944, an old family friend, Colonel Guido Perera, mentioned that he was helping to start up this new organization. A few days later, Nitze got into a fierce argument with his boss at the Foreign Economic Administration, Leo Crowley, over a group of people Nitze had "borrowed" from elsewhere in the State Department to help on a project. The fight ended with Nitze resigning and Crowley hollering that if he quit now the younger man would never again work in a Democratic administration. Nitze strode out, hopped in a cab, and headed to Perera's USSBS offices at the Pentagon. As he liked to tell the story, he had another job within two hours of Crowley's threat.

Just as Russia had special meaning for Kennan, so did Germany for Nitze. Both his grandfathers had been born there, he learned the language as a child, and his parents identified strongly with its intellectual traditions and culture. The Nitzes had been in Germany when World War I broke out; seven-year-old Paul had watched from a hotel window in Munich while people lined the sides of the central road to cheer the first soldiers marching off to the front. His father pinned a small American flag on the boy's clothes so that no one would mistake him for a Brit. At fifteen, Paul worked in the engine room of a ship that traveled across the Atlantic to Germany. He returned in 1929, delightfully exploring Berlin and the countryside by bicycle with a new friend named Alexander Calder. In spring 1937, he had cruised through the country with his wife in a Ford Model T. As an adult, Nitze found much pleasure in Beethoven, Wagner, Goethe, and Hegel. The culture of the fallen Kaiser Reich was to be admired and honored, and his USSBS work was thus much more than a means to analyze the effects of the Allied bombing; it was part of a quest to understand what had deformed the country of his roots.

Nitze's job in early May of 1945 was to track down the surviving leaders of the Third Reich, particularly those who could assess the effectiveness of the air campaign. Nitze was coordinating a series of teams dashing about countrywide, measuring bomb crater depths and rounding up enemy technocrats. He would join his men for interrogations, when not journeying through the ruins himself, and then return to headquarters to report back.

And this day, as he worked in London, he got an urgent message. Two of his people poking through makeshift offices in northern Germany had found a door marked "Speer," gone inside, and waited. About an hour later, an elegant man walked in and declared that, yes, he was indeed Reichminister Albert Speer—the man known as Hitler's architect. Speer probably knew more than anyone else about what the raids had accomplished, and now he was in Nitze's hands.

ALBERT SPEER HAD JOINED the Nazis out of misplaced idealism and optimism, not boiling hatred. An energetic young storm trooper, he caught Hitler's eye in 1933 and became the Führer's luncheon partner. From then on, each step forward meant one deeper into darkness. Soon he earned the task of designing the structures appropriate for a Thousand-Year Reich. His statues would out-tower the Statue of Liberty; his arches would dwarf the Arc de Triomphe; history, he hoped, would rank his buildings far above those of the pharaohs. His personality matched his creations: cold and technocratic, overwhelming and overbearing.

In 1942, Speer became the Reich's minister of armaments. For the next three years, he would maniacally, and brilliantly, manage steel shipments, railroad tracks, and components for V-2 missiles. As German production somehow kept going under the rain of bombs, Speer began to earn a reputation as a wartime genius: a master of detail who could somehow increase Germany's fighter aircraft production even after the Allies had destroyed all the plants along with the ball-bearing factories that fed them. Speer was a worthy enemy, the West decided. His black magic explained how Germany had resisted for so long.

But in May 1945, the towering enemy had crumbled. Hitler had spent most of the past year living in a damp underground bunker, receiving daily injections of sulfides and other toxins that he considered panaceas, even as they slowly mottled his skin and rotted his mind. As the Russians

and Americans closed in, he demanded one last round of death, calling for the heads of his brother-in-law, his old surgeon, and other newfound "traitors." Then he put a pistol in his mouth while his wife of twenty-four hours poisoned herself next to him on their sofa.

With Hitler dead and the war over, Speer knew the role he would have to play to survive: the man of all-knowing competence. Germany was full of besotted men who had once held great power and who either defied their captors or were merely too hungover to be of much use as informants. The Allies could capture them, interrogate them, learn nothing, and have no reason to keep them alive. Speer would be affable, charming, and indispensable.

The interrogation took place in Glücksburg Castle, a beautiful moated Renaissance structure near the Danish frontier. Nitze and his colleagues, including the future UN ambassador George Ball and the future renowned writer on economics John Kenneth Galbraith, stayed on a boat in the harbor. They spent the mornings preparing questions and then arrived at the *Schloss* each afternoon around two. Speer would sit on a low settee, hands locked around one knee, in a small room furnished in red and gold brocade. As he listened to the questions, he would lean forward a bit. When answering, he would rock gently back and forth, always calm and confident. The one rational man in the utterly irrational system was telling his tale. Speer's insights and information were exactly what the Strategic Bombing Survey needed.

Commanding an awe-inspiring knowledge of the German war machine, he brought the whole dreaded system to life with detail. American bombs had been less effective than British bombs but more intelligently targeted. Attacks on basic infrastructure, such as chemical plants, had most worried Speer—worried him so much, indeed, that he argued against putting other targets underground. "I wanted to continue to offer you finished armaments production as a target so that you would not get the idea of destroying our industries producing basic materials which could only exist above ground."

He sounded at times like a coach who knew he outclassed the fellow on the other sideline and would have won if only he had better players. He never paused. He never evaded. He was never at a loss for words. He reviewed each American attack to explain why it had not done as much damage as it should have. "The second visible attempt at economic de-

said during one session. "In this case it was a mistake on your part that you attacked the airframe production for so many months and not the production of motors." It was not long before the captured man began to cast a spell over his interrogators. Ball later recalled that Speer "evoked in us a sympathy of which we were all secretly ashamed."

One day, the survey investigators arrived to find Speer's secretary in tears. Her boss had technically been free, but that morning unknown men had seized him and taken him away. Perhaps they were remnants of the Gestapo? But, no: soon Speer arrived, calm as ever, to explain that another American intelligence unit had taken him, not realizing he was already working with the USSBS. "We were always having worse mix-ups than that under Hitler," he joked.

After more than a week of grueling discussion of German armaments, Nitze got a message from one of his superiors: "Paul, if you've got any further things you want to find out from Speer you'd better get him tomorrow." The day after that, Speer would be arrested. Nitze thought it over and decided he had enough dry details about Nazi factories.

The next afternoon, the team quizzed Speer about the inner workings of the Third Reich—the lives of Hitler, Göring, Himmler, and the rest of the Nazi high command. The story he told was astonishing. Germany had lost the war, Speer claimed, because the leaders were soft, drunken womanizers, entirely ignorant of the happenings on the front lines. Appropriately, their final crucial decisions were made inside an underground bunker where even the air had to be pumped in. Speer portrayed himself as the one countervailing force. He had not succumbed to greed during the glory days, or to vengefulness during *Götterdämmerung*. At the very end, he had countermanded Hitler's orders for a scorched-earth retreat—this, he claimed, he did out of loyalty to the German people and the German future, not disloyalty to the Führer. He had even returned to meet with Hitler in the bunker one last time, sneaking into Berlin as the rest of his former colleagues scattered.

The final interrogation ended at four-thirty a.m. The Americans told Speer to go home and get a good night's sleep. A couple of hours later, tanks rolled up to Glücksburg Castle and troops carrying submachine guns and hand grenades dashed in. "So now the end has come," Speer remarked, surrendering. "That's good. It was all only kind of an opera anyway."

GEORGE KENNAN KNEW Germany almost as well as Nitze did. He had grown up in Milwaukee, one of America's most Germanic cities, and lived briefly in the country at age eight. He learned the language, returned as a young Foreign Service officer, and then worked in Berlin after his first posting to Moscow. When the United States entered the war, he was serving in the American embassy in Berlin. When news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor came one night over shortwave radio, he helped burn all the embassy's codes and secret documents.

The Nazis soon rounded up Kennan and his colleagues and sent them for what turned out to be five months' internment in Bad Nauheim: a well-known spa with mineral springs, where FDR had summered in the 1890s; the Americans were confined in a rather pleasant place known as Jeschke's Grand Hotel. Kennan's friends there remembered him fondly for the historical lectures he gave and the way he negotiated with the German captors over subjects like rations and the loudness with which the Gestapo played Ping-Pong. He even played catcher on one of the pickup baseball teams. But the detainees were isolated; they were not contacted by their government and they had no idea when their imprisonment would end. Until his release in May 1942, Annelise Kennan did not know where her husband was.

