

peoples. Having suffered so much, the Soviet Union was determined to preclude any future threat to its national security. For this reason, as well as for its sheer human interest, this book is worthy of study by both historians and the general public.



Suzanne Massie, *Trust but Verify: Reagan, Russia, and Me*. Rockland, ME: Maine Authors Publishing, 2013. 380 pp.

*Reviewed by Nicholas Daniloff, Northeastern University (emeritus) and Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies, Harvard University*

The year 1983 was a tense one in U.S.-Soviet relations, perhaps the most frightening since the Cuban missile crisis two decades earlier. In the 1970s the Soviet Union had begun deploying mobile SS-20 intermediate range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) that gave it the capability of obliterating a great deal of Western Europe. In response, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization began stationing mobile Pershing II IRBMs in West Germany in late 1983 along with ground-launched cruise missiles capable of hitting military targets in Soviet home territory. President Ronald Reagan's "evil empire" speech of 8 March 1983, combined with his announcement two weeks later of a program to develop and deploy a space-based Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), stimulated war rhetoric within the Soviet military. The situation worsened further on 1 September 1983 when the Soviet air force shot down a South Korean passenger airliner.

The administration of Yuri Andropov had been talking privately and openly about the dangers of a U.S.-Soviet war. These warnings, spread by Soviet media, caused unease throughout the Soviet Union. As a correspondent based in Moscow for *U.S. News and World Report* at that time, I followed these reports but sensed that they were exaggerated. I did not believe the two superpowers were really on the brink of war. Indeed, Soviet Defense Minister Dmitrii Ustinov eventually acknowledged that the situation, though serious, was less dangerous than at the start of World War II.

Enter Suzanne Massie, an expert on Russian culture and religion, who visited Moscow during that troubled autumn. Massie was not an academic by training, but she knew a vast amount about Russia, had lectured at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, and in 1980 had published a much-acclaimed and widely read survey of Russian culture, *Land of the Firebird: The Beauty of Old Russia*. She and her first husband, Robert Massie, had co-authored the best-selling *Nicholas and Alexandra: An Intimate Account of the Last of the Romanovs and the Fall of Imperial Russia* (New York: Atheneum, 1967) about the life and assassination of the last Russian imperial family, which was made into a Hollywood film, and she co-authored *Journey*, an account of her son Robert's hemophilia, which was as severe as the hemophilia of Aleksei, the son of the last Tsar. She had many friends among Russian priests living abroad and believed that despite the Stalinist terror and the militant atheism under both Iosif

Stalin and Nikita Khrushchev, religious faith had not been extinguished among the Russian people.

Returning home from her disquieting trip to Moscow in October 1983, Massie recalls that she was struck by the thought that the two superpowers were indeed moving toward war and that she had to warn someone in authority in Washington. “Bureaucrats wouldn’t do,” she writes. “I had to go to the top, to President Reagan himself. I had no idea where this incongruous thought came from. Yet there it was asserting itself. But how to do this?” In the end, she did get to the top with initial help from Senator William Cohen, a Republican from Maine, who put her in touch with Reagan’s national security adviser, Robert McFarlane.

Although highly nervous before her first meeting with President Reagan, Massie quickly struck it off with him. Thus began an unusual relationship between a U.S. president and a private citizen that extended over the next five years and involved at least seventeen meetings by her account. The key to their relationship, I deduce from her memoir, is that she intrigued Reagan with her description of the Russians as people and the rich nature of Russian culture. This seemed to interest him more than the strategic power calculations of his experts in the Department of State and Department of Defense. She persuaded him, consistent with messages also coming from British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, to soften his hard line and seek negotiated compromises with Mikhail Gorbachev, who came to power in 1985. A tool Massie gave Reagan was the Russian proverb “*doveryai no proveryai*”—the translation of which is the title of her book, *Trust but Verify*.

Her meetings with Reagan were confidential although occasionally acknowledged. The first encounter on 17 January 1984 involved a large group of officials, including Vice President George H. W. Bush and White House Chief of Staff James Baker. As time went on and trust built up, she sometimes would meet with Reagan alone, or with Nancy Reagan, who was also gently pushing a more conciliatory approach toward Moscow. Massie writes that she was surprised when Reagan would occasionally reach out to her by telephone. She says Reagan sent her ten letters and notes in all. One should not forget that Reagan also met at least once with other specialists on the USSR, notably James Billington, the Librarian of Congress who had earlier published two highly regarded books about Russian history; Adam Ulam, a professor at Harvard University and the author of many books about the USSR; and Marshal Goldman and Nina Tumarkin, both of whom were professors at Wellesley College.

Besides offering insights, Massie also acted as a back channel to Moscow at a time when Soviet Ambassador Anatolii Dobrynin, who had been serving in Washington for more than two decades, dominated U.S.-Soviet diplomatic communications. Massie offered a counterbalance to Soviet versions of events. Among her missions:

- In 1984, she went to Moscow as an unofficial White House emissary to sound out the possibility of renewing the U.S.-Soviet cultural exchange agreement, which had been suspended, and to present to Reagan observations on the perilous state of relations.

