

THE LAST DAYS OF AMERICA

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I must emphasize that this account of events taking place between 1985 and 1987 was written in 1980. It represents my view of what might happen and obviously has to be set against a factual background. Insofar as the characters are identifiable, I would ask them to remember that this is a work of fiction, not a forecast. Readers should find no difficulty in recognizing which characters are real and which invented – Prince Leopold, for instance, is entirely fictitious. So far as the other characters are concerned, I would ask them to accept that they are not based on existing characters – and in any event not to take it for granted that they will fill those particular jobs in five to seven years' time.

PART ONE

1

BEING AN AMERICAN in the 1980s has not always been easy – as all of you know. When the decade began, most of us were convinced that we had no place to go but up. After all, we had gotten by Viet Nam and Richard Nixon and Iran and Jimmy Carter. What else could go wrong? Ha!

Not that anything catastrophic had happened, thank God. It was just that we all still had to eat and live somewhere and move around now and then. But who could afford to do any of these things in style any more? Very few – with gas at \$3.85 a gallon for unleaded premium, with a 1985 model Cadillac costing \$42,000, with that house in Woodside that we bought for \$400,000 in 1982 now going for well over a million according to our neighbors who kept track of such things, and with steak now at \$16 a pound at Safeway.

Still, when we Americans compared our situation to most of the people in the rest of the world we really had nothing to complain about. I don't mean this in terms of dishwashers and swimming pools per capita; I mean it in terms of our freedom, our right to work and live and play any *place* we chose and in any *way* we desired. Hardly anybody else on earth could do that in 1985.

In Eastern Europe the Soviets had decided, already back in '83, to abandon all pretense of civility. In Poland, in Czechoslovakia, and even in Hungary, you did what the Russians told you to do or you disappeared. In Brazil, and since 1984 also in Mexico, if the ruling junta did not like the way you parted your hair, especially if you parted it to the left, ditto. Even in Italy, that wonderful, wonderful country, they had finally to choose between utter chaos and the black shirts. Naturally, they chose the latter.

And everywhere they hated us Americans. Because they envied us.

So when Thanksgiving rolled around in 1985 you could not have enticed us to spend it abroad for anything. We decided to do what we always did during Thanksgiving week – take our annual pilgrimage to the Mauna Kea Hotel on the Big Island of Hawaii in the good

old US of A. And that was where we were in the late evening of November 18 when it all began. Little did any of us know then how tenuous it all was. That not even America would be able to withstand the – but that comes later.

On that particular evening I had finished dinner and, instead of going up to the room with Nancy, had decided to walk down to the sea and watch the manta rays go through their nightly performance. That was when the manager sent a bellhop with the word that Herb Patterson had just called from the mainland and wanted to speak to me urgently.

Before I get into what he wanted – and it had to do with the Germans – let me explain about Herb Patterson, and then about the manta rays.

Herb was Chairman of the Board of the Missile Development Corporation of Sunnyvale, California, and I was the company's President, i.e. he was my boss. Patterson's character was such that he would actually call up a manager of a posh hotel like the Mauna Kea and ask him to act as his messenger boy, as he did that evening. Patterson's power was such that the manager – Bob Butterfield was his name, and I think he is still there in case you ever need help on arranging accommodation at short notice – would actually acquiesce.

Now about the manta rays. Back in the early 1960s, Laurence Rockefeller decided to put up a hotel on the Big Island on the Kohala coast, which has all those beds of black lava, a few beaches, and little else. It is remote and quiet and that is why I liked to go there. Anyway, when the hotel was essentially complete, to add a few finishing touches, the landscapers decided to install a couple of really powerful spotlights on the rocks below the main dining room to illuminate the sea. Apparently the light attracted the plankton, and the plankton attracted the manta rays. Since then, almost every evening, sometimes as many as half a dozen of these huge monsters from the deep cavort right in front of everybody's eyes, starting around ten o'clock, i.e. about the time that Herbie Patterson called me that evening.

You might suspect that I've overdone this little anecdote to indicate some symbolic linkage between sting rays and Herb Patterson, and if you did, you are right. But that would be getting way ahead of the story.

First that phone call. I decided to take it up in the suite where my wife was already in bed reading.

"How are your pals doing tonight?" she asked when I walked in. She found my fascination with the sea monsters a bit out of character. She knew that I was more attracted to the recycled air of

boardrooms and banking offices than the nocturnal waters of the Pacific.