With the war over, Kennan wanted to find the opposition figures he had met while in the country, particularly a man named Helmuth von Moltke. On May 10, the day after the outpouring in Red Square, Kennan wrote to a colleague in the Foreign Service inquiring about the whereabouts of his old friend.

The two first met, secretly, in 1940. Von Moltke, a member of Germany's greatest military family, had been reading *The Federalist Papers*. He told Kennan he was seeking guidance for how his country should reconstitute itself after it inevitably lost the war—a comforting thought for the American at a time when the Wehrmacht seemed invincible. The war had now ended as von Moltke had foreseen. But Kennan had had no news of the man himself since 1941. Now he sought not just a friend but confirmation that Nazism had not infected all of Germany and that wise men who had resisted Hitler from the beginning had survived.

The big question for Germany was what would come next. The country that had driven two world wars in the past thirty years had descended into chaos. Its neighbors wanted to loot it, to break it apart, or to do

deformed. The U.S. government's Morgenthau Plan, which almost became official policy, called for "converting Germany into a country primarily agricultural and pastoral in its character."

Kennan, however, believed Germany needed U.S. aid and assistance; weak and abandoned, it would soon become a province of Moscow. The only solution was to divide the nation and try to make the western territories vigorous enough to resist Russian influence. A dismembered Germany, with the west as a buffer to the forces of totalitarianism, was preferable to a united Germany that could bring those forces to the North Sea.

To Kennan, this was just one of many lines that must be drawn through the map of Europe. The United States must split the world into "spheres of influence," he declared with resignation. We would maintain influence in western Europe; the Soviets could have eastern Europe. There was not much point in hoping for a belt of neutral countries down the middle of the continent: Russia would only gobble them up. "We should accept as an accomplished fact the complete partition of Germany along the line of the Russian zone of occupation," Kennan wrote.

Planning for the postwar world, of course, meant finding people who could run a respectable, competent western German government. And that was where von Moltke came in: he was the man who Kennan thought could best rule this new country.

Kennan's hopes were soon dashed. Von Moltke had survived the early years of the war, quietly hiding the depth of his opposition to Hitler even as he held secret meetings to plan for a post-Nazi Germany. But the Nazis had caught on and arrested him in January 1944. He had remained active in prison, smuggling out passionate letters about the future of Germany to his wife, Freya, who hid them in beehives in her garden. He survived a year, but the Allies did not defeat Germany fast enough. In January 1945, the "People's Court" of Nazi Germany condemned von Moltke to death.

His final letters describe the scene in vivid detail. He was like a journalist reporting his own execution, down to a sketch of where everyone at the trial sat. He was as cool as Speer, if in service to a greater cause. "My dear heart, first I must say that quite obviously the last 24 hours of a life are in no way different from any others. I always imagined that one would feel shock, that one would say to oneself: Now the sun sets for the last time for you," he wrote. "None of that is the case." He would go calmly, he said, feeling that God was on his side. His last letter read, "On the way to the

constitute a human being. We are, as I wrote a few days ago, symbolically created as one. That is true, literally true. Therefore, my love, I am certain that you will not lose me on this earth, not for a moment."

In May 1945, Kennan argued the case for von Moltke's promotion in a letter to a State Department colleague. "I can personally think of no one who would eventually make a better political leader for other Germans." Four months earlier, von Moltke had been hanged.

FOR ALL KENNAN'S dismay over von Moltke, he had other priorities that spring than the matter of choosing a new ruler for Germany. He wished urgently to convince America to look realistically at the men now running the Soviet Union. In May 1945, he wrote a long memo that he would later consider one of the most important of his life. "Peace, like spring, has finally come to Russia," he began; but of those two arrivals, the change of seasons was "far the more noticeable on the Moscow scene."

Kennan was known inside the State Department as nothing more than a highly competent clerk, but he had enormous confidence in his ability to provide a map for a shattered world. He argued that one of Russia's greatest challenges would be managing all the territory it had acquired in the war. He loved to quote Edward Gibbon's line that "there is nothing more contrary to nature than the attempt to hold in obedience distant provinces," and he made that argument, and cited the scholar, here. Russia now was adding subjects from Estonia to East Prussia to the Kuril Islands at the same time that it was trying to extend its authority over nations long hostile, for example Poland and Hungary.

The trouble was linguistic and cultural. The people in these lands did not speak Russian and did not identify with the Russians. More broadly, Kennan correctly saw that the Soviets had transformed communism from a set of well-meaning principles into a rationale for totalitarianism. By 1945, Stalin had crushed the few ideals (and idealists) that Lenin had not liquidated. People would still do what the Kremlin asked, or commanded, them to do. But they would not do so because they believed that the doctrine preached in Moscow would make for a better world, or that Moscow even had that intention. The Soviet government, wrote Kennan, "has before its gates a submissive but no longer an inspired mass of followers." True in Moscow, that was even truer in the conquered territories.

mean that Stalin would need Western assistance and cooperation. And here was his main point: Stalin knew exactly how to manipulate the United States. The Soviet Union was constantly leading America on, asking for one favor and then demanding two more. "They observe with gratification that in this way a great people can be led, like an ever-hopeful suitor, to perform one act of ingratitude after the other without ever reaching the goal which would satisfy its ardor and allay its generosity." When conflict came, Russia would simply call a summit, apologize, and announce that it was starting anew. America would acquiesce—until the next time Russia decided to stick its finger in the eye of its unwitting rival. Then the cycle would restart.

Kennan's memo ended in pained lament. A group of mendacious rulers crudely rationalizing their power by preaching a false ideology had clearly overreached. But the United States would need steady nerves and deep thinking to counter them. And success was not likely, he said, as long as Stalin treated America the way a farmer treats an ox with a rope through its nose: with occasional trepidation but an unwavering sense that he can move it wherever he wants.

Kennan's memo was forceful, beautifully written, and largely right—and it was ignored. He was just a cookie-pushing diplomat with a fondness for Gibbon (whom few people had read) and much venom toward Stalin (whom many people still admired). For nearly another year, the United States would trust and blithely negotiate with the man known to American tabloids as Uncle Joe. Kennan's time to influence the struggle between the two new superpowers had yet to come.

NITZE HAD HIS OWN problems with the USSR. He desperately wanted to capture key Germans before the Red Army did, and he sneaked around Flensburg, hoping the Soviets wouldn't be able to figure out who he was interviewing. In a letter home, he compared his operations to the plot of a spy novel.

He was more right than he knew. For while Nitze carefully locked his documents away, one of the Survey's assistants, Jürgen Kuczynski, was sending them off to the Soviets. Kuczynski had been spying for a decade and had even recruited Klaus Fuchs, the atomic scientist working in Britain who later gave the West's nuclear secrets to Stalin. Kuczynski had been careful over his long career and he fit in smoothly at the State

Bombing Survey. Colleagues remember him as a quiet, elegant man who worked hard and was "easy to talk with." Meanwhile, though, he sent everything he could to Moscow: reports meant to be distributed only to fifteen people, starting with Dwight D. Eisenhower, quietly made it to Stalin.

Kuczynski's handler was his sister in England, then known as Ruth Brewer, one of the USSR's most important spies. Brewer was a housewife and mother who passed herself off as a persecuted Jewish refugee even as she worked toward becoming the first woman to be made an honorary colonel in the Red Army. A devout communist, she kept in contact with the Soviets through a radio transmitter whose components were hidden inside her children's teddy bears. Everything in her life was part of an act for the sake of the cause, even two of her three children. One was the result of her effort to create a cover story while spying on Japan; she conceived another with a man she married to get a British passport and residency.

Nitze knew nothing of what was going on behind his back, perhaps because he was exhausted, working seventeen hours a day, seven days a week, on detailed analyses of the bombings. The fatigue exhilarated him, though. "I have never felt better than I do at the moment," he wrote his mother. As would be true for the rest of his life, nothing cheered Nitze up like working hard on matters of consequence, and nothing would depress him so much as slacking off.

In mid-June, he won the chance to apply his energies to a problem that dealt with the future, not the past. He had traveled to Berlin in the hopes of meeting with Albert Speer's chief statistician when, one night, he received a cryptic message ordering him to the Frankfurt airport the following morning at six. Frankfurt was 120 miles away on bombed-out roads. He did not know where he was going or why. But he grabbed his driver and jeep, hurtled through the night, and arrived at the airfield fifteen minutes before the appointed time. Once there, Nitze got another brief order: he was flying to Washington to help organize the ongoing war with Japan.

