

MASTERPIECES OF HISTORY

THE PEACEFUL END
OF THE COLD WAR
IN EUROPE, 1989



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EDITED BY

SVETLANA SAVRANSKAYA, THOMAS BLANTON, AND VLADISLAV ZUBOK

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THE PEACEFUL END OF THE COLD WAR
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Preface and Acknowledgements

This book is the culmination of an ambitious 15-year project to open up the previously secret Cold War files of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, as well as those of the United States and its allies, and to use those primary sources to produce a new multi-lingual, multi-archival, multi-national history covering the most important flashpoints in the Soviet bloc and the ultimate, remarkable end of the Cold War.

We chose for the title of this book a revealing quotation from the Canadian scholar Jacques Levesque, who so presciently—well before many crucial primary sources were available—defined the key historical and analytical questions about the denouement of the Cold War in his book, *The Enigma of 1989* (University of California Press, 1997). As Professor Levesque wrote on the second page:

Very little in the Soviet legacy is remembered, in the current context, as having been positive. With some irony, the way the USSR separated itself from its empire and its own peaceful end may seem to be its most beneficial contributions to history. These episodes are, in any case, masterpieces of history.

By using this wonderful phrase as our title, we certainly do not claim that our own work belongs on the masterpiece spectrum, but rather that the documents, dialogue, and analysis presented in this book do answer some of the most important questions that Professor Levesque posed and that we used to frame our own research agenda. That agenda grew from our close collaboration with many partners who were already prying loose the historical record throughout Eastern and Central Europe, as well as the former Soviet Union. Our partners sought with us to understand the crises of communism—primarily during the years 1953, 1956, 1968, 1980–1981—that culminated in the miraculous year of 1989. And yet it was exactly the repressive experience of those earlier flashpoints that made the peaceful conclusion of the Cold War seem so unlikely and—when it happened—such a masterpiece.

The books that precede this one in the series of National Security Archive Cold War Readers¹ through CEU Press tell the stories of those earlier crises in documents, and provide indispensable contextual history for the phenomenon

¹ Ostermann, *Uprising in East Germany*; Békés, Byrne and Rainer, *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution*; Navrátil et al., *The Prague Spring 1968*; Paczkowski and Byrne, *From Solidarity to Martial Law*; Mastny and Byrne, *A Cardboard Castle?*

of 1989. In the introductions and acknowledgments of those books, the careful reader will find the names of those on whose shoulders we stood—scholars, researchers, archivists, translators, former dissidents, former officials—all of whom helped in some way to open the secret files, bear witness to the events, provide explanations, atmosphere and analysis for the primary sources, and produce extraordinary cross-fertilized collections as well as “supernova” conferences that made headlines around the world. These books and the research projects they grew from led us to the present volume. Our partners in each of those adventures in scholarly spelunking urged us to take on the 1989 revolutions, which resulted in our organizing, co-sponsoring or participating in international conferences in venues from Potsdam to Timisoara, and from Providence, Rhode Island, to Saratov, Russia. We owe our thanks to the visionary philanthropists who underwrote these conferences and our work over these many years, especially the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Open Society Institute, the Central European University, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, and the Ford Foundation.

The scholarly meeting that is at the center of this book was both the chronological mid-point and truly a programmatic high point for the overall project. It followed our joint efforts to dramatically expand the historical record on each of the crises of what our Polish colleagues call “The System”—meaning the Stalinist regime imposed on Eastern Europe. Our partners from the region in particular were most curious about what exactly the superpowers had been up to in 1989, when Poland held free elections, Hungary opened its borders, the Berlin Wall fell, and the Czechoslovaks sent a political prisoner to the presidency. Why did the Soviet Union not intervene with force to stop the revolutions of 1989? When exactly did the Soviet Union decide—and did it do so explicitly—to renounce the Brezhnev Doctrine of intervention in Eastern Europe? How could a system founded on repression give up its empire largely without violence? What was the Gorbachev strategy towards the socialist camp, and how did it change over time? What happened to the U.S. policy of differentiation, which made Stalinist Romania into America’s closest friend in the region? What was the role of the United States in Moscow’s decisions, and in the multitude of interactions with East Europeans, both dissidents and officials, in the late 1980s? Was the possibility of a superpower condominium ever considered, as in the Yalta discussions at the end of World War II?

