

Gordievsky on the LaRouche SDI plan

by Jeffrey Steinberg

In a series of interviews in the British and American press, Soviet KGB defector Oleg Gordievsky has claimed that the Kremlin panicked over the American strategic ballistic missile defense plan during the closing days of the Brezhnev era in early 1982. According to the former KGB London station chief, who escaped to the West in 1985 after being exposed as a longtime British double agent, the Soviet leadership was convinced that the United States intended to launch a preemptive nuclear assault on the Soviet Union as soon as the SBMD system was in place.

Gordievsky's pinpointing of the Soviet paranoia to 1982, prior to the death of Leonid Brezhnev on Nov. 10 of that year, is an unmistakable reference to the campaign waged by Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. beginning in February 1982, to have the Reagan administration adopt the strategic defense doctrine.

Between February 1982 and April 1983, LaRouche was not only a public advocate of what came to be known as the Strategic Defense Initiative. He functioned as a back channel between the Reagan White House and the Kremlin for exploratory discussions on a possible jointly developed and deployed SDI program. By no later than February 1982, Moscow was keenly aware of LaRouche's proposals and the implicit backing he enjoyed from some circles within the Reagan administration for his plan. By the summer of 1982, many longtime advocates of SBMD in the American scientific and military communities had also joined in the effort to convince President Reagan to make strategic defense a cornerstone of his approach to the Soviets.

A crucial deception

Back in the fall of 1983, while still functioning as a British "mole" inside the KGB, Gordievsky passed out warnings that Moscow was on the verge of going to war with the West over the SDI and the deployment of Pershing and cruise missiles on West German soil. This message, which many believe was a calculated piece of Soviet (or Anglo-Soviet) disinformation, helped fuel a firestorm of opposition to the SDI. According to one former senior White House official, the Gordievsky reports were instrumental in convincing President Reagan to adopt the disastrous arms control policy of his final years in office and to slow down the SDI program.

The resurfacing of the Gordievsky line in recent weeks

is a sure signal that the SDI issue is once again being hotly debated.

In the March 5 issue of *Time* magazine, Gordievsky described his "greatest coup as a Western spy" as "when I reported to the West that the Brezhnev leadership, in its profound misconceptions, ignorance and prejudices, had become acutely fearful of a surprise preemptive nuclear strike on learning that the U.S. was developing the Strategic Defense Initiative. The Brezhnev leadership reckoned that if the U.S. was to possess strategic superiority, it would certainly stage a surprise nuclear attack on the Soviet Union. This information helped the West to realize the depth and danger of Moscow's paranoia."

Several Western news outlets, including the *International Herald Tribune*, jumped on Gordievsky's reference to the Brezhnev era as an "inconsistency," since Reagan did not announce the SDI until four months after Brezhnev's death. But in his articles for the British press, Gordievsky made clear that he was referring to the period prior to Reagan's formal announcement. This was a period in which only LaRouche was a public advocate of the policy.

In the first of a three-part series in the *Times* of London, Gordievsky wrote on Feb. 27: "In the face of Pershing, which could reach Moscow in six minutes from West German bases, and reports received from its intelligence service of an essentially new type of weapon being developed in America which would be able to render the Soviet deterrent useless (the future Strategic Defense Initiative—Star Wars) the Kremlin panicked. In so far as I was able to interpret them, its reactions—after the mirror image principle—were as follows: 'If we had a nuclear potential like the U.S.A. and a system which would eliminate their nuclear deterrent, would we deliver a pre-emptive nuclear strike against our sworn adversary? In all probability, yes. In that case we must begin to prepare immediately for an American attack.'"

Gordievsky, following a "great escape" from KGB captivity and certain execution in 1985, became one of the early backers of Mikhail Gorbachov as a "great reformer" with whom the West could "do business." Gordievsky was a key figure in turning British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher into one of the first Western proponents of "Gorbymania." And President and Mrs. Reagan were apparently not far behind.

Although Gordievsky's exaggerated warnings of a paranoid Kremlin nervously fingering the nuclear button undoubtedly contributed to the Reagan administration's hedging on its SDI commitment, the ex-KGB London station chief's locating of 1982 as the crucial time frame in which Moscow assessed the danger of an American SDI-driven technology breakout is a crucial piece of accurate reporting.

And it underscores the Soviet view, often repeated publicly following President Reagan's March 23, 1983 SDI speech, that Lyndon LaRouche is the most formidable policy adversary to have confronted Moscow in a long time.