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'Scalping the Pentagon'

According to a high-ranking Americanologist in the Kremlin, the Soviet leadership privately charges Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger and one of his top aides with having drawn up a "master plan" to destroy the Soviet Union.

Georgi Arbatov, head of the renowned Kremlin-run U.S.A. Institute, is known to have expressed that view of the Kremlin's antagonism toward Weinberger and Assistant Defense Secretary Richard Perle within the last six months. It has come into the hands of U.S. intelligence agencies, but by what means is not known. It was Arbatov's "personal opinion" that the removal of either Weinberger or Perle would be a "favorable development" and a "positive sign."

Disclosure of the secret Arbatov file on scalping the Pentagon happened to coincide with instructions from President Reagan to top Cabinet officials, including Weinberger and CIA Director William Casey, that he intends to follow "a negotiating track" on U.S.-Soviet concerns. But Moscow's call to fire Weinberger and Perle may backfire on Arbatov by raising their go-slow influence within an administration deeply divided over arms control.

The destruction of the Soviet Union, Arbatov said, is planned not by nuclear war but by "other" means: presumably economic and political subversion, military rearmament too fast for the Soviets to match and tougher restraints on sales of technology.

The Kremlin's top strategic specialist on how the Soviet Union should deal with its superpower rival denied that the election campaign had anything to do with it. "Let it be known," he said, "that it is the view of the Soviet leadership that the American administration does not want improved relations with Moscow and therefore for the foreseeable future the Soviet Union cannot move on arms control."

All this transpired before the president met Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko in the White House last month. Since then, and particularly since his landslide reelection on Nov. 6, the president has been moving fast—too fast, some officials believe—toward arms control talks with Moscow under a vague, White House-proclaimed "umbrella" formula.

The "umbrella" formula will send Secre-

tary of State George Shultz to Geneva early next year for across-the-board talks with Gromyko. Paul Nitze, Reagan's negotiator in the failed effort to halt Soviet deployment of the European-targeted SS20 missile, might become Shultz's nuts-and-bolts negotiator starting during the preliminary "umbrella" talks.

In addition, Reagan is all but certain to ask Weinberger to designate a Pentagon specialist to sit through all the negotiations—not Perle, but perhaps Defense Undersecretary Fred Ikle. Whoever is chosen must be acceptable to the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

This careful preparation for what the president is privately calling his "negotiating track" looks neater and tidier than it is. Even with Reagan's strong emphasis to Weinberger and Casey that he is committed to negotiations—that, in the words of one top aide, it is his "frame of mind"—caution about new arms control agreements dominates the CIA and the Pentagon. At Shultz's State Department, the mood is different: optimistic over possibilities for breakthroughs.

Indeed, administration insiders sympathetic to the Pentagon's arms control caution say that the State Department's private judgment of Weinberger and Perle on the nuclear issue is just as negative as the view from the Kremlin portrayed by Georgi Arbatov.

The report of Arbatov's vicious criticism of the president's top Pentagon arms-control planners may actually strengthen them. That would produce a backlash against the Kremlin in the administration's bureaucratic struggle for the mind and soul of Ronald Reagan. Pro-arms control diplomats might be disadvantaged at the hands of Pentagon-CIA skeptics who are convinced that the United States was taken to the cleaners in earlier SALT agreements and must insist on leak-proof verification procedures for all future agreements.

One fact was emerging with clarity here following high-level study of the Arbatov file: however *persona non grata* Weinberger and Perle may be in George Shultz's State Department, the Kremlin's top Americanologist has ended all prospect of their leaving their posts any time soon.

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