To address these questions, we gathered together a handful of the most well-informed eyewitnesses to the superpowers’ roles in the events of 1989—top Soviet officials Anatoly Chernyaev, Georgy Shakhnazarov, and Sergei Tarasenko, and senior U.S. officials Jack Matlock and Douglas MacEachin (their biographies are given in the “Main Actors” section of this book). We surrounded them with inquisitive scholars from Central and Eastern Europe, the former USSR, the United States and Canada, and a thick briefing book of the best documents available at the time from all sides, and engaged them in a mutual interrogation. The site of the encounter was the Musgrove conference center on St. Simons Island, Georgia.

This book centers around the three days of dialogue that took place at Musgrove in May 1998. At its heart is a slightly edited version of the transcript of the discussions. By “edited” we mean primarily that we have reduced the input of the scholars. Because these sessions have remarkable historical value as oral history, especially since one of the leading participants, Georgy Shakhnazarov, has since passed on, our bias was naturally to keep the words of the veterans intact. We also cut discussions that took us too far beyond 1989—for instance, to 1991 and the fracturing of the Soviet Union—or that inconclusively debated issues like the Politburo’s foreknowledge of the April 1989 Tbilisi violence, which the primary sources have now put to rest.

Since the Musgrove meeting, we have acquired thousands of pages of additional primary sources that answer many of the questions posed in the dialogue, and flesh out dramatically the accounts given by the veterans. The very best of that documentation is published here, most of it for the first time in English, and much of it for the first time in any language. Simultaneously with this publication, we are launching a Web companion site at www.nsarchive.org, which includes a more substantial piece of the historical record.

We consider the documents published in this volume to be the “greatest hits” of the much larger universe of sources that help us understand the end of the Cold War. Scholars have already pointed out the irony that “historians now have available, at least on the Soviet side, more primary sources on the end than on the beginning or the middle of the Cold War.”² Our selection for this book emphasizes Soviet documents from the highest levels, both because of their relative rarity and because of the unique role Mikhail Gorbachev played as general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party in a highly centralized system. We sought to include the interactive documents—the notes of Politburo meetings and diplomatic sessions, the memoranda of conversations, the advisory opinions—which argue for particular positions or roads not taken, rather than the one-dimensional formal protocols or decision directives which are usually short on substance and long on bureaucratic jargon. We also looked for evidence of what these leaders said to each other in private talks or closed-door sessions. And we focused on documents that were illustrative of issues that came up over and over, and therefore were representative of the larger body of available documents too lengthy to include here.

We selected these materials from the National Security Archive’s collection of tens of thousands of pages of sources on the end of the Cold War, which in turn were amassed from archives all over Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, as well as from U.S. government and Western European sources. Appended to each document in the book is a specific source citation, but here we want to provide some context for those citations, and give credit where it is due.

² Painter, “The End of the Cold War,” 491.

Probably the most important single source for this volume has been the Gorbachev Foundation in Moscow, which began publishing its primary materials as early as 1993, including transcripts of summit meetings such as Malta and Reykjavik. During the 1990s, the Gorbachev Foundation was a haven for scholars, providing unique access to documents as well as to eyewitnesses, many of whom were writing their own memoirs and commentaries on the Gorbachev period. In 2006, the Foundation published an extremely useful edited volume of transcripts from the Politburo meetings of the Gorbachev era.³ Although current political and archival conditions in the Russian Federation have severely limited access to this kind of material, the Foundation deserves our thanks for making possible so much of the new scholarship on the end of the Cold War.

We also relied on the extraordinary generosity and intellectual openness of Anatoly Chernyaev, who donated to the National Security Archive his historic diary of his years in the Central Committee, including six years at Gorbachev's side. Anatoly Sergeyeovich's notes of Politburo discussions, of brainstorming sessions with Gorbachev and his advisers, and of the general secretary's meetings with foreign leaders—on file at the Gorbachev Foundation—have proven invaluable for our efforts to document, analyze and understand the dramatic events of the late 1980s.