FOR THREE AND HALF YEARS, the Japanese and the Americans had battled for the islands of the Pacific and the air above. By the spring of 1945, the United States had driven the Japanese back and begun a fierce bombing campaign against the home islands.

hoped would be the last stage of the war. Henry "Hap" Arnold, commanding general of the U.S. Army Air Forces, believed that what the men involved in the Strategic Bombing Survey had learned from their analysis of the European air offensive could help the United States win without invading Japan's densely populated, ferociously defended main archipelago.

Nitze got to work, convinced that Speer had taught him the most important lesson of modern warfare: knock out the basic infrastructure. He stayed in the United States, furiously writing up lists of targets and priorities on long sheets of yellow paper. On the Fourth of July he took his pad to Jones Beach with his family, panicking after he left it behind while buying ice cream. Fortunately, no Japanese spies spirited it away from the drugstore before he realized his mistake.

Two weeks later, Nitze met with an army air forces planning group led by General Lauris Norstad to argue in favor of knocking out Japan's entire transportation system: its roads, bridges, and railroad tracks. America had already destroyed most of the enemy's shipping capacity; if the Japanese could not move materials around the country by land, Nitze argued, then neither could they build what they needed to fight back. Japan would, as he later said, "with er into surrender." But although others from the Strategic Bombing Survey backed Nitze up, the army air forces brass were not persuaded.

Since March, American planes had been dropping incendiary bombs on Japan's biggest cities, burning the wooden homes, offices, and factories. That strategy seemed to be working, Norstad's team argued. Nitze countered that his plans were more efficient, as well as more humane. One of the generals at the meeting responded that the attacks on Germany had succeeded because the United States had targeted many different sectors. "Certainly the testimony of not only Mr. Speer but everyone else who had to do with the production effort in Germany," Nitze shot back, "is in direct opposition to this principle."

Nitze's advice was ignored, but that did not matter. Two days before his meeting with the planning group, a group of physicists had put on heavy welders' goggles to watch the most massive fireball in the history of mankind explode over Alamogordo, New Mexico. As the mushroom cloud went up, the director of the test, Kenneth Bainbridge, looked the physicist Robert Oppenheimer in the eyes and softly said, "Now we're all sons of bitches." Two weeks later, Norstad was choosing which cities to

It was no longer of consequence whether America directed a fleet of aircraft to hit the ball-bearing plants, the railroads, or the cities. One plane, carrying one weapon, could destroy all of them and more. Nitze's plans and all of his hard-studied ideas about strategic bombing melted into obsolescence. New theories of offensive war would arise, but of a totally different nature. The most sudden of all new eras had begun.

2

CHARMING, WITTY, AND URBANE

One moves through life like someone moving with a lantern in a dark woods. A bit of the path ahead is illuminated, and a bit of the path behind," wrote George Kennan early in his memoirs. "We are, toward the end of our lives, such different people, so far removed from the childhood figures with whom our identity links us, that the bond to those figures, like that of nations to their obscure prehistoric origins, is almost irrelevant."

Almost, but not quite. The boy who sat alone and deep in thought in Milwaukee in 1910 could have traversed those woods by many different ways. But from the far side, the route he ultimately took looks fairly straight. The frail, elegant figure who in 2003 soberly predicted the tragedy to come in Iraq seems indissolubly tied to that child. Likewise, the ninety-one-year-old Paul Nitze, hobbling out onto the tennis court, where he would hit one ball and then rest for a minute on a chair he had set up on the baseline, seems inextricably connected to the young Paul Nitze, darting through the streets of Chicago's Hyde Park neighborhood.

The two men had plenty in common. They were nearly of an age: Kennan was born in 1904, Nitze in 1907. They spent their midwestern childhoods just ninety miles apart and attended the same summer camp—Camp Highlands, in northern Wisconsin—though not at the same time. Both traveled east for college (Kennan to Princeton, Nitze to Harvard). Both were too young to be drafted into World War I and

Kennan did not write back, and she eventually calmed down. As before, a short period without communication would convince her that she needed Kennan's friendship. In the summer of 1983, she sent him a letter about her fears of nuclear calamity. "OH, HOW I WOULD LOVE to live under a government which does not possess atom bombs and does not threaten anyone."

By the time the missiles arrived in Germany, she was nearly without hope and she was eager for the help of her old friend.

I do not know any OTHER time when a real threat to the world existence had been so strong and so dangerous. . . . George, you are a great peacemaker, and known for that. . . . PLEASE DO SOMETHING. RIGHT NOW, SOMETHING. REALLY BIG. . . . The world is hanging over an abyss. Time is running out.

Kennan wrote back, despondent.

It is true that [my recent] statements have received a great deal of publicity and that there are now many thousands of people in this country who listen with respect to what I have to say and who look to me to take some sort of leadership in the effort to ward off the great dangers that seem to be advancing upon us. My difficulty, as you correctly recognized in your letter, is that while I could, perhaps, talk usefully with the Party leadership in the Soviet Union (if not with the military one), I cannot talk that way, and I know of no one who could, with my own government.

George Kennan was also anxious and unhappy—and as the world seemed to edge closer to cataclysm he saw no way to help prevent it. On the verge of his eightieth birthday, George Kennan was a profoundly wearied man.

WE TRIED, WE TRIED

RONALD Reagan's craziest idea turned out to be his most brilliant. In September 1982, two days after the president rebuked Nitzze for his walk in the woods, a friend visited and offered inspiration. "Dr. Teller came in," wrote Reagan in his diary, referring to the physicist who had convinced Nitzze that a hydrogen bomb could work. "He's pushing an exciting idea that nuclear weapons can be used in connection with Lasers to be non-destructive except as used to intercept and destroy enemy missiles far above the earth."

Six months later, that exciting idea turned into a blockbuster speech. The United States was to devote billions of dollars to the Strategic Defense Initiative, essentially a giant shield that would swat down enemy nukes. Reagan believed SDI could work, would work, and must work.

Nitzze had no idea the speech was coming, and neither did most of Reagan's top aides, many of whom would have tried to scuttle it. They knew the Soviets would see such a shield as an offensive weapon. After all, it would be almost impossible to build a shield that would actually stop a deliberate first strike—thwarting thousands of Soviet missiles heading toward America's major cities. If it worked at all, it would be much more useful as a backup to an initial American strike. The United States would fire its thousands of weapons at the Soviet Union, blowing up most of its silos. Some Soviet weapons would survive for a retaliatory

principle of mutually assured destruction, which had kept peace for a generation. "Reagan did not tell anyone because no one [would have] agreed with him," recalled the presidential adviser Martin Anderson.

Nitze was a skeptic from the start. Soon after Reagan gave his speech, Nitze followed with one of his own, at the World Affairs Council in Philadelphia, laying out the criteria such a system would have to meet to prove useful. Most important, it would have to be effective. Somehow, we would have to build and launch defensive missiles that would be able to hit incoming missiles—a task roughly equivalent to shooting bullets at bullets. Next, the system would have to be hard to knock down: SDI would do little good if based in, say, a space station that could easily be destroyed. Last, the system would have to be relatively inexpensive. If it were cheaper for the Soviets to fire off a missile than for the United States to shoot it down, then the shield would just spur the arms race. Nitze laid out these points in his speech, and the press soon dubbed them the Nitze criteria.

These were criteria for a rational discussion in a rational world. But Ronald Reagan believed in a dream: the missile shield, promptly nicknamed Star Wars, would magically work and magically keep everyone safe. He also genuinely hoped to rid the world of nuclear weapons—an eventuality Nitze considered extremely unlikely—in which case Star Wars would have the second purpose of thwarting the lone madman who launches a single missile when no one is looking.

With his president believing in a mirage, and the Soviets taking it seriously, Nitze decided the rational thing was to try to trade the mirage for something real. He would help lead a massive sting operation against the Soviets, who had been deluded by a naive, if earnest, American president. Having seen the Soviet reaction to Reagan's speech, Nitze wrote a memo declaring that the country "should translate this initiative into Soviet movement on the issues of greatest interest to us—the stabilizing reduction of strategic . . . and intermediate range offensive nuclear forces." In other words, the United States would promise not to build SDI if the Soviets agreed to massive arms cuts.

It was a good plan, with one obvious flaw: a decade and a half before, the United States had signed, and Paul Nitze had negotiated, the ABM treaty outlawing future defenses. Star Wars, whether possible or impossible to build, appeared to be illegal.

department's legal counsel Abraham Sofaer was instructed to work with Nitze to figure out "the maximum amount of room the president could have under the treaty." Sofaer pored through the negotiating record and consulted closely with Nitze. The two men ultimately concluded that the treaty did indeed ban the "deployment" of a missile defense system. But read carefully, it did not ban the testing or development of missile defense systems based on "physical principles" that had not existed when the two parties made the initial commitment—including, perhaps, some systems based in outer space. This was soon called the "broad interpretation."

