

*NEW EAST-BLOC EVIDENCE ON*

*The Cold War in the Third World  
and the  
Collapse of Détente in the 1970s*

In January 1976, during several days of negotiations in Moscow with Kremlin leaders, U.S. Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger pleaded for a Soviet gesture to ease the superpower confrontation in Angola, where the USSR's airlift of military equipment and Cuban troops had allowed the leftist government in Luanda to withstand an assault by guerrilla forces backed by South Africa. The action could do "irreparable damage" to detente, Kissinger warned, undermining supporters of that policy (above all Kissinger himself) in the United States. And that would be a "tragedy" since neither Moscow nor Washington had any significant interests in Angola, and "Five years from now it will make no difference."

According to recently declassified transcripts of the talks, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by the National Security Archive, Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Leonid I. Brezhnev and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko rebuffed the American's increasingly plaintive entreaties with the curt response that any complaints should be taken up with Havana, since the Cuban intervention was the result of decisions made between two sovereign states, Angola and Cuba, and the USSR could not speak for them. At a Friday morning session with Gromyko at the Foreign Ministry's Tolstoi House, Kissinger finally gave up, wistfully calling it "a pity that this has come to pass when many opportunities existed for two great powers to settle this in a far-sighted way."

"It wouldn't be the first time in history," he rued, "that events that no one can explain afterwards give rise to consequences out of proportion to their intrinsic significance."

Five years later, détente had indeed collapsed, in large measure due to a series of superpower conflicts in the Third World—over Angola, the Horn of Africa, Cuba, and Afghanistan, among other locations—and another U.S. Secretary of State, Alexander M. Haig, Jr., confronted another communist interlocutor in an even more

secretive setting. This time, in the fall of 1981, at the height of the public hostility between the Reagan Administration and Fidel Castro's Cuba, Haig was clandestinely meeting the Cuban Vice President, Carlos Rafael Rodriguez, in a Mexico City suburb. And one key subject for debate was a review of recent history: How had Cuba become involved in Africa, and why did U.S.-Cuban relations begin to "go very poorly" in 1975-76 and continue to deteriorate thereafter? (The record of that meeting remains classified in U.S. and Cuban archives, but the *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* in this issue publishes a translated transcript obtained from the Russian archives.)

While Haig, repeating charges made during the Carter Administration, insisted that Cuba had acted as a Soviet proxy or puppet by intervening in Angola and the Horn of Africa, Rodriguez maintained just as stoutly that Havana had acted independently, out of its own interests, albeit (especially in the latter case) in coordination with Moscow; if anything, he declared, far from Moscow pulling the strings, it had been Castro, not Brezhnev, who had been the most ardent advocate of sending military support to revolutionary leaders in Africa.

"The outward geopolitical character of these events is completely at odds with the essence of the true facts . . . History will bring all of this to light," Rodriguez is quoted as telling Haig, adding: "One fine day, all of this will come to light. You can believe me or not, but some day this will be common knowledge."

That "fine day" has not quite arrived—much remains classified or hidden in archives and memories on all sides of the events—but with this issue of the *CWIHP Bulletin*, it has come palpably closer.

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**\*VISIT THE CWIHP WEBSITE:**  
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**ALSO IN THIS ISSUE:**  
**\* MORE NEW EVIDENCE ON THE COLD WAR IN ASIA**  
**\* MORE RUSSIAN DOCUMENTS ON THE CUBAN MISSILE CRISIS**

**\* NEW EVIDENCE ON SOVIET DECISION-MAKING AND THE 1956 POLISH AND HUNGARIAN CRISES**  
**\* RESEARCH NOTES—SOVIET NUCLEAR HISTORY**