Georgy Khosroyevich Shakhnazarov not only contributed his insights to the Musgrove dialogue, but shared with us key memos he had written to Gorbachev. We also found highly relevant documentation in the collection amassed by the historian and former general, Dmitry Volkogonov, which his family donated to the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., and in the “Fond 89” collection (based originally on the records of the trial of the Soviet Communist Party in the early 1990s), which was published through the collaboration of the Hoover Institution (Stanford University) with the publishing firm Chadwyck-Healey and the Russian Archival Service (*Rosarkhiv*). Professor Jacques Levesque donated from his personal collection the planning memos produced in early 1989 by the Central Committee's International Department and by the Foreign Ministry.

In a pioneering example of highest-level openness, former West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl took the initiative in 1998 to publish a large volume of German documentation of his conversations with other leaders about the end of the Cold War and German unification.⁴ Instead of the usual 30- or 40-year rules for release of documents, this 10-year standard would revolutionize the use of primary sources for contemporary history, not to mention accountability for leaders. Fortunately, in the formerly communist countries of Eastern Europe, such openness is now the rule for records of that era, and our partners at the Institute for Political Studies of the Polish Academy of Sciences; the Cold War Research Group and the 1956 Institute in Hungary; and the Czechoslovak Documentation

³ Chernyaev, *V Politburo TsK KPSS*.

⁴ Küsters, *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*.

Centre and Institute for Contemporary History in Prague all provided us with remarkable primary sources from those countries' Politburo and Central Committee records, opposition movements, and secret police files, a selection of which are included in this book and all of which informed our research.

As always, we warmly acknowledge our partnership in exploring documentation from "the other side" of the Cold War with Christian Ostermann and the Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington DC.

The National Security Archive's trademark approach to American documentation focuses on the U.S. Freedom of Information Act, and during the course of this investigation we filed hundreds if not thousands of FOIA and declassification requests with agencies of the U.S. government as well as the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library (Simi Valley, California) and the George Bush Presidential Library (College Station, Texas). Many of those requests are still pending today, but the ones already processed have produced such useful materials as the U.S. transcripts of Reagan–Gorbachev summits and a wide range of CIA intelligence analyses of the Soviet Union. We are particularly indebted to the archivists of the presidential libraries for making these documents available to us, and to Catherine Nielsen, formerly of the National Security Archive, who handled the organization's numerous related FOIA requests.

Special thanks to Lisa Thompson for preparing the index.

The essays that precede the Musgrove dialogue and the documents in this volume seek to answer as explicitly as we can the questions that we and our partners posed at the beginning of this project. How did the Cold War end so peacefully? What were the roles of the superpowers? Since this book does not attempt to document the actual course of the revolutions of 1989, but rather to explain the behavior of the superpowers, the two essays take their frames from Moscow and Washington, respectively.

For Moscow, this collection presents the most conclusive evidence to date that the Soviet leadership made the critical choices about Eastern Europe much earlier than historians previously understood, that Gorbachev's vision for Europe—"the common European home"—drove his decisions and tactics for Eastern Europe, and that the use of force to preserve the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe was never an option for Soviet reformers. Among other major findings, this volume shows how economic factors such as the falling price of oil influenced the Kremlin's reassessment of the strategic value of Eastern Europe, as Moscow came to see the "fraternal allies" more and more as burdens rather than assets. The evidence here reinforces arguments that the power of ideas was more important in guiding the Kremlin's new thinking than concerns over the balance of power or the realist conception of national interests.

For Washington, this book argues that U.S. engagement with its traditional Soviet adversary—especially that of President Reagan with Gorbachev in their discussions of nuclear weapons—was more significant than U.S. pressure (defense buildups, proxy wars, or anti-communist rhetoric) in contributing to the

major changes in Kremlin policies in the late 1980s. By relieving the Soviet sense of threat, the Reagan–Gorbachev discourse on arms reductions and the abolition of nuclear weapons reinforced Gorbachev’s “new thinking” mindset and enabled faster progress on reform both domestically and in foreign policy. In contrast to the interactivity between Washington and Moscow during the Reagan years, the transition to the George H.W. Bush administration was in fact the second coming of the “hawks,” clustered around a cautious president, and the resulting “pause” in U.S.–Soviet relations during 1989 left a vacuum in Eastern Europe into which the dissidents and the reform communists rushed. In making possible that outcome, the pause—more a consequence of presidential tentativeness than White House grand strategy—helped change the world, and thus was greatly, if unwittingly, beneficial. But it had significant costs as well, weakening Gorbachev’s political standing at home and leading the players to miss opportunities for dramatic arms reductions and the integration of the USSR (and later Russia) into Europe.

