Let me begin by saying that a terminal nuclear war is not an unlikely prospect. We have come disturbingly close many times, and current circumstances make the prospect quite threatening. I would like to review several factors that contribute to this state of affairs, concentrating on American initiatives — first, because these initiatives are significant and ominous; and second, because we can do something about them. A discussion of the contributions of the Soviet Union and other powers to the race towards destruction would not, I believe, affect the considerations that follow in any substantive way; if anything, it would reinforce these conclusions.

What are the factors contributing to the drift towards nuclear war? For analytic purposes, I will divide these into four categories, discussing them each in turn (though there are numerous interactions among them):
1. technical advances in weaponry;
2. domestic processes that impel the superpowers towards militarization of their societies and economies;
3. the superpower conflict — the Cold War system of global management and conflict;
4. tensions and conflicts that may engage the superpowers, leading to escalation and war.

Consider the first category. At present, the United States can explode more than 13,000 nuclear weapons over the Soviet Union; France and Britain add about 1,000 more, and their arsenals are rapidly expanding. The U.S.S.R. can explode about 8,500 nuclear weapons over the U.S. Of the 11,000 U.S. strategic nuclear weapons, about half are essentially invulnerable — on submarines. Most of the Soviet warheads are land-based; 95 per cent of these missiles are liquid-fuelled. The Center for Defense Information, which provides these figures, comments that "neither country is superior in nuclear weapons." Rather, "we are mutually inferior because there is no superiority in mutual destruction."

One of the most dangerous recent developments is the installation of Pershing II and Cruise missiles in Europe (specifically, Germany) — the former with a few minutes flight time to Russian targets, the latter theoretically undetectable with stealth technology. Further dangers are posed by the continued development of the MX missile, which, as Air Force Chief of Staff Lewis Allen and others have pointed out, has a counterforce first-strike capacity, as do the Trident II submarine-launched missiles. The Pershing and Cruise missiles, by virtue of their speed, precision and possible undetectability, will also be regarded by the Russians as first-strike weapons. The effect of these new systems, as many commentators — notably former Defense Secretary Robert McNamara — have pointed out, is virtually to guarantee that the U.S.S.R. will move to a launch-on-warning strategy, which means that war is likely if only by inadvertence, error, and concern over rising tensions. American computerized-response systems have frequently failed, warning of a nuclear attack and calling for a response that was aborted only by human intervention. Soviet systems will be
considerably less efficient and more prone to false warnings, and under conditions of tension and uncertainty such dangers will increase. It is difficult to imagine any greater threat to the U.S. than these recent programs.

The Russians generally lag about two to five years in the development of new weapons technology; so we may expect that they will have comparable systems in place before too long, compelling the U.S. too to rely on a computer-determined response — again raising the likelihood of war. Anti-satellite and "Star Wars" weapons (which the U.S.S.R. will properly regard as "offensive" since they could, for example, be used to attack military communications satellites) simply raise the threat several notches higher. Unless these developments can be stopped, war will be escaped only by a miracle.

These matters have been the primary concern of the peace movement. That makes sense; these are ominous developments indeed. But the effect has been essentially nil. In the U.S., polls indicate that about three-quarters of the population supports a nuclear freeze; some of these may even know that this is official Soviet policy, though the media have barely reported the fact. The peace movement does seem to have compelled the U.S. administration to enter into arms control negotiations, but this response seems designed to deflect criticism so that the planned military programs can proceed without interference.

**Politics of the Arms Build-Up** This leads to the second question. What is the reason for these developments? The conventional answer is that we must deter the unremitting Russian drive for global conquest, but a look at the actual history reveals that such answers are not very convincing. Let me review a few crucial cases, beginning, however, with a few general observations.

In terms of security from direct attack, the United States has been unusually privileged. There is no military threat on its borders, or nearby; it is separated from major adversaries by oceans that it commands. In the late 1940s, the only potential military threat to the U.S. lay in the development of intercontinental missiles with hydrogen-bomb warheads. On grounds of security, then, the primary concern of U.S. planners should have been to initiate arms control negotiations to
The development of these systems. No such effort was undertaken. These facts do not comport well with the belief that security considerations dominated U.S. policy.

In fact, Stalin’s “peace offensives” were regarded, from the late 1940s, as serious threats that had to be resisted. Initiatives such as Stalin’s 1952 proposal to unify a demilitarized Germany under internationally supervised elections (which elections the Communists were sure to lose) were rebuffed in favor of the incorporation of a rearmed Germany in a Western military alliance — a guarantee that the Soviet grip over its European satellites would not relax; whatever internal changes took place in the U.S.S.R. (In the light of history and strategic considerations, no Russian government would permit erosion of its control over this region in the face of a rearmed Germany allied to the United States.)

These facts again suggest that security of the U.S. was not a major concern of the planners. They were willing to accept the development of the only military systems that could directly threaten the United States and to maintain tension and conflict in Europe that might, perhaps, have been lessened. Other considerations outweighed the concern for security. One was that the U.S. was then committed to a “rollback” strategy, with the intent of causing the U.S.S.R. or successor states to yield to the American conception of world order. These plans were elaborated, by the U.S. National Security Council in NSC-68 — a central document of modern history. Furthermore, the U.S. strategic conception, since the end of the war, involved the “defense” of large areas of the globe, that is, their incorporation into an American-dominated system. There were also purely domestic considerations. I will return to all of these matters; I merely note at this point that they evidently outweighed the concern for the security of the United States — a point that merits more attention than it ordinarily receives.

Turning to some relevant history, there have been three periods of major expansion of strategic weapons systems: the early 1950s, the early 1960s, and the current period. If we hope to understand what lies behind the arms race, it makes good sense to ask just what was happening in the world during these periods to motivate strategic developments. Was there some sudden new threat to the U.S.? Or was there a change in
the international situation that required a defensive reaction of some dramatic kind? In fact, there was no relevant change in the international climate. Threats were contrived in each case, and it is clear that they were not the operative factors.

The outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 was presented as the reason for the vast expansion that quadrupled U.S. military spending. But we know that the plans were laid prior to the Korean War, which was simply exploited to justify the expansion. These spending plans and the thinking that lay behind them were expressed in NSC-68, which was produced just prior to the Korean War and declassified in 1975. The document proclaims that "the cold war is in fact a real war in which the survival of the free world is at stake," and that we must conduct it as such. The Russians are bent on world conquest; it is up to us to stop them. The study also gives an analysis of the relative power of the U.S.S.R. and the U.S., showing that the U.S. (even putting its allies aside) was vastly more powerful along every conceivable dimension. No concrete evidence is given to illustrate the Soviet move towards world conquest, nor is there a discussion of how a country just barely beginning to reconstruct itself after wartime devastation — one far outmatched by its rivals — could undertake such an enterprise.

NSC-68 proposed a rollback strategy to "foster the seeds of destruction within the Soviet system" — a strategy that would allow us to "negotiate a settlement [on our terms] with the Soviet Union (or a successor state or states)." (The idea of a successor state was not entirely a joke at the time; recall that the U.S. was then supporting and supplying armies inside the U.S.S.R. that had been established by Hitler.) Within the U.S., it would be necessary to impose "sacrifice and discipline." We would have to cease wasting resources on consumption and devote ourselves to war, and we would have to overcome the "vulnerability" of an open society with its "excess of tolerance," "the excesses of a permanently open mind," and "dissent among us" — a goal that was largely achieved during the period mislabelled as one of "McCarthyism." This was the context for a substantial increase in military spending, undertaken soon after when the Korean War — itself a more complex affair than is commonly assumed — provided an excuse.

So much for the first case. What about the Kennedy military
build-up? It was not easy, during the early 1960s, to identify a threat to the U.S. anywhere in the world. A few were conjured up — for example, an alleged North Vietnamese attack on an obscure Laotian town (the report was false). But in fact nothing in the international environment motivated the strategic weapons programs which set off the current phase of the arms race. During the 1960 election campaign, Democratic liberals condemned Eisenhower for frittering away our resources on luxuries and taking too passive a stance while our enemies were marching from strength to strength. In the absence of any plausible international threat, the famous “missile gap” was fabricated. Eisenhower denied its existence and Kennedy’s advisers learned that he was right, but as McGeorge Bundy stated in an internal memo, the missile gap had a “useful shorthand effect of calling attention to . . . our basic military posture. . .”; more precisely, it provided a means to frighten the public into supporting the planned military expansion.

The story was re-enacted in 1980. President Reagan continually insists that he is following in the footsteps of John F. Kennedy — a claim that the Democrats reject indignantly, though it has more than a little merit. Reagan’s programs are in several important respects close to Kennedy’s, and the 1980 campaign rhetoric was reminiscent of that used in 1960. Like Eisenhower in the eyes of the Kennedy liberals, Carter was portrayed by the Reaganites as being insufficiently militant and a non-activist — a “wimp” standing by helplessly while the Russians took over the world. The major domestic programs of the Kennedy Administration were a huge military build-up and a regressive tax cut designed to stimulate investment. Our implacable adversary, Kennedy stated, is “a monolithic and ruthless conspiracy” that opposes our benevolence around the world, threatening global conquest — Reagan’s “evil empire.” The similarities of program and rhetoric tell us something about the real spectrum of American politics. There are also some differences; there was nothing in the Kennedy period to match the mean-spirited attack by Reagan on the poor, though one must bear in mind the decline in relative U.S. power in the interim and the corresponding reduction in the means to achieve domestic and international ends. Kennedy could envision “great societies at home and grand designs abroad,” in the
words of presidential adviser Walter Heller, a well-known Keynesian economist, but now the homeless and destitute must sacrifice for the "grand designs."

In the recent period, international events have again been exploited to justify increased military spending — first by Carter and then by Reagan (the Iran hostage crisis and the invasion of Afghanistan). But again, the plans had been proposed in late 1978 — well before these events took place. In all these periods, the alleged reasons for the military build-up were simply devices to mobilize the public, which must pay the costs of "defense." The plans were laid prior to the events that were exploited to justify the plans; when the excuses were found to be fraudulent, the programs proceeded without change. It seems clear that there is little if any relationship between the reasons given and the plans that were put into effect.

What then are the real reasons? There are two major reasons: one related to the domestic economy, the other to the perceived need to impose order in U.S. domains.

**Domestic Forces** During each of these three periods, there was concern over domestic economic stagnation. It was felt necessary to get the country moving again (as Kennedy put it). In a modern industrial society, there is one primary idea about how to deal with this problem: state intervention to stimulate the economy. For a variety of reasons, the device that best serves the needs of existing power and privilege is what is sometimes called "military Keynesianism": the creation of a state-guaranteed market for high-technology, "rapidly-obsolescing" waste production, meaning armaments.

There are surely more efficient and less dangerous techniques of economic management than military spending. Why, then, the regular recourse to military spending? The theoretical alternatives, unfortunately, do not serve to enhance privilege and power, as does the creation of a state-guaranteed market to stimulate high-technology production (which is why these measures regularly elicit business support). The basic point was explained in a 1949 *Business Week* article, which expressed concern over Stalin's "peace offensive" and extolled the advantages of military Keynesianism over other measures that would have served to deal with the domestic problems at hand:

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But there is a tremendous social and economic difference between welfare pump-priming and military pump-priming. It makes the government's role in the economy — its importance to business — greater than ever. Military spending doesn't really alter the structure of the economy. It goes through the regular channels. As far as a businessman is concerned, a munitions order from the government is much like an order from a private customer. But the kind of welfare and public works spending that Truman plans does alter the economy. It makes new channels of its own. It creates new institutions. It redistributes income. It shifts demand from one industry to another. It changes the whole economic pattern.3

This analysis actually understates the businessman's case for military spending. The development of computers, for example, has largely been a product of state intervention through the military system, and remains so today; development of the current "fifth-generation supercomputers" is financed by the Pentagon, the Department of Energy (which is responsible for nuclear weapons), and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (largely a military-related enterprise), and these organizations will be the prime users in the early phases at least. It is commonly observed that these methods are less satisfactory than the Japanese system of state-coordinated production geared to the commercial market, but there are many necessary qualifications. Based in part on historical contingencies, and in part on a kind of international division of labor in the state-capitalist economies, the U.S. takes the lead in the costly enterprise of innovation and development, leaving the Japanese freer to concern themselves with the profitable task of application and commercial sale. By now, this is leading to internal conflict in the global state-capitalist system — a matter of serious concern which I cannot pursue here.