# *The Cold War International History Project*

The Cold War International History Project was established at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., in 1991 with the help of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and receives major support from the MacArthur Foundation and the Smith Richardson Foundation. The Project supports the full and prompt release of historical materials by governments on all sides of the Cold War, and seeks to disseminate new information and perspectives on Cold War history emerging from previously inaccessible sources on “the other side”—the former Communist bloc—through publications, fellowships, and scholarly meetings and conferences. Within the Wilson Center, CWIHP is under the Division of International Studies, headed by Dr. Robert S. Litwak. The Outgoing Director of the Cold War International History Project and Outgoing Editor of the *Bulletin* is Dr. James G. Hershberg; the Incoming Director is Prof. David Wolff (Princeton University), and the Incoming Associate Director is Christian F. Ostermann. The project is overseen by an advisory committee chaired by Prof. William Taubman (Amherst College) and consisting of Michael Beschloss; Dr. James Billington (Librarian of Congress); Prof. Warren I. Cohen (University of Maryland-Baltimore); Prof. John Lewis Gaddis (Ohio University-Athens); Dr. Samuel F. Wells, Jr. (Deputy Director, Woodrow Wilson Center); and Prof. Sharon Wolchik (George Washington University). Readers are invited to submit articles, documents, letters, and Update items to the *Bulletin*. Publication of articles does not constitute CWIHP’s endorsement of authors’ views. Copies are available free upon request.

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In this issue, the *Bulletin* presents evidence from communist world archives—Russian, East German, Cuban—on many of the same issues that so bedeviled U.S.-Soviet relations in the 1970s: Angola, the Horn of Africa, Afghanistan, Cuba, et al.

In large measure, the evidence presented here stems from the labors of the “Carter-Brezhnev Project”: a multi-year, multi-archival, international academic effort to explore the causes, consequences, and legacies of the collapse of superpower detente in the 1970s. The project was spearheaded by Drs. James G. Blight and Janet Lang of the Thomas J. Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University (organizer of similar conferences on the Cuban Missile Crisis), with the active participation of an informal consortium of scholarly partners, including the National Security Archive, a non-governmental research institute and declassified documents repository located at George Washington University; CWIHP; the Norwegian Nobel Institute; the Institute for Universal History, the Foreign Ministry archives, and the Center for the Storage of Contemporary Documentation in Moscow. (A report on some of the Project’s early findings, on U.S.-Soviet relations at the outset of the Carter Administration, appeared in *CWIHP Bulletin* 5 (Spring 1995), 140-154.)

Many of the documents in this *Bulletin* were obtained and translated by the Carter-Brezhnev Project in preparation for a series of conferences on the breakdown in U.S.-Soviet relations in the late 1970s, held in Georgia in May 1994 (on the SALT II process), in Ft. Lauderdale in March 1995 (on superpower rivalry in the Third World), and in Lysebu, Norway in September 1995 (on the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan); other translations, as well as accompanying articles and commentaries, were solicited by the *Bulletin*. (All documents obtained by the Carter-Brezhnev Project are available for research at the National Security Archive.)

Readers interested in these topics will also wish to obtain the first book to emerge from the Carter-Brezhnev Project: Odd Arne Westad, ed., *The Fall of Detente: Soviet-American Relations in the Carter Years* (see box), which contains interpretive essays by noted scholars as well as recently declassified U.S. and East-bloc materials; other volumes are planned.

This *Bulletin* double issue also contains several other major chunks of important new evidence from communist archives:

\* **More New Evidence on the Cold War in Asia**, following up on the previous *Bulletin* (no. 6-7, Winter 1995/1996, 294

pp.) and a major conference organized by CWIHP and hosted by Hong Kong University in January 1996;

\* **More Russian Evidence on the Cuban Missile Crisis**, providing another selection of declassified documents from the Russian Foreign Ministry archives and other materials to supplement those printed in *Bulletin* 5 (Spring 1995);

\* **New Evidence on Soviet Decision-Making on the 1956 Polish and Hungarian Crises**, featuring an authoritative translation and annotation of the so-called “Malin Notes” of key Kremlin meetings during the crises, along with an introductory essay, by Mark Kramer of Harvard University—a remarkable window into how the Soviet leadership responded to a challenge to the communist empire that in many ways foreshadowed the terminal crisis of 1989; and finally

\* **Research Reports on Soviet Nuclear History**: documents on the origins of the USSR’s atomic project and on Nikita Khrushchev’s 1960 troop cut.