When announced, the reinterpretation caused an explosion in Washington. The Reagan administration was not just building more weapons, it was destroying the limitations established by the presidents who had come before. The press pummeled Sofaer, and Nitze too. Congress was furious. Senator Carl Levin of Michigan declared that the legal adviser had written things that were "not true," "wrong," or "a fabrication." To some of Nitze's friends, his endorsement of the broad interpretation was his second great sin, equal to his betrayal of Paul Warnke. He had negotiated the ABM treaty, the unambiguous point of which was to limit missile defense systems in order to prevent a destabilizing of the arms race. "I'll never understand why Paul did that," said John Rhinelander, a close friend and former protégé who had helped negotiate the treaty with Nitze in the early 1970s.

Moscow's response was even angrier. The Soviets saw Nitze's support for the broad interpretation as a sign of his fundamental mendacity. His country was reneging on the most significant arms deal the two sides had ever signed, and Nitze was reneging on an agreement that he had personally negotiated. "When Nitze joined the broad interpretation of the ABM treaty, I was immediately told by my superiors in the Foreign Ministry how wrong it was to conspire with him in the woods," Kvirinsky said. The criticism overwhelmed Sofaer. Nitze considered it old hat. He told the forty-seven-year-old lawyer, whose career had been a string of successes up to this point, to ignore all the incoming fire. "They attack you, but you have the chance to do great things."

Nitze also continued to justify his position to the end, and a section of his memoirs is devoted to it. When the journalist David Callahan wrote a long, critical book about him, *Dangerous Capabilities*, the antihero responded in a letter that took issue with only one substantial point: Callahan's dismissal of the legal case for the broad interpretation.

criteria "quite obscure" and the debate quite unfortunate. On the back of a copy of Nitze's speech, he scrawled a cranky note criticizing what he saw as an effort at dealing with "employment in California, [by] building] superfluous missiles there at vast expense."

EARLY ON THE MORNING of March 11, 1985, mournful music began to play on Russian radio stations. Listeners expecting the usual state-run programming heard Chopin instead. The semi-comatose General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko had died in the night.

By late afternoon, the Central Committee had gathered. Everyone paid their grudging respects to the dead leader and then waited eagerly to hear who would take his place. Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko stepped up to the podium. He represented the old guard: a plodding, difficult seventy-five-year-old hard-liner who first came to prominence under Stalin. But the man he was about to thrust into power was of an entirely different generation and style. He said the name—"Mikhail Sergeyevich Gorbachev"—and the room burst into sustained applause. The Soviet Union had a new leader and the Cold War suddenly had a new direction.

Neither Nitze nor Kennan understood immediately Gorbachev's significance. Whenever anyone expressed enthusiasm for the new man, Nitze would point out that he was still a communist. Kennan, writing in the *New York Times*, declared that Gorbachev "should produce a much higher order of vigor, flexibility, and thoughtfulness in the leading positions." But he added that the Politburo was a collective body, and "it is not to be expected that the advent of Gorbachev will in any way affect Soviet positions at the arms control talks."

Soviets grasped the magnitude of the change more quickly. Gorbachev was soon cleaning out the top leadership, implementing economic reforms, and beginning a fierce crusade against alcohol. His surprising choice for foreign minister was a reformer named Eduard Shevardnadze. "Yes, this is the opening of a truly different stage in Soviet history," wrote Anatoly Chernenyaev in his diary. "Probably something big will come out of it. Gorbachev does not seem to be one of those who stop a quarter of the way through."

Meanwhile, Nitze had grown close to a secretary of state for the second time in his career. The first time, with Dean Acheson, Nitze was too

Appointed in 1984 as special adviser to the secretary, Nitze made it his first task to educate his boss about weaponry. "George Shultz wouldn't take a step on arms control without Nitze," said Max Kampelman, a fellow negotiator. Education then turned into collaboration on a plan to reduce nuclear weaponry by 50 percent, the magic figure that Kennan had suggested at the outset of the Reagan administration. Nitze worked up a detailed proposal in which the United States would agree to abide by the ABM treaty for a decade, over which time both parties would halve their arsenals. His staffers were instructed to tell no one about their work.

Once he had come up with the proposal, Nitze plotted with National Security Adviser Robert McFarlane about how to handle the politics. Their plan was for McFarlane to run the idea by Reagan, knowing the president might sign off on it even if he did not grasp anything like its full implications. Then they would try to open a back channel with Moscow through Ambassador Dobrynin; that done, they would set out to enlist the support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Ultimately, they could present the agreement as virtually a done deal without Perle or Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger knowing about it. It was a sting operation on the American side that would set up the larger sting operation with the Soviets.

The first part of the plan worked. Reagan initialed his support, and Shultz dropped a hint to Dobrynin about setting up a private channel through Nitze. But the Russian ambassador missed the hint. The plot was stalled.

Undeterred, Nitze pressed the idea again in early fall 1985, this time bringing the proposal to Kvitsinsky. But his old friend had no desire to get lost in the woods a second time. Kennan's, and then Nitze's, bold idea was dead.

The death of this sweeping plan was the death neither of arms control nor of Nitze's influence. That November, Reagan and Gorbachev were scheduled to meet for the first time, in Geneva. Nitze's job was to brief the president on the fine points of weaponry.

Nitze deeply admired Ronald Reagan, but the president had never been an eager student of detail. Right before the summit, one of Reagan's biographers attended a meeting between the president and Nitze. "I got the impression of a man too polite to say that he thought the distinctions Paul Nitze drew between mobile MIRVed ICBMs (worth banning be-

mobile unMIRVed ICBMs (worth preserving because they would permit a Midgetman RV system to counteract deployment of the SS-25) might just as well differentiate two cans of spinach." As Kenneth Adelman, head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, once said, Reagan "had no knowledge, no feel, and no interest in whether it was missiles, war-heads, SEPs, throw-weights, none of that."

If Reagan showed little enthusiasm for nuclear acronyms, he also did not worry. Right before his meeting, he wrote in his diary about his preparations for the summit, noting how well he had napped during his massage that day. "I hope I'm ready and not over trained."

The summit turned out to be a great success. The adversaries decided nothing of great substance. But the two leaders bonded as they sat by a fireplace and chatted. Two men, both with real power this time, now seemed ready to take their own walk in the woods.

There were hints, though, of tension to come. Gorbachev, it seemed, was as unbudging in his opposition to missile defense as Reagan was adamant in his support of it. At one point, Reagan asked his counterpart whether he believed in reincarnation. Gorbachev demurred, but Reagan said he did—and he thought that in a past life he had been the inventor of the shield.

IN EARLY 1986, the historian Gregg Herken publicly and prominently linked the lives of Kennan and Nitze in a way no one had done before. In a well-written and perceptive piece published in *American Heritage*, "The Great Foreign Policy Fight," Herken traced the parallel paths of the two men. Though it cast Nitze and Kennan as opposites, through whose lives one could understand the central conflicts of the Cold War, the article actually united them: both hated it.

Perceiving a liberal bias, Nitze sent a marked-up version back to the author—spotted with blunt "not so's" in the margins. The piece, he felt, was too sympathetic to Kennan. "Dear Gregg," he wrote, "I sense that it is difficult for you to accept that someone might honestly have come to the conclusion that the Western world faced a long term problem with totalitarianism, particularly with the Soviet variety thereof." Fundamentally, he and Kennan disagreed on how to combat that threat. Kennan had wanted us to take very little action against Moscow; Nitze had wanted

"We did in fact do a great deal and were in fact able to put off the worst dangers to the West."

As usual, Nitze refrained from attacking Kennan personally. "I've never criticized the honesty or sincerity of George's position. I merely disagree with him." But his frustration came through in the annotations. When Herken wrote "Of the two, Kennan was the first to oppose the [Vietnam] war and the only one to do so publicly," Nitze crossed off "first" and inserted "second." In the margins he declared, "I was in government, Kennan was not." Early in the piece, Herken wrote, "The two men embodied the clash between morality and pragmatism, ends versus means." In the margins, Nitze scrawled, "No! Later you point out that George was never that much interested in ends; he has not wanted to face up to the means necessary to accomplish his own ends."