A further reason for the attractiveness of military Keynesianism is that the ordinary citizen must be willing to pay the costs of subsidizing the most advanced sectors of the economy. The citizen can be mobilized to make this effort on the basis of fear of the great enemy about to destroy us. Kennedy did attempt another method — the man-in-space program — presented in quasi-military terms of national grandeur, but people soon became bored at the sight of some clown walking on the moon and this device had to be abandoned. Military spending does not have this defect, if the public can be sufficiently terrorized. As the American satirist, H.L. Mencken, once observed: "The whole aim of practical politics is to keep the pop-
ulace alarmed (and hence clamorous to be led to safety) by menacing it with an endless series of hobgoblins, all of them imaginary." The Pentagon, each year, puts out a document intended to frighten the population. The 1983 publicity release observed ominously that the U.S.S.R. has a great advantage over us in liquid-fuelled missiles, which is quite accurate, since the U.S. abandoned these as unreliable twenty years ago. The Pentagon failed to add that the Soviet Union holds a commanding lead in horse-drawn artillery, which is probably also true.

For such reasons, the Pentagon system has become the American system of industrial policy planning. Once this system of state management of the economy is established, it is exceedingly difficult to dismantle, as powerful vested interests add their weight to the continuing advantages already noted. It is no surprise that Reaganomics emerged largely as a system of "military Keynesianism gone wild," leading predictably to a huge deficit, deterioration of the ability to compete in international trade, and other deleterious consequences.

Reagan's domestic programs entail a substantial transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich (a fact evident in the shift in real disposable income under his regime), and massive state intervention in the economy through the military system. It was evident, and predictable, that the political leadership would therefore be compelled to seek international confrontation and to devise a series of threats, ranging from Libyan hit men stalking Washington to assassinate Our Leader, to the military threat posed by Grenada, to the "window of vulnerability." The accompanying rhetoric is reminiscent of NSC-68 and the exploitation of the Korean War as proof of Soviet intentions, as well as of the Kennedy days.

It is, incidentally, likely that the second Reagan term will see a diminution in hysterical rhetoric and in the desperate search for international confrontation. The reason that will be proffered is that the Russians have been tamed by Reagan's stern display of manliness; the real reason is that it is now necessary to face the costs of Reagan's Keynesian excesses, and accelerated military spending will not serve this end. Thus the Soviet threat of global conquest will dissipate somewhat — this, of course, on the assumption that no major challenge arises to
American domination. If, say, Marcos goes the way of the Shah or Somoza, then the Russians will once again be on the march.

For similar reasons, one can expect that the U.S. will now show some interest in arms negotiations, and may even accept an agreement as long as it satisfies certain basic conditions. The comparative advantage of the U.S. is no longer in the area of production; so limits on scale of weaponry are tolerable, even desirable. But the state role in development of advanced technology must be preserved; so no limits can be accepted on research and development of new and more advanced weapons systems (in conformity with the now well-established system of industrial policy planning). Build-down, combined with Star Wars, is a natural posture for the U.S., though there are contradictions, since the allegedly "defensive" systems compel the U.S.S.R. to enhance its offensive capacity. Meanwhile the debates will proceed in their largely irrelevant terms.

One can see why the substantial popular support for a nuclear freeze had no effect. A nuclear freeze would place limits on the state role in high-technology development and production, and is therefore unacceptable. In the absence of any realistic alternative system of state-capitalist industrial management, the nuclear freeze cannot arise as a serious issue within the political system, whatever popular attitudes may be. As Seymour Melman has been emphasizing for many years, the disarmament movement must place the issue of economic conversion in a central place on its agenda, or it will achieve nothing.

The International Factor The first factor that impels the militarization of society and the economy is domestic; the second is international. The point was lucidly explained by Carter's secretary of defense, Harold Brown, in his final presentation to Congress in January 1980: "Our strategic nuclear capabilities," he said, "provide the foundation on which our security rests. With them, our other forces become meaningful instruments of military and political power." In other words, aggression and subversion can proceed unimpeded under the nuclear umbrella — the real significance of "deterrence," for both superpowers.

It is to be expected that domestic militarization will be
accompanied by an "activist" (i.e., aggressive) foreign policy. One reason, already mentioned, is that the population must be mobilized to pay the costs and must therefore be convinced of the terrible threat it faces. A domestic program of military Keynesianism thus fosters a search for confrontation and military adventures abroad. The relation may also be established in the opposite direction. Concern over a loss of hegemony abroad requires intervention, and therefore reinforcement of the nuclear umbrella under which such intervention may proceed effectively. An ideology of assertiveness, mock heroics, and machismo fosters both domestic militarization and foreign adventures. These processes generally develop in parallel.

The Kennedy period is a case in point. After the failed aggression against Cuba, Kennedy launched a terrorist war that continued for twenty years, and perhaps still continues, complete with assassination attempts, bombing, sinking of fishing boats, poisoning of food and livestock, and much more. Cuba has been the prime target of international terrorism in the past decades, and therefore, predictably, is considered in Western doctrine to be a major center of international terrorism. In a masterful propaganda stroke, the alleged immunity of Cuba and other communist countries from international terrorism was presented by Claire Sterling and others as the proof that the communists are the source of this plague.

