



A WALK IN THE WOODS

by **Lee Blessing**
directed by Nick Bowling

STUDY GUIDE

prepared by
Maren Robinson, Dramaturg

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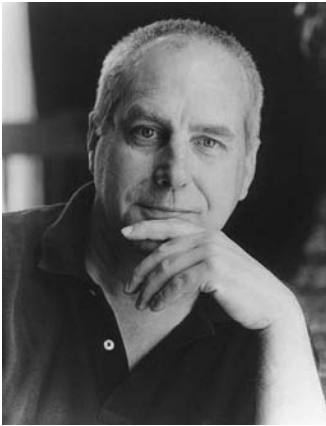
— STUDY GUIDE —

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The Playwright: Lee Blessing



Lee Blessing's plays include *A Walk in the Woods* (Pulitzer Prize and Tony and Olivier award nominations, American Theater Critics Association Award), *Going to St. Ives* (Lucille Lortel Award nomination), *Thief River* (Drama Desk Award nomination), *Cobb*, *Chesapeake*, *Eleemosynary*, *When We Go Upon the Sea* and *Down The Road*. He was the featured playwright of Signature Theatre's 1992- 93 season, which included his plays *Fortinbras*, *Lake Street Extension*, *Two Rooms* and the world premiere of *Patient A*. Recent premieres include *Great Falls* (2008 Humana New Play Festival); *A Body of Water* (Steinberg/ American Theatre Critics Award, Guthrie Theater and Old Globe Theatre) and *Lonesome Hollow* (Contemporary American Theatre Festival). Oregon's Profile Theatre devoted its 2010-11 season to Blessing's plays. Other plays have premiered at Yale Repertory, Arena Stage, Steppenwolf, Old Globe, Alliance and Seattle's A Contemporary Theater, among others. Blessing's television credits include TNT's *Cooperstown* (Humanitas Award). He has received grants from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Guggenheim, Bush, McKnight and Jerome Foundations. He heads the graduate playwriting program at Mason Gross School of the Arts, Rutgers University, and lives in Brooklyn and Los Angeles with his wife, playwright and writer/producer Melanie Marnich.

The Play: A Production History

A Walk in the Woods was first presented at a staged reading during the 1986 National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Conn. It was produced on Broadway in 1988 at the Booth Theatre, in collaboration between the American Playhouse Theatre and Yale Repertory Theatre. Sam Waterston played Honeyman and Robert Prosky played Botvinnik. A London production in 1988-1989 featured Alec Guinness in the role of Botvinnik and Edward Hermann as Honeyman. The play was a nominee for the 1987 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, the 1988 Tony Award for best play and an Olivier Award. It was subsequently produced at La Jolla Playhouse in California. The play was produced in Los Angeles at the Conejo Players Theatre in 1991 and at the Lonny Chapman Group Repertory Theatre in 2010. Other productions have been at the George Street Playhouse in New Brunswick, N.J., in 2003; the American Ensemble Theater in Washington, D.C., in 2010; Northern Stage in White River Junction, Vt. in 2010 (For the first time a woman was cast as the character of Honeyman in this production); and the Kathleen Howland Theatre in Canton, Ohio, in 2011.

The Interview: Lee Blessing

Artistic Director PJ Powers (PJP): In the early 1980s U.S. and Soviet arms negotiators Paul Nitze and Yuli A. Kvitsinsky famously left a Geneva negotiating session for an unofficial “walk in the woods.” How much did their story impact your play?

Lee Blessing (LB): The actual event took place in 1982, I think, and it wasn’t reported in the world press for several months after that. I was aware of the story, but I didn’t conceive the play until late spring 1985, so clearly it had knocked around in my subconscious for a while before it occurred to me to make a play inspired by it. However, I was in no way trying to recount the particular negotiations between Nitze and Kvitsinsky. Paul Nitze was actually the older, more experienced of the two; Kvitsinsky was considerably younger and new to his post.

I didn’t so much want to tell their story as the story of two such men in two such jobs. So I fictionalized both men completely. I needed the Soviet to be both more experienced and more charming than the American—to surprise American audiences somewhat and make them able to “hear” the Russian’s ideas without too much prejudice.

I heard much later that Nitze had seen the play and enjoyed it. I was told he had a poster of it in his office.

PJP: Looking back at this play 25 years after writing it, we’re obviously in a very different international political landscape than we were in the Reagan/Gorbachev era. Yet your play seems so resonant about the importance (and perhaps futility) of negotiating with our adversaries. What excites you about having audiences experience this play in 2011?

