

# Introduction

*Richard Schifter and Anatoly Adamishin*

In 2008, as we write these joint memoirs, there is again tension in the air in the relationship between Russia and the United States. But it is a far cry from where we were twenty-five years ago, when the two nuclear-armed superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States, confronted each other across the globe in the struggle that had come to be known as the Cold War. In the late 1980s, a tectonic shift took place in our relationship, brought about, in the first instance, by a new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, ably assisted by his foreign minister, Eduard Shevardnadze. On the United States end, President Ronald Reagan and Secretary George Shultz recognized the profundity of the change that had taken place in the Soviet Union and responded positively.

As our relationship warmed, the basic decisions were made at the Shultz-Shevardnadze level, albeit within the policy framework approved at the highest level. However, as is often said, the devil is in the details—and there were many details, in many areas of bilateral concern, that had to be resolved. One such area, which acquired increasing importance and played a key role in the warming of the relationship, was human rights. It is in that area that the task of fighting the devil fell to the two of us.

Our roots, strange as it may seem, were in the same corner of the globe, the distance from the original habitat of the Adamishins to that of the Schifters being about two hundred miles. But from the time of our birth to the time we first met, in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union, we had traveled significantly different paths, even though they occasionally paralleled each other. Anatoly, a native of Kiev, had left for Moscow, accompanying his mother, as they fled from the invading German army at the outset of World War II. Dick, whose parents had moved to Vienna, Austria, where he was born, fled to the United States after the Nazi takeover in Vienna.

Like all other young people in the Soviet Union, Anatoly received his early political education in the Young Pioneers and Komsomol, the youth arms of the Communist Party. Dick, by contrast, received his political education

from his mother, who believed in democratic socialism and vehemently opposed communism. After arriving in the United States he was associated with organizations of the anti-Communist left.

The course of Anatoly's educational preparation led him to the Soviet (and then Russian) diplomatic service, which he entered at the age of twenty-three, and a career of forty years, which included the ambassadorships to Rome and London. Dick had dreamed, as a youngster, of becoming a diplomat, but became a lawyer instead and did not engage in diplomatic work until he had reached the age of fifty-seven. He then spent the next twenty years in diplomatic work as a noncareer appointee.

When we met in April 1987, on the occasion of a ministerial meeting in Moscow between Secretary Shultz and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze, Anatoly was a deputy foreign minister and Dick an assistant secretary of state. Dick had for many years been working in the human rights field, while Anatoly had assumed his new responsibility for that subject at very short notice. We nevertheless very quickly developed a friendly personal relationship and then stayed in touch and worked together to resolve the human rights issues that stood in the way of better relations between our two countries.

While our joint effort was limited to human rights, our work had a significant impact on the field so critically important to the end of the Cold War, the field of arms reduction. The point that Secretary Shultz frequently emphasized was that Soviet progress in the field of human rights would make it that much easier for a feeling of mutual trust to develop, a feeling that would enable us to effect significant cutbacks in our military expenditures.

As these memoirs will show, our close relationship played a particularly important role in the second half of 1988 in helping to bring the Vienna Follow-Up Meeting of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe to a satisfactory conclusion. The work that we had undertaken—and the results that we had attained—allowed the meeting to be brought to a positive conclusion, making it possible for the beginning of negotiations of a Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe as well as the convening of the conference on human rights in Moscow.

In these memoirs, we trace the years of our close interaction. But before then, to furnish the necessary backdrop, we discuss our respective personal histories that led to our designation as representatives of our countries in this setting, the nature of the relationship between the two superpowers from the mid-1950s onward, and the history of the introduction of the human rights issue into the field of international relations and its impact on relations between the United States and the Soviet Union.

This book has gone through a long gestation period. We first discussed the idea of our joining in this effort as long ago as 1992, even comparing outlines

of what we would write about. However, other tasks kept us busy. Anatoly became the Russian ambassador in London. Dick joined the staff of the U.S. National Security Council. But, as we have now demonstrated, the idea of joining in an effort to write a book about our joint endeavor never died.