Elsewhere in Latin America, the U.S. also stepped up the attack against the civilian population. In 1961, the Kennedy Administration made a decision that, in terms of its impact, is one of the most important of current history. They decided to change the mission of the Latin American military from "hemispheric defense" to "internal security." It goes without saying that the U.S. can determine the mission of the Latin American military, but what is particularly important is the nature of this particular change. Hemispheric defense was not a serious concept; there was no one against whom to defend the hemisphere, except the U.S., and that is not what was intended. But internal security is a very serious matter; it is a euphemism for war against the domestic population. And that is exactly what happened. In the years that followed 1961, the military forces trained and supported by the U.S. took over country after country, instituting Nazi-like national security states which in-
troduced high-technology torture and terror, sometimes employing the same Nazi thugs who had designed these methods and who had been brought to Latin America with U.S. assistance, forming what some have called a "Fourth Reich." The result, in the words of the later Linowitz Commission, was "a plague of repression" that had no counterpart in the bloody history of the continent. The Kennedy Administration organized the basic structure of the death squads in El Salvador under the rubric of the Alliance for Progress. Kennedy and his immediate successor were involved in the military coup in Brazil, which had a significant domino effect throughout the continent. Kennedy also moved to block the threat of a democratic election in Guatemala — a country that had been turned into a chamber of horrors by an intervention in 1954 which overthrew a democratic regime pursuing programs reminiscent of the New Deal; in the Dominican Republic, Kennedy acted to prevent Juan Bosch from mobilizing popular support through reformist measures, and Bosch was subsequently overthrown in a military coup.

In El Salvador, the U.S. showed no concern when democratic elections were blocked by the military in 1972 and 1977. But problems were arising that demanded attention. During the 1970s, popular organizations were forming — many of them church-based, Bible-study classes that became self-help groups of various sorts. The 1970s also witnessed the beginnings of peasant associations, the growth of unions, and similar developments. It seemed that the basis for democracy might be in its incipient stages — a danger that became more severe after the overthrow of Somoza. It has, of course, been understood for many years that a functioning democracy requires the existence of some organizational structure that will allow powerless and isolated people to gain information, form opinions, design policies and put them forth in the political arena. Without such a structure, democratic forms have little meaning. The growth of popular organizations in El Salvador during the decade of the 1970s therefore posed an unacceptable threat.

The problem was faced by the Carter Administration, which had established human rights as "the Soul of our foreign policy." Carter backed a reformist military coup in October 1979,
ridding the country of the dictator Romero who, it was feared, might suffer the fate of Somoza. Killings began on a hitherto unknown scale. By January of 1980, the junta had fallen apart, reformist military elements and liberal Christian Democrats and socialists had left, and shortly after, the country was safely in the hands of the usual thugs whom the U.S. supports in the Third World, with Duarte now serving as a useful cover. The Archbishop was assassinated in March, shortly after Carter had rejected his plea to halt military aid which, the Archbishop had warned, “instead of promoting greater justice and peace in El Salvador will surely increase injustice here and sharpen the repression that has been unleashed against the people’s organizations fighting to defend their most fundamental human rights.” Carter’s war against the peasantry began in May 1980 under the guise of land reform, the first major atrocity being the Rio Sumpul massacre — an event completely suppressed in the U.S. media for over a year, as was most of the terror of the period, though the facts were readily available. Thousands were killed in military operations and by government-based death squads. In June the university was attacked and destroyed, and the political leadership of the opposition was murdered in November.

These measures were reasonably successful. By the end of the Carter Administration, little was left of the popular organizations; so we could then contemplate democratic elections — much to the applause of the press, and with Canadian observers certifying that all was fine (since no one was killed before their eyes).

A problem was that these measures drove many people to join the guerrillas — sure proof that the Russians were coming. Reagan took over the task in January 1981, in the context already described. His February White Paper alleged that the communist states had begun a trickle of aid to the guerrillas in September 1980 — four months after the war against the peasantry had begun in earnest and after many thousands had been massacred. The next step would have been direct U.S. military intervention of the type that Kennedy had carried out, without a whisper of protest, in South Vietnam twenty years earlier. It was assumed wrongly that the dread “Vietnam syndrome” had been cured. But a substantial and unexpected
popular opposition developed, almost totally excluding the articulate and privileged classes, but nevertheless visible and effective enough to cause the government to draw back — an important fact. The U.S. administration retreated, fearing that the more essential economic programs might be threatened by popular discontent. Shortly afterwards, the media began to raise questions about the White Paper, though not the important ones, and honest reporting of what was taking place began to appear, fuelling further popular discontent.

Much the same was true in the early 1950s. Focussing again on the Western Hemisphere, in 1951 the U.S. began training Latin American officers in counter-insurgency, and within three years, thirteen of the twenty Latin American republics were under military rule — the highest figure for the century. The best-known case was Guatemala, already mentioned briefly. This example, incidentally, should put to rest the doctrine often expressed, even on the left, that the U.S. acts to support those who share its “values” — unless we are really affected by a supreme form of cynicism. It is hard to see how Arevalo and Arbenz reflected our values less than Castillo Armas and the series of Guatemalan Himmlers whom we have supported since. More generally, as several studies have shown, U.S. aid in Latin America and elsewhere correlates rather well with torture and other atrocities against the domestic population. One cannot conclude from this that the U.S. government has a positive love of torture and death squads. Rather, these are useful instruments to ensure a higher goal: improvement of the climate for business operations and safeguarding of the fundamental freedom — the freedom to exploit. A sudden and usually brief concern for other freedoms occasionally becomes manifest — at the rhetorical level only — when this fundamental freedom is threatened, but only the most wilfully blind can fail to see that preservation of the fundamental freedom is the “value” that is dominant among planners, reflecting their social base and support.