LB: I recently saw a production at the Great Plains Theatre Conference in Omaha, where my work was being honored. I have to admit, it did seem to hold up quite well for everyone. The theme of the play—humanity faced for the first time in history with controlling a destructive technology that could literally wipe out all life on earth—certainly hasn’t become dated.

In the 1980s the threat seemed to be two superpowers creating enormous stockpiles of armed, targeted nuclear weapons. Today, it has more to do with our unsuccessful attempts to limit the proliferation of nuclear weapons to smaller, less stable regimes—and to even smaller, sub-national groups (including terrorists).

But the essence of the threat—our human ingenuity for creating destruction outpacing our ability to make peace and establish trust between rival groups—hasn’t really changed.

PJP: Your body of work includes many plays that explore challenging and controversial current events, and you are one of the most daring dramatists for writing about topics “of the moment,” with *A Walk In The Woods* being a great example when it premiered. Yet, through time, many of your plays also become fascinating historical pieces, providing a window into other eras. Do you think of yourself as a writer of history plays?

LB: Of course I don’t think of myself as a writer of historical pieces. But current events have that pesky habit of turning into history over time, don’t they? My only ambition is to write plays that people are still going to want to see 20 years from now. That’s one of the luxuries of writing for the stage, I suppose—one can be that thematically ambitious. After 9/11 *Two Rooms*, a play I’d written during the Reagan era about Americans being kidnapped in Beirut, got a lot of new productions. Audiences had no trouble plugging those 1980s events into those of 2001. As with *A Walk in the Woods*, the essential problem has never changed. Strife has been a chronic condition in the Middle East, and many of the strategies and tactics haven’t changed.

When I write about current events, I always try to conceive the story in a larger historical context. I’m not just interested in why people are doing certain things right now; I also want to explore the forces that limit our ability meet crises in new and different ways.

PJP: In *A Walk In The Woods* you never get specific about actual historical players. For instance, the “President” is referred to, but never explicitly as Ronald Reagan. Was that a deliberate choice to not tie this story to specific leaders and personalities?

LB: Again, it wasn’t my ambition to point fingers at specific individuals in this play (though I do now and then in other plays). My thought was to focus on the existential nature of the Geneva negotiations.

I was fascinated by these nations putting some of their best people in critically sensitive jobs with the sole intention of letting them fail. It’s hard to find a more existential situation than that. Besides, this sort of attitude had reigned over the proceedings through many administrations to some extent or another. Reagan wasn’t the only president who didn’t believe in the ability of the negotiations to effect real change.

PJP: TimeLine approached you with the idea of casting a woman in the role of Andrey Botvinnik, the Soviet negotiator, and you graciously agreed. You obviously haven’t had a chance to see how it’s working yet, but how do you think gender politics might impact this play?

LB: I have seen a production with a woman playing John Honeyman, American negotiator. There have been at least two of those. I think it works fine, actually. While it wouldn’t have been as likely in the 1980s, our experience of the intervening years has made us accustomed to women being at the highest levels of power in any number of nations. Hillary Clinton’s run

for president (and the fact that both she and Madeleine Albright have been Secretary of State) helped open our minds to this possibility.

It was not unknown in the '80s, of course. Great Britain's Margaret Thatcher and (interestingly) women prime ministers in both India and Pakistan were leading the way back then in terms of broadening our views on this issue.

I don't think interpersonal gender politics would affect the play's two characters all that much. The issues in the play are so overwhelming (and sexless—or sex neutral), that neither character could afford to waste much time or energy on scoring points in that arena. It would seem too petty and obviously manipulative of them, I'd imagine.

PJP: This play had a heralded run on Broadway in 1988—a grand stage for a seemingly small play about two people talking on a bench. What was that experience like?

LB: The play opened Feb. 29, 1988, at the Booth Theater. It was a good spot for the play, since it's a relatively intimate Broadway house (about 800 seats). When it opened later that year at the Comedy Theatre in London's West End, which is roughly the same size, it was similarly effective. Given the casts (Sam Waterston and Robert Prosky in NYC and Sir Alec Guinness and Edward Herrmann in London), it wasn't too difficult for audiences to spend a couple hours watching two men motivating themselves on and around a bench in a forest clearing.

In every production I've seen, that concern evaporates early. The issue is irresistibly involving, since it concerns the continued existence of every man, woman, and child on the planet. I tell my writing students that a play works when it becomes our play—and this play actually starts out that way.

Also, it's not really a two-character play. The surrounding forest—the natural world itself—is just as much at risk as we are from nuclear Armageddon. Throughout the play it's standing there silent—but it's speaking to us all the same.

PJP: As a company focused on exploring history, TimeLine is always fascinated by how much or how little playwrights rely on research in their writing, some very faithfully and others as just a launching pad or not at all. Can you talk about how you use research in your writing and also how you tackle this with your students as head of the graduate playwriting program at Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University?

