

Radio Address to the Nation on the Strategic Defense Initiative

July 13, 1985

My fellow Americans:

In a television address to the Nation on March 23, 1983, I challenged the scientific community to change the course of history by embarking on a research effort to counter Soviet threats with measures purely defensive—measures to reassure people their security no longer depends alone on threats of mutual nuclear annihilation to deter a Soviet attack, but measures enabling us to intercept and destroy ballistic missiles before they reach our soil or that of our allies. A non-nuclear strategic defense makes good sense. It's better to protect lives than to avenge them. But another reason, equally simple and compelling, persuades us to its merit. As the Book of Luke says: "If a strong man shall keep his court well guarded, he shall live in peace." Well, SDI, our Strategic Defense Initiative, could prove crucial to guarding security and peace for America and her allies.

The strategic challenges we face are far different from those in 1972, when the United States and the Soviet Union signed the SALT I and antiballistic missile treaties. When those treaties were signed, certain assumptions about the Soviets were made that—well, to put it charitably—have not proven justified. For example, it was assumed the treaties would lead to a stable balance and, ultimately, to real reductions in strategic arms. But the Soviet Union has never accepted any meaningful and verifiable reductions in offensive nuclear arms—none. It was assumed the treaties were based on acceptance of parity in offensive weapons systems, but the Soviets have continued to race for superiority. As former Secretary of Defense Harold Brown put it, "When we build, they build. When we stop, they build." It was assumed the Soviets would accept the innocent notion that being mutually vulnerable to attack was in our common interest. They haven't.

The Soviets have repeatedly condemned as provocative our research on defense against their first-strike missiles, while blanketing their own country with the most sophisticated air defense system ever seen to protect against our second-strike bombers. And while we

dismantled our lone ABM system 10 years ago, the Soviets have consistently improved the world's only missile defense system deployed around Moscow. They've also developed and deployed the world's only operational killer satellite system and then proceeded to condemn the United States for daring even to test such a weapon.

It was assumed that an effective defense would not be feasible in 1972. But in that very year, Soviet Marshal Grechko testified to the Supreme Soviet: "The treaty on limiting ABM systems imposes no limitations on the performance of research and experimental work aimed at resolving the problem of defending the country against nuclear missile attack." Thus, the Soviets have devoted a huge share of their military budget to a sophisticated strategic defense program which, in resources already allocated, far exceeds what the United States anticipates spending in the current decade.

Finally, it was assumed that the agreements signed would be complied with, but the Soviets are seriously violating them in both offensive and defensive areas. It is the Soviet Union that has violated the 1972 ABM treaty with its construction of a massive radar facility at Krasnoyarsk. Further, the Soviet Union has tested and deployed sophisticated air defense systems which we judge may have capabilities against ballistic missiles.

Given these facts, is it not preposterous for the Soviets, already researching defense technologies for two decades, to now condemn our embryonic SDI program? And as Paul Nitze, one of my chief arms control advisers, pointed out, Soviet hypocrisy is even more glaring when we realize who's taking advantage of our open society to propagandize against our SDI program. A letter to the *New York Times* denouncing SDI was signed by the very Soviet scientists who've been developing the Soviet strategic defense program; other Soviet scientists who signed have spent their entire careers developing offensive weapons. I intend to mention this when I meet with Mr. Gorbachev in Geneva this November. I will tell him the United States

not only has the right to go forward with research for a strategic missile defense, but in light of the scale of their program we'd be the greatest fools on Earth not to do so.

We're going to put our best scientists to work. We're going to cooperate with our allies. We're going to push

forward in full compliance with the ABM treaty on a broad-based research program, whose results to date are immensely encouraging. And, yes, I hope we will one day develop a security shield that destroys weapons, not people.

Until next week, thanks for listening. God bless you.