Summarizing, the role of the state in simulating and organizing the economy, and the concern to maintain order and discipline within our broad domains (the two functions often operating in parallel), lead repeatedly to domestic militarization and fuelling of the arms race — all under the propa-
ganda cover of defense against the Great Satan (to borrow Khomeini's useful contribution to modern political discourse). Our superpower enemy behaves in much the same way. The prime concern of its military-bureaucratic elite is to run their dungeon without interference, and to control the satellites, while searching for targets of opportunity elsewhere. Since their rule is based on violence, they also naturally turn to domestic militarization as their essential policy, and they too require the measures described by Harold Brown, cited earlier. For partially similar reasons, both superpowers are locked into military systems of domestic social and economic management and global domination. It will be extremely difficult to extricate ourselves from this system of control and domination.

The Superpower Conflict This leads to the third topic mentioned at the outset: the superpower conflict and the Cold War — the alleged reason for the arms race. There is no doubt that each of the superpowers would prefer to have the other disappear, and, as noted, the U.S. did for a time toy with rollback as a strategy (one even hears echoes of this strategy among the more extreme Reaganites today). But these have not been the operative policies. While the alleged fear that Russia might overrun Europe or perhaps the world is regularly invoked, we know from the documentary record that U.S. analysts never expected a Soviet military attack in Europe and, with the exception of the barbaric invasion of Afghanistan, which had largely been conceded to the Russian sphere of control long before, Soviet military forces have not passed beyond the Yalta boundaries. In relative terms, Soviet power has declined since its peak in the late 1950s, just as U.S. hegemony has declined as the bipolar post-war system has slowly eroded. Whatever the leadership may wish, each superpower has for a long time recognized that the other is there to stay, short of mutual annihilation, and each has settled into a tacit partnership in global management: the Cold War system. The picture appears with relative clarity if we consider the events of the Cold War, putting the rhetoric aside.

Let us begin with Grenada. When the Bishop government came into power, it met with immediate U.S. hostility, not because it was more terroristic or violent than the norm — that
could hardly have been claimed — but because it threatened to use Grenada's minuscule resources for domestic needs rather than subordinating itself to the transcendent needs of Big Brother. This cannot be tolerated because of the "domino effect," which, in its realistic version, means the possible demonstration effect of successful independent development. It is, then, no surprise that the U.S. immediately proceeded to isolate and threaten the Bishop government and to drive it into the hands of the Soviet Union and Cuba, thus justifying further harsh measures on the grounds that the U.S. was then threatened by the evil empire.

The October 1983 invasion was considered a splendid victory in the U.S. A total of 6,000 American elite troops succeeded in overcoming the resistance of a few Cuban military men and a small Grenadan militia, winning 8,000 medals for their valor and evoking a jingoist reaction that cannot fail to recall days when another great power was winning cheap victories. Just prior to the invasion, Cuba had offered to cooperate with U.S. efforts to evacuate the American students at the medical school, and Cuban paramilitary forces had been ordered not to fire unless directly attacked. Cuba received no response until after the invasion, when the U.S. sent a muted apology for having attacked Cubans in the confusion of the landing. All of this was suppressed in the U.S. media, with rare exceptions.

There were critics of the Grenada invasion. George Ball pointed out that Reagan was invoking a version of the Brezhnev doctrine, which was formulated in 1968 when Soviet forces were sent to crush the threat of moves towards socialism in Czechoslovakia; Ball called it "the Reaganev doctrine." That is fair enough, but let us look at the matter in slightly greater historical depth. The Brezhnev doctrine was not original. It was a close paraphrase of the Johnson doctrine, formulated to justify the dispatch of American troops to overcome the danger of democracy in the Dominican Republic in 1965. This doctrine, too, was not particularly original. It mimicked the Khruschev doctrine enunciated in 1956, when Russian forces invaded Hungary. And this was merely a reiteration of what we might call "the Eisenhower doctrine," invoked when the U.S. overthrew Guatemalan democracy in 1954. This in turn
reflected the principles of the Truman doctrine, the main purpose of which was to set in motion the huge American counter-insurgency operation in Greece, which was part of the worldwide U.S. enterprise of destroying the anti-fascist resistance and restoring collaborationist elements to power.

Major incidents of the Cold War generally fit the same pattern. The typical event of the Cold War is an act of aggression or subversion by one of the superpowers against an enemy within its own domains, combined with an appeal to the threat of the Great Satan. This regular pattern goes a long way towards explaining why the Cold War persists. The system has a certain functional utility for the superpowers. Each repeatedly deems it necessary to attack some region in its own domain to ensure obedience; each also finds it necessary to mobilize the domestic population and its sometimes-recalcitrant allies in support of brutal and often costly actions, typically by means of an appeal to the Great Satan.

In fact, the Great Satan is there. Reagan’s “evil empire” is exactly that, as is its American counterpart. The enemy is indeed ugly and threatening, with an ample record of brutality and atrocities, brandishing means of destruction that can scarcely be ignored. So there is at least a minimal degree of plausibility when the Soviet Union appeals to its population to support the “defense of Afghanistan” against bandits supported by the Central Intelligence Agency and other warmongers, or when the U.S. does the same while defending South Vietnam by armed attack. The Cold War system of global management is, of course, an unstable one, and sooner or later it will break down, as it has almost done in the past. But planners, whether in business or government, think in short-range terms, and in these terms the moves seem effective.

The idea of appealing to defense against a Great Satan did not, of course, originate with the Cold War. It goes far back in history. But just limiting ourselves to cases relevant to current concerns, consider the U.S. war against Nicaragua. The U.S. has been torturing Nicaragua for 130 years. The first major U.S. armed intervention in Central America occurred in 1854, when the U.S. Navy burned down the town of San Juan del Norte. This was not a capricious act; it was undertaken to avenge an insult. An American millionaire, Cornelius Van-
derbilt, had sailed a yacht to the town and officials had attempted to levy port charges; so in response the U.S. Navy destroyed the town. (Historians give varying versions of this story, all at the same moral level.) There have been many similar cases since then.