LB: Research varies widely with the project for me. I've written over-researched plays that have gotten bogged down in too many characters, too many "fascinating" real-life facts and episodes, etc. I've also written under-researched projects, for which I had to go back again and again to my sources for more information to support the plays' fundamental dramatic situations and/or their sense of authenticity.

I didn't do a great deal of research for *A Walk in the Woods*, especially for its early drafts. I was more interested in a repeating, existential pattern of human relations and how this episode demonstrated that. When I did start to salt in a few scientific or specialized terms, I did it as judiciously as possible.

The trick is to get an audience to accept the two characters as negotiators with a minimum of proof. It's not a dramatist's job to festoon these men with evidences of authenticity. It's a dramatist's job to get an audience to stop asking the question and focus on the other, more important questions closer to the heart of the show.

This is the sort of dramaturgical sleight-of-hand I tell my playwriting MFAs about at Rutgers—when they're listening to me, of course.

The Conversation: David Parkes and Nicholas Thompson

David Parkes is a TimeLine Company Member who portrays the character of John Honeyman in TimeLine's production of *A Walk in the Woods*.

Nicholas Thompson is the author of *The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan, and the History of the Cold War* and grandson of Paul Nitze, the arms negotiator who inspired the character of Honeyman.

David Parkes (DP): Obviously, knowing of your grandfather's considerable influence in the shaping of American foreign policy must have been a significant inspiration for the book. At what point did you decide to include George Kennan in the story, and relate the events of the cold war through their, as you say, "often parallel, and sometimes perpendicular," lives?

Nicholas Thompson (NT): The seed for the book was planted in 1999 when my grandfather read a letter he had received from Kennan. Nitze had just published an op-ed in *The New York Times* calling for the abandonment of our nuclear arsenal. Kennan had sent an eloquent note expressing his pleasure that they had finally agreed on an issue they had disputed for 50 years. I remember wondering then about the history between the two men.

I ultimately decided to write the book when I read the obituary of Kennan, who died six months after my grandfather. I hadn't recognized how closely parallel his life was to my grandfather's. But I remember sitting at my father's house, reading the obituary in the newspaper and saying to my dad "Wow. Their lives were the same." He then told me about their personal friendship, which made a possible book seem like an even better idea.

DP: What was the most surprising thing you learned in your research for the book?

NT: I had no idea about the depth of Kennan's depression and his dark feelings about this country. I also had no idea how interesting a character Svetlana Stalin, the daughter of the dictator, would turn out to be. I had never even heard of her when I started, but it turned out that she was a seminal figure in Kennan's life, and she and I actually became friends.

DP: Can you speak a little about your first recollections of Paul Nitze?

NT: I remember playing tennis, fishing and hiking with him. I had a vague sense that he was important, and I wrote a 6th grade term paper on his arms negotiating. But mostly I liked playing in grandfather-grandson tennis tournaments. When I was 10, and he was 78, we were about equal on the court. I remember him as a kind, loving, brilliant man, and these personal memories led me to doubt the standard histories that cast him as a demon of the Cold War.

DP: How did you first hear of the famous “walk in the woods,” and what did you learn from Nitze regarding the negotiations with Kvitsinsky?

NT: I never learned anything from him. I was only seven when it happened, and I never discussed it with him. But I learned a great deal from Kvitsinsky! The most surprising thing he told me was that the Russians rejected the deal in part because they thought that Nitze, who had always been a hardliner, had played a trick on him. I was also impressed with how much genuine respect he had for Nitze. He's still a member of the Russian parliament, but he was willing to speak with me, and answer repeated emails, entirely because I'm Nitze's grandson.

DP: How do you feel Nitze's thoughts changed over time on nuclear arms as a means of shaping foreign policy?

NT: I think his general philosophy—nuclear weapons should be at the center of foreign policy, and we need to set the strategic balance in such a way that minimizes the odds of war, particularly by making the U.S. stronger than the U.S.S.R.—was pretty consistent. What was also, strangely, consistent was his view that any given moment was a moment of urgent peril and that the Soviets were ahead in a way that we needed to catch up to.

DP: You mentioned that you saw a previous production of the play. What were your impressions of the story in light of what you know of the actual events?

NT: I think the play does a good job of capturing the reality of events, though, of course, in real life, it was an old American pairing with a young Russian. But it was truly two men from very different worlds who undertook a risky mission to try to solve an unsolvable problem.

DP: How have your own views of American diplomatic efforts changed or evolved since your completion of the book—particularly with respect to the United States' post-Cold War relationship with Russia, and the continued challenges of nuclear disarmament?