Kennan, for his part, ignored the big themes and focused on technical errors, sending Herken a long memo specifying twenty-six mistakes in the rough draft he had received. He copied Nitze and John Lewis Gaddis on the letter and added a cover note. "While most of these taken individually are trivial, the number of them leaves me to wonder whether the author had more than the most fleeting familiarity with my life."

The letter revealed more about Kennan's sensitivity—and acute memory for detail—than about Herken's (genuinely impressive) scholarship. Most of the errors were trivial, and some were more Nitze's fault than Herken's.

Nitze's memory sometimes substituted drama for precision, and over the years he repeated a number of slightly spurious stories about Kennan, a few of which made it into *American Heritage*. Perhaps the most irksome to its subject was Nitze's claim that Kennan had told him in the summer of 1949 that two mobile marine brigades could serve the country's entire defense needs. All attributions of this view to Kennan come from people to whom Nitze fed the tale. The story never appeared elsewhere. No documents back it up, Kennan vehemently denied it, and it doesn't square with the views he expressed elsewhere that summer. Kennan no doubt hoped that copying Nitze on the letter would get his former colleague to stop telling the story. But if Nitze read Kennan's list of errata, he did not remember them. That story and others Kennan debunked would pop up again and again in the interviews Nitze gave and the oral histories he recorded.

Herken's article circulated widely in Washington. Clark Clifford sent

a copy to Paul Warnke with a note attached. "On p. 65 is a fascinating piece on Kennan and Nitze. They both end up frustrated. I thought you might find it interesting."

FEW LIVES HAVE A SINGLE DAY as intense as Paul Nitze's October 12, 1986. Phyllis, his beloved wife of fifty-four years, was dying of emphysema, and he was finding it harder and harder to concentrate. Set to turn eighty in three months, he had flown to Iceland with President Reagan for another round of negotiations with Gorbachev at the Hofdi House, a white art-nouveau building on the outskirts of Reykjavik. For more than forty years, since he had walked in the radioactive rubble of Hiroshima, Nitze had obsessed over the forces unleashed by the Manhattan Project. He had studied these powers as closely as anyone alive. If any nonscientist understood them, he did. And though it was his job to talk about them dispassionately, they still haunted him. Now, in Iceland, he suddenly had the best chance of his life to entomb the horrors deep underground.

Reagan and Gorbachev would not have been meeting in Reykjavik had they not hit it off in Geneva the previous autumn. Nor would this summit have occurred if not for the April meltdown of four nuclear reactors in Chernobyl, Ukraine. That disaster, which spread fallout across the Soviet Union and throughout Europe, gave the Soviet high command a new, visceral sense of nuclear calamity. The reactor contained a fraction of the power of one large weapon, yet months later workers in Kiev were still raking up chestnut leaves and sending them off as radioactive waste. That summer, when Gorbachev received the summit briefing papers from his staff, he threw them aside and exclaimed, "Simply crap!" It was the typical stuff—how to score small points and maneuver to get a faint edge—and he was sick of it. He wanted to make some kind of grand proposal.

In late September, Reagan agreed to the meeting, and two weeks later, the two leaders were flying to Iceland. As the Soviets left, Anatoly Chernenko prepared a memo for his boss. "The main goal of Reykjavik, if I understood you correctly in the South, is to sweep Reagan off his feet by our bold, even 'risky' approach to the central problem of world politics."

Nitze suspected a trap. He had heard rumblings that Gorbachev might offer a serious deal. But the Soviet leader would not mean it, or he would rig it so the United States would have to reject it and appear set on war. He was thus pleasantly surprised when, at the first meeting, on the morning

of October 11, Gorbachev offered real concessions, proposing to eliminate the Soviet SS-20s threatening Europe and reducing all weaponry by 50 percent. After that first conversation, the nine-man American team gathered in a tiny acrylic bubble inside the U.S. embassy. There were eight chairs, so Ken Adelman, the head of the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency, sat on the floor, up against the president's knee. "Boy, this place would look great if it was filled up with goldfish," said Reagan. When they got down to business, Nitze called the Soviet proposal "the best we have received in 25 years."

At eight that evening, Nitze sat down to work out the details with the lead Soviet negotiator, Marshal Sergei Akhromyev, a veteran of World War II who had been wounded at the siege of Leningrad and who later led the invasion of Afghanistan. He was the toughest man Nitze ever negotiated with, and probably the smartest. At one dinner during the Geneva negotiations, he described how he had fought to protect the same road against the Nazis for eighteen months, never going inside a building, even when the temperature dropped to twenty degrees below zero. Secretary of State Shultz gushed and started to exclaim his wonder at the marshal's devotion to country. "Mr. Secretary, there was that," Akhromyev said. "But I knew that if I had left that road, Stalin would have had me shot."

Now Akhromyev's boss was gentler and the terrain was different. But he would handle this task with the same tenacity and resilience. He met with Nitze in a conference room with a long table in the elegant Hofdi House, flanked by beverages and a buffer.

"Good evening. I hope that today we will be able to make real progress," began Nitze, according to a transcript of the meeting. The first order of business was how exactly to reduce armaments by 50 percent. The Soviets wanted to cut each category of weapons by 50 percent. Nitze, however, did not like that idea, for the same reason that he had not liked so many proposed arms deals over the past sixteen years. The Soviets were starting with more heavy ICBMs, and if both sides simply halved their numbers, the Soviets would still have more heavy ICBMs. Wouldn't it be better for the two sides to reduce to equal levels?

Nitze and Akhromyev argued the point back and forth. The conversation was intense but respectful, with each side yielding a bit when they hit an impasse. Here is a typical exchange.

Nitze: "We do not agree with that."

Akhromeyev: "Yes, we should record specifically that our opinions differ on this question."

Nitze: "Maybe we should try to liquidate this difference of opinion?" They just kept on talking. They made progress, and then they would get stuck. They would make more progress, and then get stuck again. Eventually, they hit the issue of missile defense. Here Akhromeyev was adamant. If the Soviets were to reduce their offensive arsenals so massively, they could not have the United States building space weapons or a shield. Nitze offered to share any missile defense technology created by the United States, a proposal the Soviets considered ridiculous.

At two A.M., Akhromeyev declared, "Right now I suggest we take a break." They would resume the talks in one hour.

NITZE STEPPED OUTSIDE into the frigid night with one of his colleagues, jumped in a car, and drove to their hotel. They woke up Secretary of State Shultz, who was so cold he put a sweater on over his pajamas, and then a robe over that. They asked Shultz what to do, as well as how to settle a dispute between Nitze, who wanted to give some ground, and another member of the delegation, General Ed Rowny, who did not. Shultz told Nitze to do whatever he thought was right. "This is your working group, and you're the boss."

When they returned, it became clear that Akhromeyev had woken up his bosses too, and that they had told him to yield. He picked up the debate with the declaration that "we offer to prepare an agreement for the 50 percent reduction of US and Soviet strategic weapons to an equal number of carriers and warheads for both sides." It was a breakthrough.

Soon the two sides were negotiating limits upon particular types of missiles, as well as challenges in verification. They made progress and more progress. Issues that had sucked away hundreds of hours during past talks were resolved in minutes. And then, finally, they hit the inevitable and very familiar bump: missile defense. It was now 6:30 in the morning and Akhromeyev had had enough. "We brought closer our positions on strategic weapons quite well, but completely disagreed on the ABM. This makes strategic weapons impossible. . . . Thank you for your cooperation."

Nitze hustled back to report everything to Shultz. He had just worked intensely through the night—ten hours straight—and his adrenaline was

pumping. He met the secretary at a few minutes past seven and explained what had happened, noting all the breakthroughs. "Damn good! It's what we came for!" exclaimed Shultz. "A terrific night's work, Paul."

"I haven't had so much fun in years," responded Nitze.

Now it was up to Gorbachev and Reagan.

BEFORE THE NEXT MEETING later that morning, the U.S. team huddled in the one private location they could find in Hoffi House, a small bathroom. Three men stood in the tub. When Reagan walked in, he said, "I'll take the throne," and sat on top of the toilet.

When the two leaders met that morning, they immediately returned to their haggling. Nothing mattered except missile defense. If they could resolve that, everything else would fall into place. Reagan could not understand why the Soviets objected to it, particularly since he offered to share the technology if it worked. Gorbachev knew that, if he could not kill SDI, his defense establishment would press ahead with its own, potentially quite dangerous, space weapons systems. And he also understood that SDI actually became more dangerous if built in tandem with substantial weapons reductions. If both sides had massive numbers of nuclear bombs, they could easily overwhelm a proto-defense. But SDI could offer a decisive advantage if each side had only a few weapons.