What did we do before we could defend ourselves from the Bolshevik threat? Woodrow Wilson, the great apostle of self-determination, celebrated his doctrine by sending the marines to Haiti and the Dominican Republic, where they re-established slavery, burned villages, and tortured and murdered the inhabitants, leaving a legacy that remains today. Marine Commander Thorpe explained to his men that some of them were defending against the Huns here. The hand of the Germans was particularly evident in Haiti, where "the niggers" were putting up such a strong resistance that no other explanation was possible.

Neither the historical record nor analysis of the Cold War gives much credence to the view that the U.S. is primarily concerned with defense against one Great Satan or another, any more than its superpower enemy is. What then is the real reason for the persistent U.S. assault against democracy, independence and human rights? The United States is a remarkably open society; so we can find plausible answers to this question in the documentary record. During World War II, American élites realized that the war would end with the U.S. in a position of global dominance; so, as one might expect, they undertook serious planning to design the post-war world. Government and business planners developed the concept of a "Grand Area" — a region that was "strategically necessary for world control" and that had to be subordinated to the needs of the American economy, providing markets and free access to raw materials. The Grand Area was to include the Western Hemisphere, the Far East, and the former British Empire, which the U.S. was then in the process of dismantling and taking over (a process called "anti-imperialism" in the literature). As for Europe, the fear was not of Russian invasion, but of economic collapse leading to the rise of domestic Communist parties, which might have tried to exclude this crucial region from the Grand Area.

Time being brief, I cannot review the documentary evi-
dence, but let me give an example of the way in which the problems were perceived from the liberal side of the spectrum. Consider George Kennan, the influential head of the State Department Planning Staff, and one of the most level-headed and thoughtful of American planners, who is now regarded as a leading critic and dove. In 1948 he produced an important study, State Department Policy Planning Study (PPS) 23, in which he explained the problems and tasks of the U.S. as follows:

We have about 50% of the world's wealth but only 6.3% of its population. This disparity is particularly great as between ourselves and the peoples of Asia. In this situation, we cannot fail to be the object of envy and resentment. Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will permit us to maintain this position of disparity without positive detriment to our national security. To do so, we will have to dispense with all sentimentality and day-dreaming; and our attention will have to be concentrated everywhere on our immediate national objectives. We need not deceive ourselves that we can afford today the luxury of altruism and world-benefaction. . . . We should cease to talk about vague — and for the Far East — unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization. The day is not far off when we are going to have to deal in straight power concepts. The less we are then hampered by idealistic slogans, the better.

This document happened to be directed at Asia, but the U.S. is a global power and its concerns therefore are more generalized. Kennan himself applied this thinking to Latin America during a 1950 meeting of Latin American ambassadors in which he observed that a prime U.S. concern is "the protection of our raw materials" (my emphasis); no mincing of words here. He explained further:

The final answer might be an unpleasant one, but . . . we should not hesitate before police repression by the local government. This is not shameful since the Communists are essentially traitors. . . . It is better to have a strong regime in power than a liberal government if it is indulgent and relaxed and penetrated by Communists.

The term "Communist" has a technical usage in American political discourse, one that is explained in a State Department intelligence analysis at about the same time. The analysis noted a problem spreading throughout much of the world, namely, "the wide acceptance of the idea that the government has direct responsibility for the welfare of the people." The term "Communist" has come to refer to people afflicted with this heresy, with the implication that they must be stopped by any
means — by repressive measures if need be.

Special applications of these doctrines were established for particular regions. For example, in 1948, NSC-48 set out the U.S. role in Asia:

While scrupulously avoiding assumption of responsibility for raising Asiatic living standards, it is to the U.S. interest to promote the ability of these countries to maintain . . . the economic conditions prerequisite to political stability. . . .

Here “stability” is a code word for obedience. The document goes on to explain that the natural markets of Japan are in Southeast Asia, and that we must ensure that these are available to Japan so that this whole region can be incorporated within our global system instead of developing with Japan as the industrial center of an Asian “new order” from which the U.S. might be excluded. (We fought World War II in the Pacific to prevent that.) This, in fact, is the background thinking that led the U.S. into the Indochina war: prevention of successful independent development in Vietnam that might have had a domino or demonstration effect and caused “the rot to spread” throughout the region, leading Japan to associate itself with an independent bloc of nations. Note, incidentally, that the U.S. achieved its objective; it is a mistake to describe the Vietnam War simply as a “defeat.” Vietnam will never be a model for anyone; it will be lucky to survive, and the harsh and cruel measures taken by the U.S. in the past decade are intended to ensure that this partial victory is sustained. The U.S. is intent on winning the war in Nicaragua in the same way — to ensure that no successful social and economic development can take place there; that is the main point. It is very hard for a great power with the strength of the U.S. to be defeated in a conflict with such adversaries, and it rarely is.

Canadian Complicity I mentioned that Reagan gives the conventional formulation of the general doctrine when he says, for example, that “the Soviet Union underlies all the unrest that is going on” in the world and that without the Soviet Union, “there wouldn’t be any hot spots in the world.” Reagan’s rhetoric should be familiar here. The same point was explained at the same level of integrity by Canada’s Nobel Peace Prize winner, the eminent statesman, Lester Pearson. He declared in
the House of Commons in 1953 that "it is becoming increasingly clear from the events in Indo-China that there is a strategic connection between communist aggression in one part of the world and communist aggression in another." What concerned Pearson particularly was the aggression then being conducted by the Vietnamese against the French in Vietnam. As he had explained two years earlier before the House: "If the valiant efforts now being made by France to defend and complete the independence of Indo-China were to fail, the whole of Southeast Asia, including Burma, Malaya and Indonesia, with their important resources of rubber, rice and tin, might well come under communist control," with repercussions throughout South Asia. The conception is the one found in U.S. documents of the period. Person's view was that "Soviet colonial authority in Indochina would appear to be stronger than that of France" — this at a time when major French military forces were attempting to regain control of their former colony and no Russians were in sight. Both the U.S. and Canada recognized, ruefully, that Ho Chi Minh and his Vietminh resistance had overwhelming domestic support in the struggle against the U.S.-backed French invaders, and that the puppet regimes established by France had no legitimacy. But no matter: Ho Chi Minh was just an agent of Russian colonialism and aggression. The Indochina "hot spot" was the fault of the Russians, in absentia.