"Herb Patterson wants me to call him back," I said. "Didn't he call here?"

"Somebody wanted you person-to-person. I said you were out."

"Thanks." Sometimes they can drive you nuts.

I picked up the phone. The fact that Hawaii is on the same direct dialing system as Newark and Cleveland tends to take away a bit of the romanticism of the islands, but when you come right down to it, by the mid-1980s there was very little left of it anyway.

"Herb, it's Frank," I said.

"Good of you to call back, Frank. Look, we've got some trouble in Europe. Maybe big trouble. Can you come back tomorrow?"

"Sure."

"Let's meet in the city." By that Patterson meant the city of San Francisco and not the town of Sunnyvale down on the Peninsula, where we had our corporate offices.

We decided on the Pacific Union Club. That's where the elite of Northern California lunched, and occasionally dined. Patterson and I were definitely of that elite. And intended to stay that way for a while.

"Would seven be all right, Frank?" Patterson wanted to know.

"Sure," I answered.

"OK, see you tomorrow. Best to Nancy."

Nancy was, of course, taking this all in, and pretending not to. I had met her in the late 1950s. She was from Virginia and I from California. We got to know each other in Switzerland, where we were both Americans doing graduate work at the University of Basel. Her field was philosophy with a smattering of theology on the side. Her principal professors were Carl Jaspers and Karl Barth. My field was economics and finance. We both graduated in the fall of 1959 with our doctorates. I received a *summa cum laude*, she a *magna cum laude*. We got married three days later and managed to stay that way ever since. Thank God, as later events proved.

On the United flight back the next day she never said one word about Herb Patterson, the Missile Development Corporation, the Germans, or the cruise missile. She later told me that during the entire trip she was on the verge of telling me to simply resign . . . immediately, without giving any reason to anybody. But obviously she didn't.

After landing at San Francisco International we took separate cabs – she with the baggage to our home in Woodside, I to my meeting with Patterson at the Pacific Union Club.

FRANZ JOSEF STRAUSS, the Chancellor of West Germany, described by some as “a fat demagogue with brains”, summoned his Minister of Foreign Affairs, Graf Otto von Amsburg, to an unscheduled meeting shortly before lunch on that same Monday, November 18, 1985. Upon returning to his office, von Amsburg made a slight change in his plans: the following day he, not his deputy, would attend the NATO forward planning meeting in Brussels. This change in schedule would ultimately have extraordinarily profound implications for all of us. In fact, without referring specifically to this particular action, Henry Kissinger later described the process that was thus set in motion as “affecting the very future of mankind”.

It hardly seemed so at the time. On the agenda in Brussels the following day were two rather serious matters, but hardly new ones, and hardly any that seemed to have apocalyptic overtones. The first was a motion to confirm that NATO would deploy 572 American Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCMs) without further delay, and that the governments of Britain, Italy, West Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands would agree, irrevocably, to allow such missiles – all to be armed with nuclear warheads – to be deployed on their territory. The second motion referred to the type of missile system to be deployed by NATO. Three competing systems were still in the running: that being built by Boeing in Seattle, the one developed in St Louis by General Dynamics, and the weapons system being offered to America’s allies by the Missile Development Corporation (MDC) of Sunnyvale, California.

The outcome of both votes was assumed to be a foregone conclusion in NATO circles. It was now known that the Dutch and Belgian governments were reluctantly prepared finally to come round and stop their eternal stalling on the cruise missile deployment issue. After all, with the Russians now firmly entrenched in Yugoslavia, did they really have any choice? Equally certain seemed the selection of the Missile Development Corporation as the prime contractor for the NATO GLCM. It was common knowledge that Boeing’s cruise missiles kept crashing all over the state of Washington, burn-

ing down more than a few trees in the process, while General Dynamics' prototypes simply kept getting lost: some over the Pacific, a few over the Caribbean, and one over Mexico.

Before the meeting actually got under way Graf Otto von Amsburg was seen in the corridors of the NATO headquarters building chatting briefly first with the Minister of Defense of Belgium, and then with the Commander-in-Chief of the Dutch Armed Forces, an air force general. What was discussed seemed to have caused a bit of a flurry since both the Dutch and Belgian delegations immediately went into what was quite obviously an unscheduled caucus. The result was that the general meeting started a half hour late.