It was possible to write this book together because while we had represented our respective governments in a highly sensitive and contested area, we had developed a personal friendship. The development of this friendship, in turn, was made possible by the close working relationship that had been established between Foreign Minister Shevardnadze and Secretary of State Shultz. There was no doubt that our task was to remove some of the very important obstacles to better relations between the Soviet Union and the United States.

But did we have a story worth telling that had not theretofore been told? The conclusion that we reached was that the results of our endeavors—the end of abuse, of psychiatry, the change in Soviet policy on emigration, the end of the crime of “anti-Soviet agitation and propaganda,”<sup>1</sup> the positive note on which the Vienna Meeting of the Conference of Security and Cooperation in Europe ended—are indeed either well-known or have been written about by others. What is not well-known and what has not been written about as yet is precisely what the process was by which these results were achieved, results that were important factors in ending the Cold War. And this process was wider than is generally thought, as it included what we called “the new agenda”: bilateral humanitarian cooperation, which embraced a number of concrete topics, such as round tables of experts on housing for the elderly or possible U.S. production of prostheses for Soviet soldiers wounded in Afghanistan.

The Soviet-U.S. human rights dialogue of the late 1980s achieved significant results because each of us knew the thinking of our respective bosses, who wanted to remove the obstacle to good relations that disagreement on human rights issues presented. We knew what was expected of us. We, in turn, had come to have confidence in each other. Each of us had concluded that the other was seeking to attain the same objective, namely good relations between our two countries. It was that feeling of trust in each other that enabled us to move forward and attain the results that we sought.

When we first met in April 1987, the system of government that had been installed close to seventy years earlier in the wake of what had become known as the Glorious October Revolution was still in place. But some close observers of the scene, both in the Soviet Union and abroad, had begun to wonder whether change was in the offing. Many Soviet citizens had for years been concerned that their leaders were too old and too ill to function

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1. Article 70 of the Penal Code of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic.

effectively. They were pleased when, in March 1985, a vigorous man who had just turned fifty-four became the general secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and thus the country's de facto leader.

Less than a year before he moved into the Soviet Union's top leadership position, Mikhail Gorbachev had visited London and met with Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. She commented after that meeting that she thought one could "do business" with Gorbachev. That did not mean the serious problems that had beset the Soviet-U.S. relationship for the preceding forty years suddenly disappeared with Gorbachev's assumption of the Soviet Union's top leadership position. On the contrary, after decades of hostility and international political competition as well as an arms race, there was skepticism on both sides. To Soviet officials, President Reagan was the man who had dubbed their country an evil empire. To many Americans and their allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the Soviet Union, irrespective of who might be its leader, was a totalitarian state that had threatened international security.

However, only two days after assuming the Soviet Union's top leadership position, Gorbachev had an encounter with high U.S. officials that left them with the feeling that Margaret Thatcher may have been right after all. Vice President George H. W. Bush and Secretary Shultz had come to Moscow to attend the funeral of the most recently departed Soviet leader, Konstantin Chernenko. That occasion offered an opportunity for the U.S. vice president and the secretary of state to exchange thoughts briefly with the new Soviet leader. In a press briefing following that meeting, Secretary Shultz said: "Gorbachev is different from any Soviet leader I've met. But the U.S.-Soviet relationship is not just about personalities."<sup>2</sup>

Presaging the dialogue of the years to come, the exchange of thoughts between Gorbachev and the Bush-Shultz team on March 13, 1985, covered two topics: international affairs and the arms race, and human rights problems in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's observations on the first of these two topics were viewed as positive by his American interlocutors. There was a standoff, however, on the issue of human rights. Gorbachev made it clear that he did not consider human rights an appropriate subject for discussion between the Soviet Union and the United States.

It was in keeping with the exchange of thoughts at this first meeting that the U.S.-Soviet dialogue in the early Gorbachev years focused on arms control. More than two years passed until, in April 1987, in the context of

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2. George P. Shultz, *Turmoil and Triumph: My Years as Secretary of State* (New York: Scribner, 1993), 532-533.

another bilateral meeting on arms reduction, Anatoly and Dick met to initiate a dialogue on human rights.