The U.S.-French invasion, backed by Canada, came close to nuclear war. The U.S. was planning direct intervention at the time of the Dienbienphu battle. The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised that the use of tactical nuclear weapons could be "the best means of smashing [the Vietminh] and cleaning up Indochina." Secretary of State Dulles stated that "in case of an all-out Vietminh attack," there would probably be "general war with China." "Our concept," he continued, "envisages a fight with nuclear weapons rather than the commitment of ground forces." This was October 1954. Dulles was concerned about a possible Vietminh response to American actions to subvert the Geneva peace agreements and to continue the war against Vietnam (the parallel with the U.S. stance towards the Contadora negotiations today is evident). A few months earlier, in August, the National Security Council had
established a doctrine that was to be reiterated year after year: in the event of "local Communist subversion or rebellion not constituting armed attack" — specifically, popular resistance to U.S.-backed terrorism in South Vietnam in violation of the Geneva accords — the U.S. would consider intervening directly with military force, also attacking China if this seemed "necessary and feasible." These crucial documents (NSC-5429/2 and others), which express a clear and explicit commitment to violate international law, are invariably suppressed in academic and popular histories. The standard account is the Pearson version of the Party Line: France — and consequently the United States — were defending Vietnam against Vietnamese aggression.

Canada continued to adhere to what the influential Canadian diplomat, John Holmes, called "the Canadian idea": "You hang on to your principles but you find a way around [them]." James Eayrs documents that, as a member of the International Control Commission (ICC), Canada routinely passed on military information to Washington, though Pearson was concerned that this be kept secret to avoid "very serious repercussions" (i.e., damage to Canada's image). The editor of the *Montreal Star* later wrote that the Canadians in the ICC "are functioning as spies when they were supposed to be serving as international civil servants." In 1964, Pearson was informed by Lyndon Johnson about U.S. plans to bomb North Vietnam the following year. His reaction was positive, though according to McGeorge Bundy's notes, he expressed "great reservations about the use of nuclear weapons" — caution befitting a Nobel Peace Prize laureate.®

As the American war against Indochina escalated, Canada participated enthusiastically, selling over $500 million worth of military equipment to the U.S., so that by 1970, it was, per capita, the largest international arms exporter. One Canadian commentator, George Grant, wrote that behind the high-minded rhetoric, Canadian society had become "a machine for greed, and our branch-plant industry is making a packet out of the demolition of Vietnam." The same was true of Japan, as it was during the Korean War. Offshore procurement — that is, the purchase of military equipment to demolish Indochina — was one of the most effective forms of U.S. foreign aid to the
industrial democracies during that period.

In a study published by the Canadian University Press Service, Ian Wiseman wrote that "every university in Canada received money from the U.S. defence complex" — meanwhile upholding "the Canadian idea." As for the U.S. idea, that was expressed with frankness by George Kennan in the remarks already quoted.

Returning to the main theme, why are we entitled to do all of these wonderful things? There is an answer to that too. We are good; so what we do is also good. As George Kennan put it, a "thoughtful observer" would "experience a certain gratitude to a Providence" that had given Americans "the responsibilities of moral and political leadership that history plainly intended them to bear." This thought was expressed at about the same time that he was explaining the real facts of the world about raising living standards, democratization, and human rights (in the passage quoted earlier). These ideas have been familiar for many years. At the turn of the century, the U.S. was engaged in what we call "the Spanish-American War," meaning the American war against the Philippines in which the inhabitants were liberated from their yoke. (About 200,000 were liberated permanently, while we destroyed much of the country.) All of this was understood rather well at home at the time. The New York City press described what was happening in the following way:

Whether we like it or not, we must go on slaughtering the natives in English fashion, and taking what muddy glory lies in the wholesale killing until they have learned to respect our arms. The more difficult task of getting them to respect our intentions will follow.

First we get them to respect our arms; they will come to respect our intentions later.

The same idea is common in the liberal press. Consider, for example, the New Republic — the major journal of American liberalism, and one highly regarded among American left-liberals and democratic socialists. In the issue of 2 April 1984, the editors offer some advice to Ronald Reagan:

The Reagan Administration, if it is honest, must argue bleakly that there are higher American priorities than Salvadoran human rights (human rights meaning, in this context, not anything so elevated as democracy but simply the physical security of persons who may or may not be suspected of potential anti-oligarchical sympathies), and that military aid must go forth regardless
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of how many are murdered, lest the Marxist-Leninist guerrillas win. And indeed, the guerrillas must not win. [My emphasis.]

The editors stress that "given a choice between communism and war for the people of El Salvador, no doubt the American people will choose the latter"; it is assumed without comment that the choice for the people of El Salvador properly lies in the hands of the American people, and that it is they who dictate policy. "'Nonintervention' long ago disappeared as a thinkable option"; "in the end the only moral choice may be military intervention," but (since this is a liberal journal) it will be "not in alliance with the death squads but in opposition to them" — the death squads, that is, that we helped establish and have regularly supported, and that we firmly oppose in such countries as Afghanistan.