The first vote went as predicted, and it was unanimous. The second did not; in fact, the second matter on the agenda did not even come to a vote. This was because Graf Otto von Amsburg made a motion that the decision regarding the selection of the particular weapons system to be deployed be postponed for two weeks, until Monday, December 2, 1985. He gave no reason as to why he was making this request. His motion was immediately seconded by the leaders of the Belgian and Dutch delegations. It was then adopted, also unanimously. One of the generals in the American delegation was seen making quite a fuss among his colleagues prior to the vote, but in the end the United States went along with everybody else in acceding to the German/Belgian/Dutch request.

Otto von Amsburg was back in Bonn by noon that same day. The Brussels-Bonn flight time is only thirty-five minutes. He then made four phone calls, all to destinations inside West Germany. The purpose of these calls was to arrange for a meeting that he was scheduling, tentatively, for two weeks and one day later, to be held at the Gasthaus zum Sternen, a little country inn about eleven kilometers north of Bonn on the old road to Cologne. The scheduling was tentative because it was too early to tell which way the Americans would jump. Three of the four men he spoke to said that they would be there. Doktor Reinhardt Kreps, Chairman of the Board of the Deutsche Bank, was not in – he was in New York – so von Amsburg simply hung up the phone rather than talk any further with the secretary. He would catch him later.

Then Graf von Amsburg called the Chancellor. When he had finished his report, Strauss said to the German aristocrat who was serving Germany as Foreign Minister in the tradition of Bismark: *“Ausgezeichnet. Die Amis merken nichts. Die Scheisskerle werden täglich einfältiger. Lass uns hoffen, dass wir sie jetzt endlich los werden. Mach nur weiter so, Otto.”*

This translates more or less as follows: "Excellent. The Americans notice nothing. Those shitheads are getting more simple-minded every day. Let's hope we are now finally going to be rid of them. Proceed, Otto."

Franz Josef Strauss may have brains, but he certainly does not have class. But he was right. We shitheads did not notice anything – at least this particular American shithead did not.

3

PROBABLY SOME OF YOU have been at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco now and then and wondered what that huge stone mansion was on the square across the street. Well, that's the PU Club. For some reason, I remember quite a few of the faces around the main dining room that evening: Steve Bechtel Jr, who controls the largest privately owned corporation in the world, was there, sitting with Keller, I forget his first name, head of Standard Oil of California. Then there was Prentice Cobb Hale, the department store tycoon, who a decade earlier had absorbed Nieman Marcus like it was some Texas hot dog stand . . . He was there with the senior senator from Illinois. There were a couple of Swiggs, the family that owns the hotel across the street, and also a couple of Haases – they've got Levi Strauss. I am telling you this so that you can get an idea of who belongs there, who could belong. It was not enough that you ran a big company or a big bank or a big whatever. You also had to *own* a reasonable percentage of it. That, my friends, is what really separates the men from the boys in the US of A, and the Pacific Union Club was one of the last places that was willing to recognize that fact and to hell with the public. To hell also with women, by the way. Not allowed. Which is natural enough, since there was not a woman within hundreds, probably thousands, of miles of downtown San Francisco, who ran and owned anything of any importance.

How did Herb Patterson and I rank among the big boys in the room that day? I guess Herb Patterson would have been right up there with Steve Bechtel or Prentice Cobb Hale, in that he owned a very substantial part of the business of which he was chairman. Me? Well, like everybody else that was brought in from the outside to be president of a company, I had my stock options and not a hell of a lot more, but that hardly kept me out of the Pacific Union Club. When

Herb Patterson sponsored somebody there, he was automatically approved.

But enough of that stuff. I was already seated at the table with a double gin, with a twist, in front of me when Patterson walked in the evening of that nineteenth day of November. Herb ordered a double vodka with three olives.

"All right, Herb, what is it?"

"Our general. He called me last night from a phone booth at NATO headquarters in Brussels just after he got out of that meeting there."

"Probably as safe as any procedure," I said.

"I guess so. Now let me tell you what he said. Something went wrong with the vote. Not only did they not approve our system but he tells me that the Germans, the Belgians and the Dutch are now all leaning toward Boeing or General Dynamics. It's unbelievable."

"What do we do?"

"You want me to put it nicely or straight?" asked Patterson.

"Straight."

"OK. Look, Frank, we are back where we were a few times in the past. Somebody has gotten to the Defense Ministers or the generals or I don't know who over there. But somebody has bought somebody. Somebody very big. You know full well and they know full well and everybody knows full well that our cruise missile and especially our guidance system is a hundred percent better in every respect than their versions. You know that, the Pentagon knows that, and until yesterday the majority of NATO's members agreed. I am repeating myself, but bear with me, Frank. The swing votes in NATO on this issue are Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, as you also know. We had them in our pocket. Now . . .?"