NT: One of the great questions of our times is the one Nitze struggled with at the end of his life: Can we actually get rid of all the nuclear weapons in the world? It's a very tough question, in part because of game theory. If every big country gets rid of its nuclear weapons, it becomes particularly valuable for a small country to build them. But I've been impressed with President Obama's rhetoric on the issue, and I've been pleased by the limited progress that has occurred with Moscow.

The Context: The Cold War Arms Negotiation Landscape

In the 1980s, the Soviet Union had surpassed the United States in the number and size of nuclear weapons. The U.S., though, had more effective targeting and delivery systems. All nuclear-arms talks necessarily dealt not only with the number of weapons but also the means of improving their delivery, defense systems, testing and future weapons.

Before the talks started there was already disagreement about numbers and types of weapons. The Soviets wanted to count the missiles of Western allies toward the total number of U.S. missiles for the purposes of the negotiations. The U.S. delegation wanted to count total numbers of weapons not the speed or effectiveness of their delivery. Early Cold War negotiations relied on the principle of Mutually Assured Destruction. The theory was that neither the Soviet Union nor the U.S. would initiate a nuclear missile attack because both had systems in place to launch nuclear missiles in response to a nuclear assault. The resulting devastation on each country was a sufficient deterrent to nuclear conflict.

However, in spring 1983, in advance of the presidential election, President Ronald Reagan announced his plan to create the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), a proposed defense system that could shoot down nuclear missiles from land and space. Although the technology for SDI—nicknamed Star Wars by opponents because the program sounded like science fiction—had not yet

been developed, the Soviets perceived it as an attempt to shift the balance from mutually assured destruction. The proposed defense system was seen as an act of aggression and a violation of earlier treaties, increasing tensions between the two countries.

At the height of the Cold War arms build up during the Reagan administration, the Pentagon spent \$34 billion per year on armaments. In spite of a recession, Reagan was reelected in a landslide in 1984, carrying 49 states, in part because of his Cold War hawkishness.

During this period, the Soviet Union was undergoing an upheaval. While presenting a united front to the Americans and the world, the country was soon to face an economic crisis and its leadership was in disarray. There were four General Secretaries of the Communist Party between 1982 and 1985—Leonid Brezhnev, Yuri Andropov, Konstantin Chernenko (he died in office) and Mikhail Gorbachev—and this flux in leadership provided an additional challenge to arms negotiations.

The History: The Walk in the Woods

“[It was] the most flagrant disobedience toward negotiation instructions that I had ever heard.”

—Richard Burt, director of politico-military affairs for Secretary of State George Schultz on the “walk in the woods”

The events of the play are inspired by negotiators Paul Nitze and Yuli A. Kvitsinsky, who were involved in talks to limit Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) between 1981 and 1984.

In 1982, under the real risk of the talks stalling, the two men left the negotiating sessions in Geneva, Switzerland, and drove to the Jura Mountains on the border of France and Switzerland and walked up a logging road into the woods. During this unofficial walk in the woods, Nitze and Kvitsinsky created a proposal for sweeping arms reductions, and each agreed to take the document back to their respective countries. Their discussion was not authorized, and they had wildly exceeded their mandate as negotiators.

Although the proposal was promising, it became caught in internal politics on both sides and was rejected. President Reagan was initially interested but hardliners in his administration, like Richard Perle, Assistant Secretary of Defense, argued fiercely against giving up faster missiles. Kvitsinsky presented the proposal to Deputy Foreign Ministers Georgi Kornienko and Victor Komplektov. Here, Nitze’s reputation as a past hardliner worked

against the negotiations: Kornienko and Komplektov argued the proposal was a hoax; they accused him of being naïve and ordered him not to respond to the United States.

Nitze and Kvitsinsky's clandestine meeting and negotiation attempt was leaked, and it convinced many European nations the United States and Soviet Union were serious about genuine negotiation. It paved the way for the nearly successful arms-reduction negotiations in Reykjavik, Iceland, in 1986 and finally the INF Treaty in 1987 and Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) in 1991.

“We came up with a piece of paper which both of us agreed to support with our governments. He wasn't very hopeful that he would be able to get support in his government. I was hopeful that I could get support in my government, but it was quite different than anything that had been cleared by our administration in advance. When I took it back and took it up with the President and his immediate advisors, they were really quite impressed with it. They thought this really might be the breakthrough everybody had been looking for.”

“If Kvitsinsky found support for this in Moscow, he would let me know through a man in their embassy in Washington. But the weeks went by, and I never did hear from this man in their embassy in Washington. So I became persuaded that he hadn't found any support amongst the Russians. Then later, people on the U.S. side began to object, so the whole thing met an early death.”