- In 1985, she brought back to Reagan from Moscow a description of what the Soviet side hoped to get out of a summit meeting with the U.S. president, including help in resolving the Afghan quagmire and renewing Aeroflot flights to the United States.
- At Nancy Reagan's request, she clarified why the Soviet Union had refused a visa for her son Ronnie. The refusal was part of the retaliation aimed at the American Broadcasting Corporation for airing a program with an anti-Soviet bent titled *Amerika*. The turn-down, she learned, was not a personal rebuff of Ron, Jr., and was subsequently reversed.
- In January 1987 she carried an informal message from Gorbachev to Reagan seeking help from the United States in achieving national reconciliation in Afghanistan.
- In March 1987 she carried a message from Reagan to Gorbachev urging him to visit the United States, with a return visit by Reagan to the USSR projected for 1988.

In Washington, Massie had limited access to Secretary of State George Shultz, who regarded her kindly, and to Jack Matlock of the National Security Council staff (later ambassador to Moscow), who supported her discussions about Russian civilization with the Reagans but says she had no influence on policy.

Who were Massie's contacts in Moscow? Did they mirror her U.S. connections? Did they go right up to Gorbachev personally? Massie discloses that her major contact was Radomir Bogdanov, the first deputy director of the Institute on the USA and Canada, who on one occasion took her to see Vitalii Gusenko, a personal adviser to Gorbachev. Bogdanov, who was a colonel for Soviet State Security (KGB), had served as "resident" in New Delhi at the time of Svetlana Allilueva's elopement and later defection to the United States. Possibly as punishment, Bogdanov was transferred to the Moscow institute.

As a Moscow correspondent at that time, I came to know Bogdanov quite well and judged that his role was three-fold: to be a point of contact for foreign visitors, to provide confidential information on hot topics of the day, and to look after the KGB's interests. Massie describes how Bogdanov at one meeting offered her money in what may have been an attempt to recruit her. She refused. I had a similar experience with Bogdanov when he offered me \$100 to buy him medicine in London. I refused but offered to get the medicine without his money. He declined my counteroffer.

In conclusion, it seems a pity that *Trust but Verify* was not published by a prominent New York or Washington house or by an academic press with the ability to get the attention of historians or other interested observers. This is a fascinating book for anyone seeking to understand hidden twists and turns of U.S.-Soviet relations in the 1980s. Some have speculated that Massie had greater impact than anyone else in moving Reagan off his hardline stance. This reviewer believes her influence was notable but that Nancy Reagan's persuasion, Prime Minister Thatcher's urging, and a sober assessment of the Soviet political situation under Gorbachev would have moved

Reagan off his hard line even without Massie's input. Massie's great contribution was in giving Reagan a sense of what the Russian people and culture are like.



Daniel J. Sargent, *A Superpower Transformed: The Remaking of American Foreign Relations in the 1970s*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015. 287 pp.

*Reviewed by Roland Burke, La Trobe University (Australia)*

Daniel Sargent's *A Superpower Transformed* seeks to appraise how U.S. foreign policy-makers encountered the epochal ruptures of the 1970s and failed to impart coherence to a discordant and disintegrating international system. This is an intimidating enterprise, one that locates the author at the chronological focal point of current historiographical debate and invites comparison with some of the most eminent historians of U.S. foreign relations. Sargent's first monograph competes with memoirs and analyses from the very subjects under study—not least the confident and complicated prose of Zbigniew Brzezinski and the multiple volumes of memoirs and reflections by Henry Kissinger. The book is remarkably bold in ambition and still more remarkable for its successful execution.

The research is impeccable, with good symmetry across the periods and a mastery of both the core archives and a vast array of secondary literature. Although conventional files of the executive branch and the Department of State stored at presidential libraries and the National Archives are the mainstay, they are supplemented by personal papers from Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, documents from various non-governmental organizations, and collections from the United Kingdom. Although many of these materials have begun to be examined, the greatest sphere of novelty is not so much in their recovery as in the manner in which Sargent has approached them. Instead of the thematic, temporally stochastic sampling that historians tend to use when surveying foreign policy briefs and memoranda, Sargent has immersed himself in the sequence, reading all of the daily briefing items in the order they arrived to facilitate the “reconstruction of strategic assumptions” (p. 8).

Although no historian escapes teleology, Sargent at least makes a diligent attempt. The value of trying is amply demonstrated in his empathy and appreciation for the dynamism, contingency, and difficulty that hinder any effort to craft strategy. In myriad places, Sargent explains how events thwarted design, which is the central argument of the book, and a pattern that is manifest in his treatment of energy, economic, monetary, military, and humanitarian affairs. Alongside the chosen start point and end point for the book's core periodization, 1968 and 1979, this technique revitalizes a field of history that has previously seemed to have exhausted any further insight. Less obviously, it produces an account that draws out much greater commonality between U.S. presidential administrations that have otherwise been seen as highly dissimilar. Sargent's meta-description of strategy across the administrations of Richard