"Wait a minute, Herb, this is not the 1970s, you know. I simply don't believe anybody is pulling stuff like that any more. Now, what or who did they vote for?"

"They voted to go ahead with the procurement and the deployment. But they postponed for two more weeks the decision on which weapon system they want to buy."

"So we got one more chance," I said.

"Yeah, one more. But if it goes against us next time . . ."

Well, as I recall there was a bit of a lull then. The waiter came and we both ordered steaks and a nice bottle of wine. The PU has a good cellar. It also has fast and efficient service. The result was that within thirty minutes we had no further excuse to postpone the matter at hand.

"All right," I said. "How do we make sure that it does not go

against us next time?"

"I think," said Patterson, "that we are going to have to reactivate Herr Dr Simonius in Switzerland. And Aeroconsult in Liechtenstein."

Now I could say right here that I threw up my hands in horror and tried desperately to convince Herb Patterson that there were such things as morality, ethics, codes of conduct and all that sort of thing. I could also say that I told Patterson that at least as far as I was concerned principles were more important than the survival of a corporation like MDC as an independent company; or even the survival of Herb Patterson as its chairman, or finally the survival of Frank W. Rogers as its president.

But . . . I am afraid that would not exactly accurately describe what transpired. For what I *did* say was this: "Are you going to handle it yourself, Herb, or do you want me to do it?"

"You don't know Simonius, do you?"

"Not personally, no. But I know, at least vaguely, about some of the - "

"I know you know, Frank. I think you came on board about three years after we put that whole thing over there in the deep freeze."

"Well, let's see, I joined in 1982 - in the fall."

"Right, then it was about three and a half years after we deactivated Aeroconsult."

"Does, ahh, anybody else by any chance know about the old arrangements there?" I asked.

"Sam Jackson knew about it. He's dead."

Sam Jackson was my predecessor as President of the Missile Development Corporation. He died in 1983 of natural causes . . . I think.

"You know," I said, "it's a pity that we have to go this route."

Patterson answered in a low, cold voice: "We don't have any choice. You think that I just intend to stand by and let Boeing and General Dynamics siphon billions of dollars of business from us?"

"Herb, that's not . . ."

"Their missiles are no damn good! With their speed and that goddam Tercom guidance system they are using the Russians will be able to shoot down the sons of bitches just as fast as they are fired. Is that what you want, Frank?"

"But how do you know that somebody has been bought over there?"

"Because I've been in this business my whole life. Something fishy as hell has been happening over there. But Frank, now listen to me, if you want out, right now, just say so, and I'll understand.

When I brought you into the Missile Development Corporation, frankly I did not think it would come to this."

"Look, Herb, I didn't spend eighteen years working for City Bank and Chase Manhattan around the world without knowing probably a lot more about what we are doing here than you can even dream of. So let's cut the horseshit and get down to procedures, and I repeat my question: Do you want to handle it or do you want me to handle it?"

"If I were younger, Frank . . ." Patterson's voice kind of tapered off.

"All right, where do I start? With our general?"

"God no!" exclaimed Patterson. "Start with Simonius in Basel. He'll know where the hanky panky is going on if anybody does. You know, I've seen some bent lawyers in my time but Herr Doktor Simonius takes the cake in any country and in any language as far as I am concerned."

"I think that I am going to have to know a few more details about, you know, how much is stashed where, and how I can break it loose, without making any unnecessary waves," I then said.

"Everything that you need is in a dossier. It's in a safe in Simonius's office. It's been gathering dust there for quite a while. But it will tell you everything you need to know. Needless to say, Frank, I don't think that you should let that dossier get too far away from you. I would also like to suggest that I don't think there is really any necessity for you to go into any of this with Nancy. You know what I mean?"

"I know it."

"Better come down to the plant with a suitcase ready to go tomorrow," continued Patterson. "If Nancy asks, just tell her you are going to London or something."

When I told Nancy about going to London she did not even bother to look at me. When I asked her about it later on she said she figured I was a big boy and knew precisely what I was doing.

Well, I was a big boy. And right here I'd just like to stand back a minute and discuss what Patterson and I were waltzing around about at the PU Club that evening without being cagey or anything. In a word, we were embarking upon a program of bribery. Yes, bribery.