—*Paul Nitze, the chief American negotiator in the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces talks, in an interview on what came to be called the “walk in the woods”*

“In each session it will go through episodes of competition in wit and humor, calm dead seriousness, oratory or at least attempts at eloquence, and at least on his part outrageous polemics which I choose to believe offer me fine opportunities for brilliant thrusts, rebuttals and repartee. But underlying it is a sense of deadly seriousness.”

—*Paul Nitze on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces negotiations with Yuli Kvitsinsky*

“[My colleagues] depicted Nitze as a shrewd and dangerous American hawk who hated communists and the Soviet Union. Out of previous experience the general attitude towards him in Moscow was persistently negative. That is why my confidential contacts with him were met with suspicion and the results of them considered rather a proof of Kvitsinsky’s gullibility.”

—*Yuli Kvitsinsky reflecting on the “walk in the woods” 25 years later*

“Well, Paul you just tell the Soviets that you’re working for one tough son-of-a-bitch.”

—*President Ronald Reagan’s response to Paul Nitze in rejecting the “walk in the woods” proposal*

The Players: Paul Nitze and Yuli Kvitsinsky



Paul Nitze inspired the character of John Honeyman

“I have been around at a time when important things needed to be done.” — *Paul Nitze*

Born in 1907, Paul Nitze had a long career in the government spanning multiple presidencies. At the time of the “walk in the woods” Nitze was an elder statesman. Trained as an investment banker, he entered government service during World War II. He began familiarizing himself with weapons when he was vice chairman of the Strategic Bombing Survey for President Harry S. Truman, assessing the accuracy and damage of the bombs used in World War II. Known as a Cold War hawk, Nitze authored the policy paper NSC-68, which urged the build up of military forces to counter Soviet expansionism.

He was director of policy planning for the State Department in the Truman administration. President John F. Kennedy appointed him Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and, later, Secretary of the Navy. He continued to serve as Secretary of the Navy for President Lyndon B. Johnson and later became his Deputy Secretary of Defense. He was a member of the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) delegation. He opposed the ratification of SALT II. He was a member of the Committee on Present Danger, a watchdog group that feared the Soviet nuclear threat. He met future president Ronald Reagan while on the committee.

He became President Reagan's chief negotiator for the INF Treaty. He participated in the promising but failed arms-reduction negotiations between Reagan and Gorbachev in Reykjavik, Iceland, negotiated a successful INF treaty and worked on early START negotiations.

He continued to write and offer opinions about nuclear weapons after he retired. He was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1985. He died Oct. 19, 2004, in Washington, D.C.

Yuli Kvitsinsky inspired the character of Andrey Botvinnik

“That was an abortive child, impregnated and delivered by Mr. Nitze.” —*Yuli Kvitsinsky, on the proposal generated by the “walk in the woods”*

Yuli Kvitsinsky was Paul Nitze's Soviet counterpart during the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces negotiations between 1981 and 1984. He was 45 when the negotiations began; Nitze was 74.

He was the son of a Polish engineer and grew up in Siberia. He was assigned to East Germany between 1959 and 1965. He served in Soviet embassies in Berlin and Bonn and spoke German and English.

When Nitze suggested they could solve the problem by negotiating alone, Kvitsinsky was intrigued and agreed to their “walk in the woods,” where the two men sat in a log in the rain and hammered out a plan for real arms reductions.

Kvitsinsky was described as always holding the Soviet line but not being an ideologue. One diplomat said of him, “After a while you even get to like him.”

The Women: Soviet Women in Diplomacy

The Russian Revolution included the belief that women should be treated equally and have equal access to work. Articles 22 and 122 of the Soviet Constitution of 1918 promised women employment on an equal basis with men. The massive number of deaths of Russian men in World War II also meant that women entered the Soviet workforce in significant numbers during and after the war. In 1944, women made up 40 percent of the workers in the iron and steel industry.

In spite of the government's promises of inclusion, Soviet women remained under-represented in more prestigious and powerful positions. Although 20 percent of Communist Party members were women, men almost exclusively held the highest-ranking positions.

However, several Soviet women have achieved high-ranking diplomatic positions.

Nataliya Alekseevna Narotchnitskaya, born in 1948, was a Soviet diplomat to the United Nations between 1982-1989. She is a vocal conservative and nationalist.

Roza Otunbayeva, born in 1950, became the president of Kyrgyzstan in 2010. She was a professor of philosophy before becoming involved in politics. In the 1980s, she was head of the Soviet delegation to UNESCO in Paris. Otunbayeva was the Soviet ambassador to Malaysia. She became Kyrgyzstan's first ambassador to the U.S. and Canada.

