

AMERIKA

PROLOGUE

IN THE HISTORY of human folly, arrogant fantasies of military supremacy and pathetic illusions of national safety have played a crucial role. The Great Wall of China, the Spanish Armada, the Maginot Line – all were thought to be impregnable. All fell. And with them fell not only governments, but ideals, not only nations, but those unique aspects of the human spirit that were embodied in each conquered civilization.

Through most of the 1980s, the United States of America had regarded itself – and was regarded by the rest of the world – as the mightiest and therefore the most secure nation the world had ever seen; it seem to dawn on no one that those two notions did not necessarily go hand in hand. The American defense system represented the perfect combination of American skill and American will, of vast wealth and limitless ingenuity applied to the problems of survival for this hardest of peoples. In fact, the U.S. Military had evolved the most sophisticated weaponry and communications networks known to man.

With that sophistication, however, came a vast complexity, with that complexity came danger. The taller a building gets, the more it sways in the wind; the longer a bridge, the less it takes to send the whole span crashing. So it was with the American system of defense. Paradoxically, as the system grew more powerful, it grew more fragile; as it took on more and more weight and bulk, it came even closer to teetering. Some few men and women, both inside the government and out, were aware of this. As in ages past, their voices were not heard.

As those voices of caution were ignored in Washington, however, voices of opportunity were listened to closely in Moscow. In the waning days of the 1980s, the leaders of the Soviet Union, beset by paralyzing economic woes and growing domestic unrest, had less to lose than to gain by gambling on a massive rearrangement of the balance of power in the world. Without warning, on a quiet Tuesday morning, the Russians took the headiest gamble in the history of warfare by launching a nuclear attack against America.

But this attack was no storybook Armageddon of mushroom clouds bursting over cities, of scalded millions murdered in their homes. This was new sort of war, conceived in shocking simplicity by Soviet scientist. The premise: don't attack targets. Attacking targets, after all, even with nuclear missiles, was essentially as primitive as throwing stones. What mattered was not the individual bases and silos, but rather the electronic network that linked them as an effective whole. The key, then, was to attack and disable the communications systems *among* the targets, thereby crippling the entire system.

High in the stratosphere above America, four enormous nuclear deices were detonated. On earth, the explosions were heard only as a low rumble. No one was hurt by the blasts, nor did they generate a dangerous amount of fallout; no one even felt the concussive power of the bombs. But the explosions were “felt” by every computer circuit, every telephone line, every banking system and every electrical plant from Maine to San Diego. The detonations created a vast electromagnetic pulse (EMP) that was like a hundred thousand bursts of lightening focused insidiously on America's nervous system. Vast stores of computer memory were instantly erased. The coils of electric generators swizzled and seized. Telephones went dead. The age of Communications ended in a millisecond, and with it ended America's military, political, and economic hegemony.

The conquest of America, incredibly, had been effected without taking a single life.

American missiles stood unharmed in their silos, but could not be activated. Around the world, American forces, their ranks undiminished, were at the ready, but could not be issued orders. In Washington, the American President was given an agonizing and humiliating choice: surrender and agree to unilateral disarmament, the virtual destruction of the dollar, and the essential end to national sovereignty; or, resist, fight back with whatever sundered forces could be mustered, and face certain annihilation.

The choice was not a choice at all for a leader who valued human life. With dizzying, incomprehensible suddenness, the United States of America was under the thrall of the Russians.

With Soviet rule came a dizzying torrent of of euphemisms and double-speak. The conquest – by far the most cataclysmic and humiliating event in all of American history – was tamely dubbed “the Transition” - as if the shift from capitalism and freedom to communism and subjugation was indeed and inevitable procession. Thousands of loyal citizens were redefined as “subversives” and forced to leave the cities, where, in concentration, they could be troublesome to the new authorities. They were called Exiles – and it was true that their homeland had abandoned them. The most committed of the Exiles became Resisters – guerrilla fighter who endured the most crushing hardships and dangers in the name of those values that, only yesterday, had been the norm. Under the system of the system of the conquerors, logic was stood on it's head and language it's self was recruited into the service of erasing history.

But who were these Soviets who were now America's administrators, overseers, bosses? Oddly, they did not conform as all closely to our hysterical, Cold War images of them. They were not beetle-browed commissars, nor were they blustering boors who swilled vodka and spouted rigid ideological platitudes. They were modern men and women – cultured, pragmatic, efficient, very often charming, and generally humane. They had humor, they had desires, and they had a vision. Their vision was of a world united and running as a single mechanism according to the precepts of Marx and Lenin. *To each according to his need; from each according to his ability.*

On it's face, the prescription was benign enough. Could any thinking person claim that the rhetoric was less dignified or lofty – or even essentially *different* – than the thrilling pronouncements of Jefferson and Lincoln on which the American republic had been based? The Soviets came not to conquer by force, but to win a more total victory by imposing an alternate mythology.

They were offering peace. It was a sort of peace that the great majority of Americans – all of those who wanted nothing more than to preserve some fraction of the security and comfort they'd known before – accepted with appalling ease.

It was a sort of peace against which some few Americans – keeping alive the spark of freedom in it's armor of defense – vowed to wage the most intimate and sacred form of battle.

This is the story of three men, each of whom fought for his vision of what the New America might become.

David Milford – once a candidate for president, now stigmatized as a criminal – was the defiant one, a man who insisted that the real world of politics and power conform to his ideal of a united America.

Peter Bradford was the pragmatic one, and honest man committed to the principle of compromise and to practical approaches to problems that could not really be solved.

Andrei Denisov was the complex one, the enemy and not the enemy, the KGB colonel who harbored a love for America that the Americans themselves had lost.

Most important, this is the story of a people searching for their noblest selves under circumstances that had long been feared, but never truly imagined.