Now, I think that for many years there has been a total misunderstanding, at least in America, about just what exactly goes on in this world under the general heading of "bribery". I mean, there have been some truly pathetic instances of what I term the penny-ante variety, the most sickening being the so-called Abscam affair. Here

we had obscure congressmen from obscure districts accepting fifty thousand bucks from an FBI agent of Lebanese origin disguised as a Saudi Arabian businessman after a gambling license in New Jersey. That, my friends, is not the sort of thing that Patterson and I were embarking upon.

Nor were we about to get involved in one of those usual operations involving the so-called multinational corporations – you know, the sort of thing that ex-Senator Frank Church used to investigate. Again, so what if IT & T was bribing customs inspectors in Chile? And what if Textron – remember Mr Miller who used to be Secretary of the Treasury? – well *his* company, so what if they were greasing the skids a bit with some colonels in Iran to get them to buy three lousy Bell helicopters? The whole thing was small potatoes and boring.

¶Now let me tell you what bribery is really all about in the latter part of our twentieth century. It is not penny-ante stings and it does not involve greasing palms in some Latin-American customs shed, and it is not something that came up very often in one of Senator Church's investigations. If anything, in this area as well as in most others, Church's biggest fault was his lack of any imagination. He is a small man who obviously thought small. He missed all but a few of the really big ones. Now I am not going to talk about some of the things that my former competition at McDonnell Douglas, or Lockheed, or General Dynamics, or Boeing were doing in the world of the 1970s. But what I would like to do is just make things clear about the attitude that I had when I went into this whole thing in the latter part of 1985 by citing two examples of what I believe are historical parallels.¶

First, the story of General Douglas MacArthur and the President of the Philippines. It's a short story. The Philippines President, Manuel C. Quezon, was trapped on Corregidor at the end of 1941. Quezon, understandably, wanted out before the Japs got to all of them. MacArthur, for whatever reason, refused to help him. On January 3, 1942, President Quezon issued an executive order that \$500,000 be transferred from the account of the Philippine Treasury in New York City to MacArthur's personal account. On February 19, 1942, MacArthur received confirmation that the funds had arrived in his account at – where else? – Chase Manhattan Bank. On February 20 Quezon left Corregidor in an American submarine. To this day the Philippines is a good friend of the United States, and MacArthur proved to us all that, in the words of that old song, "Old soldiers never die, they just fade away . . . rich."

Example number two: Henry Luce. Yes, the sainted Henry Luce

who co-founded *Time* magazine and ran the place for decades. If you page back through the *Time* magazines of 1960s and 70s you will find that one of that publication's big heroes, along with such great men as Chiang Kai Shek, was the Shah-an-Shah of Iran. Why? Perhaps it had something to do with the fact that Agence Reza Pahlavi, the chief financial front of the Shah, disbursed from account No. 214895.20 of the Union Bank of Switzerland in Geneva one million dollars to the account of Mr Henry Luce in 1962. How do I know this? Well, like I told Patterson that evening in San Francisco, when you worked for Chase Manhattan around the world you learned and did a lot of things. MacArthur used to bank with us, and the Union Bank of Switzerland in Geneva was just down the street from our office there and we used to swap war stories sometimes, provided the parties involved were long deceased. The point of all this is to show that there is a type of bribery on a very high level which really produces results. It can actually change the path of history for the better. Are the so-called perpetrators of such payoffs such evil men? I doubt it. Just think – if somebody had blown the whistle on General MacArthur in 1942 what could have happened? We might still be bogged down in Guadalcanal. Right? Or take Mr Luce and his friend the Shah of Iran. Sure, the Shah ended up where I guess he had to end up, but at least he kept the Russians at bay in South-West Asia for twenty-five years. Without the support of Luce and his friends in high places in Washington how long would he have lasted? To be sure, when he went, Iran went. And partly because it went, Missile Development Corporation and the Germans and the Russians somehow found themselves on a type of collision course in 1985. And we were on that course because, perhaps, somebody in a very high place had once again been bought.

I think Herb Patterson's mind was full of similar thoughts that evening of November 19, 1985. Because he said, just as we were parting on California Street after that dinner, each about to head in his own direction, "Keep something in mind, Frank, because I suspect you are going to be mulling this over before you go to sleep tonight. It was never proven but almost everybody in the industry, almost everybody in Germany, has very strong suspicions that in 1962 Lockheed Corporation made the deal of the century by selling West Germany 350 F104 Starfighters when a man called Franz Josef Strauss was Minister of Defense of West Germany. After Germany bought, both Belgium and the Netherlands also went Lockheed. The F-104 was such a lousy aircraft that eventually more than half of them crashed. But that's not the point. My point is:

Strauss is now Chancellor of Germany, after spending almost twenty-three years in limbo. It seems to me peculiar that just a few months after his reappearance on the European scene this new 'procurement problem' has suddenly cropped up."