Olga Yakovlevna Ivanova, born in 1948, is a career diplomat. She worked in the Soviet Ministry of Foreign affairs and as an adviser to the Russian mission to UNESCO in Paris. In 2004, she was named ambassador to the Republic of Mauritius; her posting marked the first time the ministry appointed a female as ambassador to a foreign nation. In fact, the world's first female ambassador was a Russian.

Alexandra Kollontai (1827-1952) was a communist revolutionary. She was appointed ambassador to Norway in 1923.

The Negotiators: Diplomacy Today

The Foreign Service, under the auspices of the U.S. State Department, generally handles diplomatic work in the United States. High-level negotiations or state visits may be performed by the Secretary of State, members of the President's staff, handpicked members of Congress, ambassadors and/or past presidents. Members of the Foreign Service take exams and serve in countries worldwide.

For arms negotiations, a team of experts—including internal White House strategists, arms experts and negotiators—may be involved in the talks. When a treaty has been agreed on, the leaders of countries step in to sign it. In the U.S., the Constitution requires the treaty be ratified by the Senate.

In many cases, the work of the negotiators goes unnoticed. Though members of the negotiation team can have a wide variety of backgrounds, they generally also have had long careers within the government.

The Timeline: Key Moments in United States–Soviet Arms Negotiations



January 20, 1981

Ronald Reagan is inaugurated.

July 1981

Paul Nitze, 74, is asked to lead the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) talks.

November 1981

The first round of INF talks between Nitze and Yuli Kvitsinsky, his Soviet counterpart, begin in Geneva, Switzerland.

June 1982

Half a million people walk from the United Nations to Central Park in New York City to demand nuclear disarmament.

July 16, 1982

Nitze and Kvitsinsky drive to the Jura Mountains, on the border of Switzerland and France. The two men take their famous “walk in the woods” and draft their own plan for arms reduction.

September 12, 1982

In a meeting with President Reagan, Nitze tries to save the arms-reduction proposal. Reagan rejects the plan.

January 1983

A departing member of the White House staff leaks details about Nitze and Kvitsinsky’s “walk in the woods.”

January 28, 1983

Paul Nitze and Yuli Kvitsinsky resume INF talks in Geneva, Switzerland after recessing November 30, 1982.

March 1983

President Reagan announces the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI), which quickly becomes known as Star Wars. However the proposed defense plan appears to violate the terms of the previously negotiated ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty, increasing tensions between the countries. The Americans broadly interpret the old treaty as leaving room for new defenses, while the Soviets are outraged by a perceived American breach of the treaty.

September 1983

A civilian South Korean airliner strays into Soviet airspace; two air-to-air missiles shoot it down. The 269 passengers and crew are all killed.

November 1983

The United States goes ahead with positioning Pershing missiles in Germany. The Soviets walk out of the INF talks in part because Pershing missiles are one of the items being negotiated.

1984

Ronald Reagan is reelected President in a landslide; he carries 49 states.

March 11, 1985

General Secretary Konstantin Chernenko dies in office and the Soviet Central Committee names Mikhail Gorbachev as his replacement.

July 31, 1985

Nitze and Kvitsinsky have an unofficial dinner together in Boston.

November 19, 1985

Reagan and Gorbachev meet for the first time in Geneva; although nothing comes of the summit, it is apparent the men like each other.

April 26, 1986

Four nuclear reactors in Chernobyl, Ukraine, melt down, offering a poignant image of the risks of nuclear exposure.

October 1986 Nitze accompanies Reagan to arms negotiations in Reykjavik, Iceland. The Americans and Soviets are incredibly close to an arms deal, but it falls apart over whether the countries could continue research and testing while abiding by the ABM Treaty.

December 1987 Nitze succeeds in negotiating an INF treaty; the terms are better for the U.S. than the “walk-in-the-woods” proposal.

1988

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) negotiations between the United States and the Soviet Union begin again. Nitze is part of the team. The negotiations are too complicated to be completed before the end of the Reagan administration.

1991

START is ratified right before the collapse of the Soviet Union.

December 5, 2009

START expires.

April 8, 2010

President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev sign New START in Prague. The treaty becomes effective January 26, 2011.

Timeline of the Nuclear-Arms Race

1945**July 16**

The first atomic bomb is tested in Alamogordo, N.M.

August 6

The United States drops an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan.

August 9

The U.S. drops an atomic bomb on Nagasaki, Japan.

1949**August 29**

The Soviet Union tests its first atomic bomb.

1952

October 3

The United Kingdom tests its first atomic bomb.