Our real purpose in preparing this book is to encourage and guide further scholarship on these issues, since we see this collection as a starting point for much more work. For us, the dialogue, the documents and the analyses show what 10 years of research have added to our knowledge—from the point at which the original Musgrove dialogue took place, all the way to 2009, this 20th anniversary of the year of miracles and “masterpieces of history.”

SVETLANA SAVRANSKAYA
THOMAS BLANTON
November 9, 2009

FOREWORD

Anatoly S. Chernyaev

This book is based on the materials of a conference that took place in a picturesque spot on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean off the state of Georgia—the Musgrove Plantation—in May 1998. That conference was probably one of the most significant ever held by the National Security Archive. It was organized by Tom Blanton, director of the Archive, and his colleagues. They courageously entered a subject, which allowed them to discover the origins, the motives and the circumstances of a turning point in world history—the cessation of the Cold War and of an ideological confrontation that had been suicidal for mankind.

The Archive exhibited an enviable persistence and piercing energy, which deserves the highest praise for its dedication to work and truth, and for overcoming numerous obstacles created by bureaucrats and other excessively cowardly and greedy custodians of the truth about the past. The documents for this book were compiled in a painstaking process from the archives of several countries by the scholars participating in the project, through Freedom of Information Act requests by the National Security Archive, and through donations by the conference participants.

The proceedings of the conference and the documents—Soviet, American, and East European—together create a rare volume and significant pool of evidence about that time. They provide an opportunity for an unbiased reader and scholar to build an adequate understanding of Gorbachev’s policy toward those countries, and about his “new thinking” in general. They show that the principle of freedom of choice announced by Gorbachev—which was used primarily by those countries—was his sincere conviction. In addition to the withdrawal from Afghanistan, and perhaps no less so, this opened the road to *understanding* in the West, and therefore, to *trust*, which became the decisive factor in the movement toward crucial change throughout the international arena, and toward the cessation of the political and ideological Cold War. This was because that principle essentially contradicted the central Soviet doctrine, which interpreted world politics as a function of the international class struggle, and repealed the principle that was in effect at the time—that what is good for you should be bad for the opposite side.

Gorbachev, during his first meeting with the leaders of the alliance after the funeral of his predecessor, Konstantin Chernenko, announced to them that from now on they should proceed from the assumption that there would be no control from Moscow, and that they would not be getting any directives from there either. Let them be responsible for their actions to their parties and to their peoples, and that was all. It was then that he put an end to the “Brezhnev Doctrine,” then

confirmed that position at the October 1985 conference of the Warsaw Treaty Organization's Political Consultative Committee in Sofia. And he never, throughout all the years of *perestroika*, retreated from that position, even though his colleagues from the socialist countries, having felt the dangerous nature of that freedom, repeatedly tried to pull Moscow into their own affairs.

Another extremely important point, even though it derived from the "freedom of choice" principle, was the rejection of the use of force in international relations and the ban on utilizing Soviet armed forces on foreign territories. Many people did not believe this at first, and those in the leadership of our allied countries simply did not want to believe it. However, when Moscow did not react to the mass exodus of East Germans across the borders of Hungary and Czechoslovakia, and when later it did not allow the troops stationed in the GDR "out of the barracks" against the powerful popular movement for German reunification, which brought down the Berlin Wall, everyone became convinced that Gorbachev's deeds did not diverge from his words. And then the so-called "velvet revolutions" unfolded, and independent states emerged very quickly.