This is an interesting document. One might try to search for historical precedents, beginning, perhaps, with the Nazi archives. Some comparisons do come to mind. For example, Colonel Vides Casanova, now minister of Defense in the Duarte Administration, which we support because of its loving advocacy of human rights, had something similar to say shortly after the reformist junta was established in October 1979. As reported by Ray Bonner, "he reminded those present that in 1932 the country had survived the killing of 30,000 peasants. 'Today, the armed forces are prepared to kill 200,000-300,000, if that's what it takes to stop a Communist takeover.'" During the peak of the furor over the Pol Pot atrocities, in 1977, Jean Lacouture cited a maxim attributed to the Khmer Rouge, commenting: "When men who talk of Marxism are able to say that only 1.5 million young Cambodians, out of six million, will be enough to rebuild a pure society, one can no longer speak of barbarism; what barbarians have ever acted in this way?" The Khmer Rouge statement, one implying that it was prepared to kill all but one to two million people, was widely publicized with much horror as proof that its mentality was comparable to Stalin's or Hitler's, perhaps worse. The quote turned out to be a fabrication, but the judgment is fair enough. Even Vides Casanova, or the fabricated Khmer Rouge source, however, did not go as far as the liberal editors of the New Republic, who say that we must proceed "regardless of how many are murdered," lest the Communist guerrillas win.
The Nuclear Precipice  This brings me to the fourth and last of the four topics mentioned at the outset. Given space constraints, I will only mention it, though it is the most important question of all. If we are seriously concerned to do something to reduce the likelihood of nuclear war, the first question we will seek to address is this: How is such a war likely to break out? No one has seriously expected that the U.S.S.R. would attack Western Europe or that we would attack the East. The primary danger is, rather, that some Third World conflict will get out of hand, engaging the superpowers, and leading to confrontation and war. This might happen in Central America, for example, if the U.S. pursues a suggestion by Walter Mondale to institute a “quarantine” or blockade of Nicaragua, stopping Soviet ships. The Globe and Mail comes close to advocating this in a remarkable editorial this morning (12 November 1984) that merits careful reading. It concedes that the Soviet ships that arrived in Nicaragua did not carry MIGs, but, the editorial contends, the ships have brought military hardware, perhaps even “a radar system that will allow the Nicaraguans to monitor their entire territory.” This is an intolerable affront to world order: “What business has the Soviet Union running arms into Central America? ... the Russians have no more right to bolster a friendly regime in Central America than the Americans have to topple an unfriendly one.” And, by parallel reasoning, the U.S. has no more right to bolster a friendly regime in Europe, the Near East or Asia, near Soviet borders, than the Russians have to topple an unfriendly one — an end to arms to European powers, Turkey, Israel, China, etc. In fact, using this logic, if one of these countries were under attack by a well-armed mercenary force based in a Soviet satellite and armed and directed by the Soviets, the U.S. would still not have the right to bolster it — by, for example, sending it a radar system to monitor its territory, penetrated by Soviet planes on bombing and supply missions. Since Nicaragua will surely not receive means of self-defense from Canada, or other U.S. allies, and since it is outrageous for the U.S.S.R. to provide it with the means of self-defense, it must simply succumb quietly. If the U.S.S.R. or Cuba provides it with aid, a blockade is presumably legitimate to prevent what they have no right to do. And if a superpower confrontation results, we can blame the
Russians as we go up in smoke. Putting aside its moral level, this is the kind of thinking that has led us close to nuclear war in the past, and will do so again.

For some years, the major threat has been in the Middle East. An Air Force study called “Airforce 2000,” reported on in the *Globe and Mail* (3 October 1983), concluded that “without a settlement of the Arab-Israeli issue, war in the Middle East is virtually inevitable. . . . The possibility of global peace seems remote.” That is a reasonable assessment.

How has the United States reacted to this increasingly hazardous situation? There is no time to review the diplomatic record here, but it is very illuminating. I reviewed it through mid-1983 in my recent book (*Fateful Triangle*), and the story continues since in the same way. It is beyond question that since 1970, at least, there have been opportunities to achieve a peaceful diplomatic settlement that would recognize the rights of Israelis and Palestinians. In every case, the possibilities have been blocked by the U.S. in support of Israeli rejectionism. The bare facts of the matter, as well as their meaning, have been suppressed, denied and inverted in a spectacularly successful propaganda campaign that would have made Orwell gasp. The peace movement has also tended to ignore the issue, thus largely consigning itself to irrelevance, since this stand is likely to lead to an eventual nuclear war.

The real victims of the policies I have been describing are millions of suffering, tortured and brutalized people throughout the Third World. Our highly effective ideological institutions protect us from seeing this, except sporadically. If we had the honesty and the moral courage, we would not let a day pass without listening to the cries of the victims of our actions, or inaction. We would turn on the radio in the morning and hear the account of a Guatemalan army operation in Quiche province — one supplied and backed by the U.S. and its Israeli client — in which the army entered a town, collected its population in a central town building, took out all the men and beheaded them, raped the women and then killed them, and took the children to the nearby river and killed them by bashing their heads against the rocks. A few people escaped and told the story, but not to us. We would turn on the radio in the afternoon and listen to a Portuguese priest in Timor telling
how the Indonesian army, enjoying constant and crucial U.S. military and diplomatic support, forced villagers to stab, chop and beat to death people suspected of supporting the resistance, including members of their own families. And in the evening we would listen to some of the victims who escaped the latest bombing attack on villages or fleeing civilians in El Salvador — an attack coordinated by U.S. military aircraft operating from their Honduran and Panamanian sanctuaries. We would subject ourselves to the chilling record of terror and torture in our dependencies, compiled by Amnesty International, America’s Watch, Survival International, and other respected human rights organizations.

But we successfully insulate ourselves from this grim reality. By doing so, we sink to a level of cowardice and moral depravity that has few counterparts in the modern world, and we also help to fan the flames that will lead to a conflagration that will, very possibly, engulf us as well.

Notes


2. Walter Lafeber, America, Russia, and the Cold War (New York 1967). For an important early discussion, see James Warburg, Germany — Key to Peace (Cambridge, Mass. 1953).


4. For discussion, see Richard Fagen’s article in Foreign Affairs (Winter 1979).


8. Ibid.