1954

March 1

The U.S. tests the world's first hydrogen bomb on Bikini Atoll in the Pacific Ocean. It is 1000 times more powerful than the bombs dropped at Hiroshima.

1957

The United Nations establishes the International Atomic Energy Agency to monitor nuclear development worldwide.

1959

The U.S. tests its first intercontinental ballistic missile.

1960

February 13

France tests its first nuclear bomb.

1964

October 16

China tests its first nuclear bomb.

1968

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty is signed.

1974

May 18

India detonates an underground "non-weapon" nuclear explosion.

1979

Israel and South Africa are suspected of jointly testing a nuclear bomb.

1991

The Cold War ends. The U.S.-Soviet arms race ends; massive missile stockpiles, though, remain in the U.S. and former Soviet nations.

1998

India runs five underground nuclear-weapons tests; Pakistan conducts six underground nuclear weapons tests.

2002

North Korea announces it has a nuclear-weapons program.

2003

North Korea withdraws from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. Libya ends its nuclear-weapons program.

2005

A review meeting of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty ends with no agreement.

2006

October 25

North Korea claims to have carried out an underground nuclear test.

2009

May 25

North Korea runs an underground test of a nuclear bomb as powerful as the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima.

2011

January

In a threat assessment U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates warns North Korea is within five years of developing an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile able to reach the continental U.S.

June 8

Abbasi Davani, head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, announces plans to triple Iran's capacity to produce enriched uranium, which has some civilian uses but is primarily used in nuclear weapons.

The Rhetoric of the Cold War

As the Cold War arms race escalated, the language used by leaders in the United States and the Soviet Union has been challenging. Both countries' leaders have been aware of the precarious balance between their countries and have not wanted to use nuclear weapons. Yet politics and ideological differences often have led to vehement rhetoric that, at times, made arms negotiations even more difficult.



"We are Bolsheviks! We stick firmly to the Lenin precept—don't be stubborn if you see you are wrong, but don't give in if you are right. ... About the capitalist states, it doesn't depend on you whether or not we exist. If you don't like us, don't accept our invitations, and don't invite us to come to see you. Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you!"

—*Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev in a 1956 speech the day after 12 NATO ambassadors had walked out on a similar tirade*

"It is insane that two men, sitting on opposite sides of the world, should be able to decide to bring an end to civilization."

—*President John F. Kennedy on lessons learned from the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis*

"I'd rather use the nuclear bomb."

—*President Richard Nixon to Henry Kissinger in 1972 before ordering the escalation of the Vietnam War*

"It is dangerous madness to try to defeat each other in the arms race and to count on victory in nuclear war. I shall add that only he who has decided to commit suicide can start a nuclear war in the hope of emerging a victor from it. No matter what the attacker might possess, no matter what method of unleashing nuclear war he chooses, he will not attain his aims. Retribution will inevitably ensue."

—*Leonid Brezhnev, General Secretary of the Communist Party, in October 1981, in response to a question from a Pravda correspondent.*

"When we sit down, I will tell President Brezhnev that the U.S. is ready to build a new understanding, I will tell him that his people and his government have nothing to fear from the U.S."

—*President Ronald Reagan, discussing what he would say to Brezhnev at the renewed arms-limitation talks (Time magazine, May 17, 1982)*

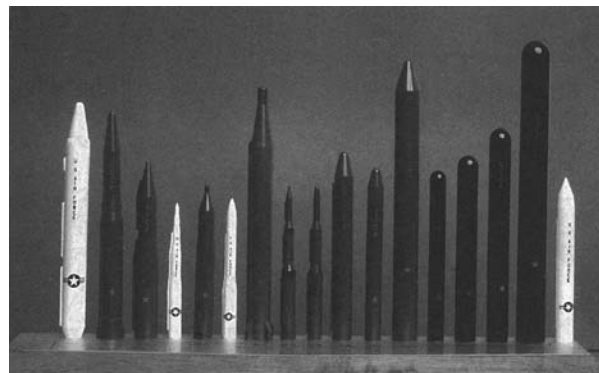
“General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace, if you seek prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, if you seek liberalization, come here to this gate. Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!”

—*President Ronald Reagan calling for the destruction of the Berlin Wall in a June 12, 1987, speech at the Brandenburg Gate in West Berlin*

“General, General, I am very, very sorry. You will have to find a new enemy.”

—*Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Communist Party, to Gen. Colin Powell, then serving as Reagan’s National Security Advisor, at a U.S.-Soviet conference in 1988.*

Nuclear Warheads by Country Over Time



These statistics do not include short-range missiles, nuclear artillery shells, depth charges and anti-ballistic missiles.