He paused. Then, "Strauss's chief aide is Graf Otto von Amsburg. Strauss appointed him Foreign Minister, as you know, but the relationship goes much deeper than that. I think Simonius knows von Amsburg's family."

He paused again.

"Everybody over there is going to be very, very cagey on this sort of thing. I know, since I've been through it before. What I suggest is that you keep these names in the back of your mind, but let Simonius go through all the various motions he feels necessary before you really get to deal with the principals. If that sounds a bit vague, it's because we are fishing in very murky waters. See you tomorrow, Frank."

The next morning I left home at quarter past seven and as usual took Sandhill Road past the linear accelerator and Stanford Medical Center, through Palo Alto to 101 and onto the freeway leading south to Sunnyvale.

Now Sunnyvale, California is not a place that exactly strikes one as being ominously capable of global reach. Until, that is, one is confronted with the massive facilities of the Missile Development Corporation. Like Boeing up in Seattle or Lockheed down in Burbank it has its own huge private airfield situated between Highway 101 and San Francisco Bay. Impressive as the airfield is on its own, even more awesome are those huge hangars behind the landing facilities where the MDC ballistic missiles are – or at least were – assembled. Occasionally those huge doors were left open to tease the imaginations of those never-to-be astronauts working their way south on the freeway to an appointment in San Jose – not at 5,000 mph in a MDC missile, but at 55 mph in a Ford LTD.

That morning instead of going directly to my office I decided to stop off at Plant No. 5 to see how things were going. Plant No. 5 is where the final assembly operation of the MDC cruise missile prototypes was taking place. When I stepped into the huge building I could not, as usual, fail to stop in admiration of what our American technology had once again wrought.

There were eight of them "laid out" that morning. Our cruise missile was just under fourteen feet long, colored a glistening steel blue, and resembling very closely an elongated version of those

Navy torpedoes we are all so used to from World War II submarine movies. But as any observer that day would have immediately concluded, these modern weapons were infinitely more complex. Each of the eight prototypes was hooked up to hundreds of wires, each in turn leading to dozens of mobile racks of highly sophisticated electronic instrumentation surrounding them.

In Plant No. 5 there was no hammering, no shouting; there were no huge cranes, no hissing, no whining. The place in no way resembled the usual scene at aircraft or aerospace plants. If anything, our Plant No. 5 more closely resembled a research laboratory than an industrial factory. Even the dress of the “workers” was somewhat similar. Dozens of technicians wore white coveralls, many others were dressed in tweedy jackets, Brooks Brothers shirts, and conservative ties. Not a blue collar in the lot. And if one continued to analyze the scene another aspect soon became apparent: the average age of the people was not much over thirty. The median education of the men in that building was somewhere between a master’s and a doctorate, and not from places like North Dakota State either: Stanford, Cal, and Cal Tech were most heavily represented; then MIT and Georgia Tech. The majority of them had specialized in the field of electronic engineering – the older ones going back to the days of, first, Frederick Terman, and then Joe Pettit at Stanford, in other words, the best in the business.

We paid our people minor fortunes. For which they had produced two major miracles, the keys to our cruise missile: first, the unique electronic guidance system which our corporation had developed over ten years, and second, an amazing new jet engine which incorporated an electronic fuel system a decade ahead of the current state of the art. These miracles involved an R&D expenditure of over one point five billion, i.e. \$1,500,000,000, by our company. They meant that our company now possessed a cruise missile with a truly astounding capability, astounding in two chief respects: the 572 missiles which NATO intended to deploy, if all were launched within a ten-minute time frame, and assuming that just under fifty per cent would be intercepted, would kill about one hundred and twenty five million Russians, that’s 125,000,000. That is amazing, isn’t it? In fact so amazing that the financial fortunes of the Missile Development Corporation were insured to the end of the century.

At least we had thought so.

“Mr Rogers,” came a voice beside me. “Mr Patterson’s secretary was on the phone, and asked me to tell you that Mr Patterson is expecting you in his office. Now.”

It was somebody from the chief engineer’s office. He seemed