Gorbachev was not very interested in the changes that began in Eastern Europe. He used to say, "They are sick and tired of us, and we are no less so of them; let them live on their own, then everything will come out right." However, it did not turn out the way he hoped. We received no appreciation from the "fraternal countries." They turned away from us and turned their faces to the West. This was where one of Gorbachev's mistakes caught up with him: he continued to believe in the appeal and the "gravitational force" of the idea of socialism, as such. However, our allies were no less sick and tired of socialism than they were of Soviet paternalism, especially because that socialism was in reality the Stalinist-Brezhnevist model that had been imposed on them, and that was alien to them both historically and ethnically.

Nonetheless, Gorbachev naturally imagined those new states as an integral part of the "common European home." He announced that idea for the first time in Prague—not just in any location—in the spring of 1987. And from then on he tried to convince each of his interlocutors—whether it was François Mitterrand, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, Johannes Rau, Gro Harlem Brundtland, Felipe Gonzalez, Giulio Andreotti or those of a lower rank—of its promise. He could not imagine how to overcome the division of Europe, or the European future, in any other way. President George Bush eventually came to share this idea, otherwise the European CSCE Paris summit of November 1990 would not have taken place, and the famous Declaration for Europe would not have been signed by 34 states, including the United States and Canada.

For Gorbachev, that was the pinnacle of his European policy, which he always saw as the most important and perhaps the decisive (always together with the United States) part of the transition to a peaceful period in world history.

One can only guess how his design for a common European home would have turned out had the Soviet Union survived as a great peace-loving democratic power. However, history has demonstrated that Europe, and even the world,

were not yet ready to accept the “new thinking”—even individual elements of it, let alone in its entirety. The process of integration in the western part of Europe turned out to be more complex, difficult and contradictory than it appeared in the late 1980s. And yet, Gorbachev acted “ahead of his time,” believing in his idea of the common European home, which perhaps did not go to waste.

The materials in this book show that Western leaders, especially the Americans, did not trust Gorbachev for a long time: at first they believed that his “new policy” was nothing more than another Kremlin trick and the ambitions of a young leader. Later, when they came to trust his sincerity, they did not believe that he would be able to do what he wanted, the way he wanted. That circumstance—in which the West only with great delay recognized the “usefulness” for its own purposes of Gorbachev’s *perestroika* and then only very timidly demonstrated its willingness to support it or even to provide help—contributed to his inability to cope with the crisis and to solve the historic task of preserving the Soviet Union in its new, democratic form.

The book is valuable also because the documents collected in it can be viewed through the prism of the discussion and polemics at the conference, where many things were clarified, developed, and even refuted.

The organizers of the conference chose—precisely for this purpose—the most appropriate and persuasive method. They brought together at one table, face-to-face, scholars from different countries, as well as experts and people who participated directly in the events of that time that were marked with the name of Gorbachev and *perestroika* in the USSR, and those who were connected with the work of presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush (the elder) in the United States. At Musgrove, among other similar conferences and meetings, this combination turned out to be especially expressive and fruitful.

On the one side were the Americans led by the conference mediator, Tom Blanton, who, in addition to his own brilliant interventions, posed very sharp and professionally irreproachable questions. (In any serious conversation that is a great feat in itself!) The former U.S. officials comprised the wise and knowledgeable professor Jack Matlock, former State Department official and U.S. ambassador to Moscow, and the respected intelligence officer and author, Doug MacEachin, in 1989 the CIA’s leading Soviet expert. On the other side were two former assistants of the CC CPSU general secretary and president of the USSR—Anatoly Chernyaev and Georgy Shakhnazarov (now deceased)—the former assistant to Eduard Shevardnadze, Sergey Tarasenko, and two historians from the Russian Academy of Sciences. On the third side were prominent Western scholars, especially the well-known expert on the subject, Jacques Levesque, and scholars from the countries of Eastern Europe, especially Andrzej Paczkowski, Vilem Prečan, and Csaba Békés, whose contributions made it possible to see the problems from a somewhat different perspective than they appeared to the “main protagonists.” The clash of opinions was made more pronounced and even somewhat bitter by the scholars of Soviet origin but who already possessed an American mentality.

The polemics were further enlivened by sharp confrontations among ... the Russians themselves, among whom were some who had hidden as well as explicit ill feelings towards Gorbachev's policy.