While we were working on reaching a common goal, our tasks in dealing with our respective bureaucracies differed significantly. To be able to give full recognition to our differing perspectives on the same subjects, we have structured this book to allow each of us to explain how we saw the issues that we had to deal with. Therefore, except for this introductory chapter, each chapter consists of two parts, one written by Dick, the other by Anatoly. For the first five chapters, Anatoly leads off each chapter; in chapters 6 and 7, the order is reversed and Dick's section precedes Anatoly's. Both sections of each chapter (save for the final chapter) cover the same period and focus, broadly speaking, on the same issues. However, the two sections do not, and are not intended to, parallel one another perfectly; to the contrary, just as the Soviet and U.S. perspectives on a given subject varied, with different issues and concerns occupying the foreground, so the perspectives in the paired sections of each chapter vary. In addition, of course, each author's involvement in his country's unfolding political and social history was very different, and those differences are reflected in the chapters, especially chapters 1, 2, and 7.

As our respective bosses and many of our colleagues believe that our roles were significant in the context of the Soviet-U.S. dialogue, we hope we shall not be viewed as exhibiting illusions of grandeur when we begin this book with accounts of our personal backgrounds. There appears to have been a common thread in our vastly different experiences that caused us to be fully dedicated to the desire to help bring our countries closer together and to resolve the differences in the field of human rights.

As noted, at the very first meeting that Gorbachev, as secretary general, had with high-level U.S. officials, he rejected the notion of engaging in discussion of human rights issues. His outlook deserves explanation of the treatment of the human rights issue in the decades that preceded Gorbachev's encounter with Bush and Shultz. We have, therefore, written a general account of the post-World War II evolution of human rights as an issue entitled to receive attention at the international level. We have also reviewed the more specific question of how the human rights issue affected Soviet-U.S. relations in the pre-Gorbachev period. Against that background, we have then provided a chronological account of our interaction in helping bring about an end to Soviet totalitarianism.

As we initiated these discussions, Anatoly found that Dick had framed the expressions of U.S. human rights concerns in a way that improved the chances that the Soviet Union would respond positively. Allowing Jews, Armenians, and Pentecostal Christians to emigrate, for example, was no threat at all to the prevailing system in the Soviet Union. Furthermore the new leadership felt sufficiently confident about its hold on power to agree

to end abuse of psychiatry and prison sentences for expressions of dissent. Dick did not ask the Soviet Union to adopt the Swiss model of democracy and move forward to free elections promptly. Also, when Anatoly pointed out that the Soviet Ministry of Justice would not release the documents that Dick requested on criminal cases that were suspected of being politically motivated unless U.S. documents were released on a basis of reciprocity, Dick collected the material on the U.S. cases said to be of concern to the Soviet Union; these involved the conviction of persons for acts of terrorism that happened to be politically motivated.

There was a truly unique feature to our dialogue: While we were focused on issues grouped under the term human rights, our discussions were closely related to those undertaken by different Soviet and U.S. officials in different rooms of the same buildings on the subject of arms reduction. Whether the meeting was in Moscow or in Washington, the initial human-rights discussions took place in the context of so-called ministerial meetings, that is, meetings attended by the foreign minister and the secretary of state, with the largest number of participants focusing on arms reduction and only a small number of officials engaged in human rights discussions.

There is no doubt that arms reduction and human rights issues were closely intertwined, but in a manner that was not quite obvious. As Dick had occasion to say, it was not a matter of trading exit permits for one hundred refuseniks in return for permission to allow ten additional missiles in a particular location. What Shultz had in mind when he frequently emphasized the critical importance of the human rights issue in the context of our bilateral negotiations was that arms reduction was ultimately based on mutual trust and that the U.S. government, particularly Congress, would place greater trust in a government that respected human rights than it would in a government that abused them.

In writing these memoirs, we relied largely on our memories of the events in which we participated, although Dick consulted the memoirs of secretaries of state Shultz and James Baker and was able to retrieve from State Department files the messages that dealt directly with his engagement in the Soviet human rights issue. Anatoly did not have much access to the confidential files of the Ministry of Foreign Relations but was able to draw on his personal papers from the time and to refresh his memory by exchanging recollections with a variety of former colleagues and former superiors, including President Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Shevardnadze.