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This *Bulletin* marks my final issue as Editor and as Director of the Cold War International History Project; beginning in January 1997 I took up a position as Assistant Professor of Diplomatic History and International Affairs at George Washington University. I am pleased to report that the Project is passing into able, enthusiastic, more linguistically-gifted, and perhaps more organized hands: David Wolff, formerly of Princeton University, the author of a major forthcoming study of Northeast Asian history, and fluent in Russian, Chinese, Japanese, German, and French, becomes CWIHP’s new Director; and Christian F. Ostermann, research fellow at the National Security Archive, a frequent contributor to the *Bulletin* of reports on new evidence from the East German archives, and the author of a forthcoming study on relations between the German Democratic Republic and the United States, becomes Associate Director. I am also glad to say that I plan to remain closely associated with CWIHP, collaborating with my successors on transitional activities, contributing to future endeavors, editing CWIHP’s Book Series, and perhaps even finding time after five years of administration to do more of my own research and writing on Cold War history. So this is not good-bye.

Nevertheless, I would like to express my gratitude to CWIHP’s creators, supporters, friends, and collaborators for the chance to participate in the thrilling experience of peering behind (and trying to rip down entirely) the curtain of the last half-century of world history, and to work with an extraor-

dinary group of people from around the world. Even more than the historical information it has gathered and disseminated, CWIHP’s greatest achievement, I think, has been the creation of an international community of Cold War scholars, especially those who, on a daily and sometimes hourly basis, 24/7, constitute the CWIHP “network”: Tom Blanton, Malcolm Byrne, Vlad Zubok, Mark Kramer, Jim Blight/janet Lang, Odd Arne Westad, Chen Jian, David Wolff, Christian Ostermann, Kathryn Weathersby, Hope Harrison, John Gaddis, Bill Taubman, Warren Cohen, Aleksandr Chubarian, Mikhail Narinsky, and the “group” in Moscow, Bill Burr, Ilya Gaiduk, Leo Gluchowski, Csaba Bekes, Norman Naimark, Priscilla Roberts, Sven Holtmark, Bob Brigham, Ray Garthoff, Vojtech Mastny, Kostia Pleshakov, Allen Greb, Maxim Korobochkin, Mark Doctoroff, Piero Gleijeses, Daniel Rozas, Peter Kornbluh, and many others who have made the last five-and-a-half years such fun that the exasperation paled by comparison. And above all, thanks to Annie for putting up with everything and coming along for the ride.

—Jim Hershberg

**THE FALL OF DETENTE:  
SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS  
IN THE CARTER YEARS**

Readers interested in the materials on the Cold War in the Third World and the Collapse of Detente in the 1970s should also consult a newly published volume which also emerges from the work of the Carter-Brezhnev Project: Odd Arne Westad, ed., *The Fall of Detente: Soviet-American Relations in the Carter Years* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997).

The volume includes interpretive essays as well as key U.S., Russian, East German and other documents on SALT and Bilateral Relations, Regional Conflicts, and Afghanistan and After. For ordering information within North America, contact the Scandinavian University Press North America, 875 Mass. Ave., Ste. 84, Cambridge, MA 02139, USA; tel: 617/497-6515; toll-free: 800/498-2877; fax: 617/354-6875; e-mail: 75201.571@compuserve.com; e-mail orders outside North America: books@scup.no

Essays in the book include: Odd Arne Westad, “The Fall of Detente and the Turning Tides of History”; Olav Njolstad, “Keys of Keys? SALT II and the Breakdown of Detente”; Carol R. Saivetz, “Superpower Competition in the Middle East and the Collapse of Detente”; Dan Caldwell, “The Demise of Detente and US Domestic Politics”; Odd Arne Westad, “The Road to Kabul: Soviet Policy on Afghanistan, 1978-1979”; John Lewis Gaddis, “Why Did the Cold War Last as Long as It Did?”

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