Thanks to the art of "managing" the discussion, the sensitivity and the good sense of humor exhibited by Tom Blanton as chairman, the comparison of facts, opinions and positions assumed an extremely sincere, lively, often sharp, but always correct character. The hosts succeeded in creating an atmosphere of tolerance for every opinion, an honest approach to any detail of a problem in any of its twists and turns, which provoked the kinds of spontaneous thoughts, reminiscences, and discourses that the participants themselves probably could never have "planned" beforehand. This circumstance enriched the main theme with often unexpected details, which gave the discussion the unique and colorful feel of "being there" and, I would also add, a certain "cheerfulness." It is not without reason that laughter was heard often at that table.

The conference uncovered a lot that was new not only in terms of factual material, but also in terms of arguments substantiating the policy of "new thinking" and the reactions to it in other countries. It also raised doubts—if not about its goals then about the methods of its implementation at particular stages and in certain cases.

In short, this book, based on the Musgrove conference together with the documents included in it as an integral part, represents rare historical evidence of how and why the ideas and decisions that led to the ending of the Cold War were born, and which concrete consequences of the accomplishments of that period were especially significant for different countries, and for the entire world.

Thinking about Musgrove today, I would like once again to express my deep gratitude to Mr. Smith Bagley, who made his beautiful, picturesque estate available for convening that conference.

And once again, my deepest bow to the main organizers, who also prepared this volume. All that is left for me to do is to express my regret that publication of such a unique book was delayed for ten years.

FOREWORD

Jack F. Matlock, Jr.

The conference held at the Musgrove plantation on Georgia's southeast coast in 1998 illuminated one of the most important periods in 20th century history: the liberation of the countries in Eastern Europe from Soviet control. The fact that this episode occurred peacefully near the close of a century filled with violence and following over four decades of East–West confrontation made the event worthy of the most careful study. The National Security Archive rendered a service to historians and the public as a whole when it gathered declassified source material from both Soviet and American archives and invited scholars and several former officials to examine the historical evidence, comment on it, and discuss its implications. One of the scholars who attended the conference, Jacques Levesque, had published a book on the events discussed at Musgrove which he entitled *The Enigma of 1989*. The task of the conference was to take some of the mystery out of that enigma.

Although the conference took place 10 years ago, publication of these documents and of the record of discussions is both necessary and timely. It is necessary because groundless myths have arisen regarding the way the Cold War and the division of Europe ended; it is timely because these myths have produced dangerous distortions in current American and Russian policy.

The unfounded conviction that the United States and its European allies “won” the Cold War and “defeated” communism by the application of military and economic power, and that, as a consequence, the United States has the means—if it has the will—to police the world and to create, wherever it wishes, governments that mirror its own, lies behind many of the mistakes American deciders have made since the turn of the century. The facts are that the Cold War ended not as the victory of one country over another, but as the result of successful negotiations benefiting both sides. It was not a defeat for the Soviet Union, for the Soviet leader made no agreements that were not in his country's interest.

It is to Gorbachev's credit that he was able to recognize that the policies he had inherited were not in his country's interest. It is to the credit of Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush and their Western colleagues that they aimed to change Soviet behavior, not to destroy the Soviet Union or replace its regime. They offered conditions for ending the Cold War that were consistent with the national interests of a Soviet Union at peace with its neighbors.

Communism ended in the Soviet Union not as the result of Western military pressure but in response to internal reforms in the Soviet Union that would have been possible only if the Cold War were ending. The subsequent break-up of the

Soviet unitary state was caused by internal factors and could not have taken place if the Cold War had not ended.

Myths about a quasi-military victory by the West in the Cold War have also had a damaging impact on current Russian thinking and the policies of the current government. If the Cold War ended in a “victory” of the West and Western pressure destroyed the Soviet state, then Gorbachev was duped and surrendered Soviet (and Russian) interests when he came to terms to end the Cold War. This has fed anti-Western and anti-American sentiments in Russia and made it more difficult to find a way to cooperate in the interests of both countries.

For these reasons, understanding how “1989” happened is essential if one is to benefit from the lessons the Cold War and its end should have taught us. In making available to scholars and interested members of the public the Musgrove documents and discussions, the National Security Archive has once again helped us reach a more reliable understanding of the past in order better to deal with the problems of the present, and of the future.