The rest of the morning session was more of the same. Gorbachev insisted that the United States agree to restrict its research on missile defense technology to laboratories for a decade. Reagan said he simply could not do that. As Richard Perle would later argue, restricting SDI research to a laboratory was like restricting submarine tests to land. The leaders broke for lunch and agreed they would meet again at three. There would be one more chance for the great settlement. Hundreds of journalists waited outside.

When they returned, both sides had come up with radical new proposals that involved eliminating all offensive weapons within the next ten years. Gorbachev, however, continued to insist that the United States restrict its work on SDI to a laboratory for a decade. Reagan said that although he would agree not to deploy SDI for a decade, he needed to be able to test components wherever he wanted.

Discussion grew heated, and the two sides decided to take another break. On one floor, Gorbachev paced, intensely aware of how close he

was to a deal. Below him, Reagan asked his top advisers whether he should agree to Gorbachev's terms. Nitze and Shultz said yes. We had come so far; the Soviets had conceded so much. We should close the deal now. But Perle counseled no. Confining research to a laboratory would kill SDI.

The principals returned and tried one final time. Reagan began by reading his proposal to Gorbachev. "The U.S.S.R. and the U.S. pledge for a period of ten years not to exercise their right to withdraw from the unlimited ABM Treaty and, during that period, to comply strictly with all its provisions, while at the same time continuing research, development, and testing permitted by the ABM Treaty."

Gorbachev responded tartly. "Your formula omits any mention of laboratory testing. Was this done specifically?" Reagan bobbed and weaved. Gorbachev snapped, "What I'm asking is, did you omit the mention of the laboratories deliberately or not?"

"Yes it was deliberate. What's the matter?"

Reagan began making an old point that building missile defense was just a way to protect against nuclear maniacs. "Our aim is to safeguard ourselves from a revival of missiles that have been destroyed, in order to make a kind of gas mask against nuclear missiles."

"Yes, I've heard all about gas masks and maniacs, probably ten times already. But it still does not convince me," Gorbachev said in exasperation.

Each recited his now familiar arguments; each appealed to domestic politics, suggesting that colleagues would allow no further retreat. But none of it worked, and eventually there was simply no way forward. The issue of restricting missile defense research was insurmountable.

"It's too bad we have to part this way," said Reagan. "We were so close to an agreement. I think you didn't want to achieve an agreement any way. I'm very sorry."

"I am also very sorry it's happened this way," said Gorbachev. "I wanted an agreement and did everything I could, if not more."

"I don't know when we'll ever have another chance like this and whether we will meet soon."

"I don't either."

It was over. They had failed—on what now look like the most absurd grounds. Missile defense research was not going to lead to a workable missile defense, whether confined to a laboratory or not. And none of the

people in the debate even knew exactly what "laboratory" meant in this context. No one had bothered to define the word upon which the greatest arms deal ever had been shipwrecked.

Nitze and Shultz drove to a downtown hotel to talk with the press. Nitze was exhausted, run down, and crushed. "We tried, we tried. By God, we tried. And we almost did it."

WHEN NITZE RETURNED to Washington, he had lost his voice and he was angry. Looking back on the talks a few days later, he declared that their failure seemed like a setup. He speculated to his friend Charles Burton Marshall that the Soviets had actually wanted the talks to fail. They wanted to bring SDI into disrepute by blaming it for the collapse of the peace deal. He was angry at the euphoria he had felt at the Soviet proposal; he thought he and his colleagues had been "taken in."

Marshall speculated that the Soviets had taken such an adamant position against SDI because they had discovered their own form of defense and wanted to protect their monopoly; perhaps it was something involving high-energy X-rays. Nitze thought that possible too.

It turned out, though, that the Soviet Union had offered so many concessions because Gorbachev understood that his regime was on the verge of collapse. He knew by 1986 that the USSR could not afford its weapons—nor could it afford a race in space. The Soviet Union was like a snake that had broken its jaw trying to swallow an elephant. The system was dying, and Reykjavik was one of the USSR's last chances to survive. Right before the summit, Gorbachev had told the Politburo, "If we don't back down on some specific, maybe even important, issues, if we won't budge from the positions we've held for a long time, we will lose in the end. We will be drawn into an arms race that we cannot manage. We will lose, because right now we are already at the end of our tether."

Reykjavik, in some ways, was like the inverse of Stalin and Kurchatov's explosion of the atomic bomb in 1949. On that day, the United States had lost its monopoly over the atomic weapon. From then on, the springs of the arms race became ever more tightly wound and ever more dangerous.

After Reykjavik, the springs loosened: slowly at first, and then ever so quickly. Gorbachev hadn't offered his grand proposals in Iceland because he had a hidden program in high-energy X-rays. He had done it because the

Soviet Union's economy was imploding. Alexei Obukhov, who was deputy foreign minister under Gorbachev, remembers a sudden shift in his concerns. In Iceland, he worried about space weapons. Soon thereafter he worried that, besides a few boxes of salt, the delicatessen below his apartment had entirely empty shelves. It wasn't long before America's adversary of four decades was waving a giant white flag of surrender.

In December 1987, fourteen months after the apparent failure in Iceland, Nitze was negotiating the final touches on an INF treaty that eliminated all intermediate-range and short-range ground-based nuclear weapons from Europe. It was a far better deal for the United States than the one Nitze had negotiated in the woods with Kviritsinsky. Playing his usual role, Nitze trudged to Capitol Hill to defend it. A few of his old enemies, among them Jesse Helms, argued against it. But the agreement went through. The Soviet Union was commencing one of the greatest going-out-of-business sales in history. Soon, American inspectors would be heading to Soviet military bases—from which even Soviet civilians had long been banned—to observe missiles being dismantled.

With the signing of the INF Treaty, the two sides had accomplished half of the dream deal of Reykjavik. The second half—massive reductions in strategic nuclear weapons—was the last cause of Nitze's career. As he worked on what were called the START negotiations in 1988, he knew it was a chance for him to untie the Gordian knot that he himself had wrapped together so carefully over the years. Here was his chance to officially reverse the great arms buildup he had done so much to start with NSC-68, pushed with the Gaither Report, and driven to a peak with his aggressive bugle blowing in the 1970s.

Ultimately, Nitze, personally, would not succeed. The negotiations were too complicated to finish in Reagan's final year. And Nitze was beginning to slow down. Viktor Koltunov, one of the Soviet negotiators, remembers a late-night session in Moscow especially well. Around one a.m., Nitze quietly stepped out of the conference room where the talks were going on. A short while later, the delegations took a break. In the hallway outside the room, they found Nitze curled up, shoes off, asleep on the couch. They walked by quietly and respectfully, in awe of the eighty-one-year-old man who had done so much through the years and now simply needed a little rest.

When George H. W. Bush became president, Nitze yearned to continue his work. But the new administration had little interest in him.

"Nitze was old and crotchety," said one top aide to Secretary of State James Baker. Two weeks after the inauguration, Nitze wrote to his sister, "It is rather Kafka-like. Whenever they decide to talk to me, I will make up my mind what to do."

A few months later, they still were not talking to him. Baker had offered him a big office and the title of ambassador at large emeritus—but nothing to do. It was exactly the opposite of the sort of position in which he had thrived throughout his career. So he resigned. And, naturally, Nitze did not go silently. He left office on May 1 and, on May 3, his wry, smiling face was atop the front page of the *New York Times*: "Reagan Arms Adviser Says Bush Is Wrong on Short-Range Missiles." More interviews, and more darts, would follow.

The START talks did indeed end with an agreement—but it was anticlimactic, coming in July 1991, just weeks before a coup started the process by which the Soviet Union disappeared. People were not going to end the arms race. Events would.

ALMOST FORTY-FIVE YEARS before the Soviet Union collapsed, George Kennan accurately predicted the closing act. "If anything were ever to occur to disrupt the unity and efficacy of the Party as a political instrument," wrote X, "Soviet Russia might be changed overnight from one of the strongest to one of the weakest and most pitiable of national societies."

The whole thesis of that famous article had been that our adversary appeared strong, but the strength rested on savagery and illusion. Properly contained, the Soviet order would eventually rot from the inside out.

Who can say with assurance that the strong light still cast by the Kremlin on the dissatisfied peoples of the western world is not the powerful afterglow of a constellation which is in actuality on the wane? This cannot be proved. And it cannot be disproved. But the possibility remains (and in the opinion of this writer it is a strong one) that Soviet power, like the capitalist world of its conception, bears within it the seeds of its own decay, and that the sprouting of these seeds is well advanced.

The seeds took much longer to sprout than Kennan thought or hoped.

But when at last they did, they were like acorns that had slowly germinated and then suddenly burst through the stones above. Every seventy

years or so, historians have noted, Western civilization turns upside down. It happened in 1776, 1848, 1917—and in 1989. First came the bloodless revolution in the Baltics, where the Soviet regimes in Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania collapsed. In November, hordes of young Germans took their axes to the Berlin Wall. That same year the greengrocers of Eastern Europe took down the party signs from their windows, and the tyrants in Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, and Romania toppled from their pedestals. The iron curtain was rolled up as swiftly as it had descended. “We have literally no time even to be astonished,” said Václav Havel, the Czech playwright-turned-dissident-turned-president.

The next year, the USSR’s ethnic republics began to defy Moscow’s authority. Gorbachev survived the August 1991 coup of orthodox Soviets against him, but after that he was a ghost. By the end of the month, Nitzze’s negotiating partner at Reykjavik, Marshal Akhromyev, had become so depressed by the course of events in his country that he committed suicide. At the end of 1991, Boris Yeltsin deposed Gorbachev and suddenly the USSR ceased to exist. Its demise was accompanied by less violence than the average revolution in Guatemala.

Kennan had not gotten it all right. But he had foreseen how fast change would come once it began, and he had even perceived the potential role of ethnicity. In *The Cloud of Danger*, in 1977, he wrote:

This nationalistic restlessness in the constituent republics is not a serious short-term problem for the regime, but it is a hard one to cope with; for both tolerance and repression tend to enhance rather than to dispel it. If, therefore, the regime does not have to fear it excessively in the short term, it has to recognize that it has still not found the answer to it. And this, too, is disturbing for anyone within the regime who has any historical sense; because the very similar nationalistic restlessness that prevailed among certain of these minority people in the Tsarist time proved, when that regime came under severe pressure, to be one of the major factors that conduced to its downfall.

Unlike many other students of Russia and Sovietism, he had seen how perilously loose was Gorbachev’s grip on power. In February 1991, he wrote in the *Washington Post* of his doubt that “what we know as the Soviet Union can any longer be governed from a single center at all.” And on the *MacNeill/Leiner NewsHour* right after the August coup, he declared

that neither Gorbachev nor the country would recover. “Kennan was the one person in the United States who really got it,” said James Billington, a historian of Russia and later the librarian of Congress, who was in Moscow at the time. And the endgame in Moscow was not all that Kennan foresaw. Just before Warren Zimmermann headed off to serve as U.S. ambassador to Yugoslavia in 1989, Kennan explained to him that the country would soon shatter and that the United States would get pulled into the disaster.

As the Cold War ended, Kennan changed, in the minds of many, from pesky dissident to sage. Forgotten were his cries about the nuclear danger. What people remembered now was that this man had designed the strategy that ended up winning the Cold War. In 1989, he won the Presidential Medal of Freedom. President Bush’s deputy chief of staff, James Cicconi, had the task of notifying the recipients that year. One of them, the baseball star Ted Williams, refused to come because he did not want to appear in public on crutches. Kennan, reached in Norway, responded with utter dignity and his customary grace: “I would be honored to be anywhere that the president of the United States wants me to be.”

“George is a happy man now,” wrote Arthur Schlesinger Jr. in his diary. “He basks in an atmosphere of belated but heartfelt recognition and approval.” After he testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on April 4, 1989, everyone in the room, including the committee members, broke into spontaneous applause. Asked by Senator Claiborne Pell when that had last happened, the committee clerk said 1966—when Kennan had testified about Vietnam.

Kennan had created the concept of containment, which, whether he liked it or not, had guided America’s foreign policy for half a century. Although the idea had provided the justification for so many initiatives that Kennan disapproved of, the essential strategy had nonetheless won out. Even hard-liners gave him grudging credit. According to Richard Perle, Kennan had been “right for an instant—if wrong forever after.” When Bill Clinton came to power in 1993, aides began trying to come up with a new name for his amorphous post-Cold War foreign policy. They called the quest “the Kennan sweepstakes.”

AS THE SOVIET UNION CRUMBLED, Nitzze stayed focused on the tasks at hand. “He didn’t live in the past; he lived in the present,” said George

Shultz, reflecting on meetings he had with his partner in the early 1990s to discuss reconstructing what was now Russia.

But eventually Nitze did begin to bask somewhat in the attention awarded to the men who had designed America's Cold War strategy. "Paul Nitze's mind and his memory of his experiences are a national treasure," declared a Senate resolution. Newspapers and magazines ran adoring profiles. The *Time* reporter Strobe Talbott published *The Master of the Game*, a meticulous history of Nitze's career as an arms negotiator. The School of Advanced International Studies renamed itself after its cofounder.

In retrospect, his was a remarkable career. The United States had, for the most part, followed his militant version of containment: arming itself, but never actually trying to roll back the Soviet Union. On nuclear arms policy, he had long pursued two objectives: making the United States a less tempting target for the Soviets and negotiating deals that would make an attack less likely. And whether he could take credit for it—or whether success came in spite of him—"Moscow never did launch. 'I've come to the conclusion we did it pretty goddam well," he said in a 1995 interview. "The Cold War achieved the eventual triumph of freedom over tyranny, and that was a very important triumph. Thank God for the Cold War, and thank God that it turned out the right way."

Until the end of his life, Kennan kept in his home office a newspaper front page from the day the Berlin Wall came down. But he was far less enthusiastic about the final result than Nitze was. Yes, the nuclear danger had now diminished. But victory, if it was that, had come at a great cost: to civil society, to our economy, and even to an orderly Russia.

In his view, the conflict had gone on too long and been too militarized. American belligerence had merely encouraged Soviet belligerence, which had encouraged the arms race. In 1992, he published an op-ed in the *New York Times*, "The G.O.P. Won the Cold War? Ridiculous." His argument was one he had made many times before: "The suggestion that any Administration had the power to influence decisively the course of a tremendous domestic upheaval in another great country on another side of the globe is simply childish." He could have retold his story about the fly on the nose of the ox who returns to the village to proclaim, "We've been plowing."

For his part, Nitze was in no position to seek credit for spending the

ended. After all, he had advocated passionately in the Reagan years for cost-saving arms deals. But he could feel vindicated in the principle he had articulated in the 1950s: respond to every problem, day to day, and assume that your efforts will help things work at the end. If you looked at the arms race at any given moment, the future seemed hopeless. Surely, at some point, either the Soviet Union or the United States would launch a strike that would destroy the world. But was it possible to imagine that the United States could survive the next decade? Yes. And could doing so reduce the odds of catastrophe in the decade after that? Yes. That pragmatic approach—despite a few terrifying episodes and a lot of wasted money—had helped to keep the world from Armageddon.

A few years after the Cold War ended, Nitze published a book called *Tension Between Opposites: Reflections on the Practice and Theory of Politics*. The premise came from Heraclitus: one way to seek truth was to think about the way tension works in a bow or a guitar, which depend on strings being pulled simultaneously in opposite directions. In the first chapter, Nitze quoted from his 1953 commencement speech at his son's boarding school:

The great problems with which all of us have been wrestling . . . include the individual versus society, change versus continuing order, force versus consent, the East versus the West, power versus responsibility. In each case the answer is to be found not in the elimination of one of the opposites or in any basic compromise between them but in striving for a harmony in the tension between opposites.

One could make the same point about the harmony between Nitze's and Kennan's viewpoints during the Cold War. They pulled in different directions but, as suggested by the toasts they gave at Kennan's eightieth birthday party, the two men complemented each other. Kennan's ideas and methods were not practical and could do little to help solve day-to-day problems. He could not, for example, have been an effective arms negotiator. Nonetheless, he played a crucial role, both in framing the conflict and then serving as his nation's conscience as those horrifying weapons hypnotized the superpowers more and more. Kennan, the outsider, accurately foresaw how the Cold War would play out. Nitze, the insider, helped bring about the Cold War's end by behaving as if Kennan's prophecy would never come true.

★ ★ ★

EPILOGUE

There is more to tell than space permits.
 The traits we most admire—it fits
 Husband, father, skier, dancer
 Horseman, donor, and romancer,
 At tennis and bridge he starts too.
 He surpasses us all—so what's new?
 Paul, we salute you, entreat you,
 To see that just ninety's too few.

In October 1999, Nitze invited his friend Jurek Martin of the *Financial Times* over for coffee and declared that after years of quiet contemplation he had decided that we should eliminate our entire nuclear arsenal. Martin went home, typed up Nitze's argument as he remembered it, read it back for approval over the telephone, and then sent it to the *New York Times* op-ed page.

In Nitze's prime, the piece would never have met his standards for rigorous thinking. The argument was composed of blunt assertion, and it passed over the complicated attendant questions, such as how to deal with future blackmailers. "Why would someone who spent so many years negotiating with the Soviet Union about the size of our nuclear arsenal now say we no longer need it?" Nitze asked in the piece.

I know that the simplest and most direct answer to the problem of nuclear weapons has always been their complete elimination. My "walk in the woods" in 1982 with the Soviet arms negotiator Yuli Kviritsinsky at least addressed this possibility on a bilateral basis. Destruction of the arms did not prove feasible then, but there is no good reason why it should not be carried out now.

But if the piece was simple, it came from an honest and sound heart. Five years before, Nitze had written that the country needed to place much less reliance on such armaments. In a study group the year after that, he had joined in concluding that the country should start to move toward nuclear renunciation.

Nitze was touched by the warm letter that Kennan wrote in response to his op-ed, with the author noting how pleasant it was to find them finally in agreement after their half century of contrasting views. But Nitze's conversion was based on the facts at the time: he certainly did not

Old age, and the fall of the Soviet Union, released Nitze's inner liberal. In January 1991, ten days before America began bombing Iraq, he said that the United States could contain that country with a blockade and sanctions; war was not necessary. He also joined the board of the Environmental Defense Fund, focusing on acid rain because he thought it a narrow enough issue that he could master it in the time he had remaining. He worked for an international treaty to ban land mines, and another to ban chemical weapons.

His new political endeavors solidified the position in the Washington establishment that his many years of public service had already earned him. At his ninetieth birthday party, a grand fete in Washington's Metropolitan Club, Supreme Court justice Sandra Day O'Connor read some verses she had written that summed up the way many people there felt.

Paul Nitze—a name we all know

A man whose life leaves us aglow

Aglow with amazement that he,

In only 90 years, could be

A scholar, investor, author

Diplomat and aristocrat,

Navy Secretary, pundit.

All we can do is meet with true grief.

think his past judgment had been in error. Not long afterward, talking with the journalist James Srodes, he said: “[Kennan] always thought that I hijacked our Cold War policy of containment away from him.” He paused and then chuckled: “And I did, of course.”

THE END OF THE COLD WAR gave George Kennan a chance to reflect in a way he had never done before. He published a book of political philosophy—one that showed him to be a true conservative, in that he did not want significant changes in either the environment or the culture. He followed that with a work about the hard-laboring agrarian past of the Kennan line, *An American Family*. It was published when he was ninety-six years old; he labored to find the strength to depress the keys on his typewriter while working on it. And then came the last intellectual project of his life: a deep analysis of his religious faith.

Kennan had rarely discussed the subject publicly, but he had long pondered it. Raised a Presbyterian, Kennan maintained a certain distance from formal religion for most of his adult life. But age and a sense of his own mortality had pulled him closer to Christianity. In October 2002, he sent a twenty-page letter to his children.

The beginning was personal. He avowed his deep feelings of connection to Helmuth von Moltke and observed that the barrenness of secular Soviet ceremonies made him yearn for Christian ones. But most of the letter was didactic. He wrote, for example, how he had taken a skeptical historian’s eye to the Gospels. Not only were they based on hearsay, but by focusing so intently on miracles, they emphasized merely the authors’ own shallowness, and not the greatness of their subject. St. Paul, he wrote, was a courageous man and a great leader. But Kennan disliked him for distorting the historical record. And Paul, he argued, had clearly over-stated his personal intimacy with Jesus.

But the letter’s most compelling passages involved his vision of the human spirit and his answer to the fundamental question surrounding Christianity: if God is all-powerful, why is there evil in the world?

To Kennan, the answer was one provided by a small but passionate group of spiritual thinkers through history: God is not all-powerful. “I can see this whole range of human predicament as something beyond a divine motive or control—rather as a limitation, if you will, on the al-

mightiness of the divine power. But this, to my mind, is no reason for the abandonment of what we call faith.”

It was classic Kennan. He did not explain away evil or pain; after all, he had spent his life brooding on them. And he even seemed to be bringing his realism to religion. One nation cannot control others; and one all-powerful God does not control us. As with so much else that he wrote, Kennan’s words were profound and moving:

At no time in my life have I ever been devoid of the awareness that I was accompanied, surrounded, and penetrated by some sort of tremendous spirit—the Holy Spirit, if one wishes to call it that, and one that stood in some intimate essentially benevolent if critical relationship to all that I was doing or experiencing. Without that awareness, life would have lost all hope and meaning.

IN LATE SEPTEMBER 2001, I visited my grandfather in his home in Georgetown. As he often did, he sat in his study, leaning back deeply in an oversized easy chair. A cane rested by his side. Books were stacked on the side table next to a small silver bowl of nuts and a glass of red wine. He moved slowly and had grown a light, scratchy beard. He talked infrequently and with great effort, and I would often come just to sit near him and keep him company. Sometimes I would read to him.

This day, he started by saying how shaken he had been by the terrorist attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center. I nodded, and told him I agreed. After waiting for a bit, I decided to ask a question. Looking over his bookshelf, I noticed the complete works of Conrad, each conspicuously worn. I was a little taken aback. “How, Gramps,” I asked, “did you have time to read all of these books when you were negotiating all the arms treaties?”

“Missiles are boring,” he replied deliberately. “Conrad is interesting.” He then began to reflect a bit over his life. Again he paused for a second. “Sometimes I think I have had so much more luck than I deserve.” That evening, I wrote down another nugget of wisdom he passed on that day: “I keep going because I still find it interesting.”

Three years later, in the summer of 2004, we had our last conversation. I came by to tell him of my engagement and plans for a wedding that

I knew he was far too frail to attend. "Is she kind?" he asked. Yes, I replied. He came back with the last sentence he ever said to me. "Tell me about her."

On October 19, 2004, he let go his grip on life.

KENNAN GAVE ONE final public interview, in 2002, when he was ninety-eight, warning that the United States should not rush into Iraq. "War has a momentum of its own, and it carries you away from all thoughtful intentions when you get into it. Today, if we went into Iraq, like the president would like us to do, you know where you begin. You never know where you are going to end."

His body was frail, though, and he knew it was time to tie up his most important loose end. One day he put on his coat and tie and told his nurse, Betsy Barrett, that he wanted to pray for his mother, who, he said, had died knowing that she would never know her son. He went to his church and spent fifteen minutes on his knees. He never mentioned her again.

Kennan was determined to be alert for his hundredth birthday. As the day neared, he tried to stay sharp by folding little pieces of paper and trying to keep track of them. But he knew he was losing control of his mind, just as his wife of more than seventy years had. Annelise was of sound body, but she could no longer remember what she had done during the day.

One of the last things Barrett remembers is Kennan tenderly looking at Annelise, who he knew could no longer understand him. He wished, he said, that "we could go down the steps and out through the door together."

He died, at age 101, on March 17, 2005, just 149 days after the death of his lifelong rival and friend.

NOTES

The following abbreviations appear in the endnotes and bibliography.

AFOH: Air Force Oral History

AHN: Anina Hilken Nitze (Paul's mother)

BRB: boiler room boxes (Boxes found in the boiler room of SAIS; these files are now in the possession of the Library of Congress.)

CBW: C. Ben Wright

CEB: Charles Eustis Bohlen

CFR: Council on Foreign Relations

DGA: Dean Gooderham Acheson

FHTG: *From Hiroshima to Glasnost*

FRUS: Foreign Relations of the United States

GFK: George F. Kennan

GFKFBI: George Kennan file held by the Federal Bureau of Investigation

GFKP: George F. Kennan papers

GFKP OF: George F. Kennan papers, Office Files (These files were examined before the Princeton Library made them public; thus, the box numbering system is likely different from the one in current use.)

HSTL: Harry S. Truman Library

JEK: Joan Elisabeth Kennan (Kennan's daughter)

JEKP: Joan Elisabeth Kennan Private Papers

JH: Jeanette Hotchkiss (Kennan's sister)

JLG: John Lewis Gaddis

JRO: J. Robert Oppenheimer

LOC: Library of Congress

LP: Lana Peters (Svetlana Alliluyeva/Svetlana Stalin)