	1945	1950	1955	1965	1975
U.S.	11	640	4,618	32,040	25,579
Russia	0	25	426	7,089	21,205
UK	0	0	15	270	350
France	0	0	0	36	212
China	0	0	0	20	190
Israel	0	0	0	0	0
Pakistan	0	0	0	0	0
India	0	0	0	0	0
North Korea	0	0	0	0	0

	<u>1980</u>	<u>1985</u>	<u>1995</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>2009</u>
U.S .	23,464	24,401	11,009	10,527	9,552
Russia	32,049	45,000	25,000	20,000	12,987
UK	350	300	300	200	192
France	274	355	450	350	300
China	330	425	400	400	176
Israel	0	0	0	0	200
Pakistan	0	0	0	0	90
India	0	0	0	0	75
North Korea	0	0	0	0	2

Cold War Terminology

Acceptable losses – The term used to refer to strategic losses or sacrifices such as anticipated casualties in war.

ASAT (Anti-satellite) – Anti-satellite weapons are designed to destroy or incapacitate satellites for military purposes.

Ballistic Missiles – Ballistic missiles are missiles that are guided by a weapon guidance system in the relatively brief period of ascent arc and fall freely in descent.

BMD (Ballistic Missile Defense) – A system of defense in which layers of weapons are designed to intercept ballistic missiles. Since there are a variety of speeds and types of ballistic missiles there are different means of defending against them.

C-cubed – A systems company that developed video compression and transmission technology as well as implemented that technology in semiconductors.

CEP (Circular Error Probable) – In ballistic missile technology the CEP is a measure of the accuracy of a weapon system.

Cruise missile – A missile that has a radar guidance system and flies at a moderate speed and a low altitude.

Détente — Derived from the French word meaning a relaxing or easing; it describes the Cold War policies of a softening of relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union during the presidency of Richard M. Nixon. A series of summits and meetings between the two countries (including the SALT I negotiations) was part of that easing in relations.

Emigration – To leave one's country to live in another country.

FBS (Forward Based Systems) – A variety of aircraft deployed geographically close to an opposing country, capable of delivering nuclear weapons within a foreign country at short notice.

ICBM (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) – Missiles with a range often in excess of 3,500 miles, designed to deliver nuclear warheads.

Lasers – Originally an acronym for “light amplification by stimulated emission of radiation,” it refers to a device that uses changes in the energy states of atoms to create a steady beam of electromagnetic energy. Lasers have a variety of medical and military uses.

Megadeath – The term used to refer to one million deaths, generally used as a unit of reference describing the power of nuclear weapons.

MX (Missile Experimental) – A short name for the LGM 118A Peacekeeper Missile, it was a land-based intercontinental ballistic missile that was deployed in 1986. All 50 missiles that were part of the deployment have been deactivated.

SALT (Strategic Arms Limitation Talks) – The SALT I talks took place in Helsinki, Finland, in 1969 between delegations from American President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev. These talks led to the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty. The SALT II talks occurred between 1977 and 1979 between delegations from American President Jimmy Carter and Russian President Leonid Brezhnev. They were designed to build on the SALT I talks and reduce methods for delivering nuclear weapons. The U.S. Senate never ratified the treaty because of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. However, the treaty was honored until President Ronald Reagan withdrew from it in 1986, accusing the Soviets of violating the terms of the pact.

SDI (Strategic Defense Initiative) – Proposed by President Ronald Reagan on March 23, 1983. It was designed to protect against ballistic missiles through a system of land- and space-based defense systems. It was meant to replace the doctrine of mutually assured destruction but many scientists and strategists felt it was not viable and it became derisively called “star wars” after the space explosions and defenses in the popular science fiction film.

SLBMs (Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles) – A ballistic missile that is designed to be launched from a submarine.

SLCMs (Submarine Launched Cruise Missiles) – A cruise missile that is designed to be launched from a submarine.

START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty) – START I was proposed by Ronald Reagan in Geneva in 1982. The negotiations were slow and a treaty was not ratified until 1991, right before the collapse of the Soviet Union. The treaty expired on December 5, 2009.

Star Wars — The name given to the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) proposed by President Ronald Reagan in 1983 to use both ground and space based defense systems to protect against ballistic missiles. The name used the name of the popular film to ridicule the initiative, which many scientists and strategists felt was not possible.

Summit – A conference of high-level government officials or diplomats.

Test ban – A ban or partial ban on testing nuclear weapons agreed upon by countries that have those weapons. A test ban treaty is a treaty in which countries agree to the ban.

Discussion Questions

About the Play

1. When the play was first performed, it was still during the Cold War era. What issues struck you as still being significant today? How do the issues raised by the play resonate for a modern audience?
2. Honeyman and Botvinnik have a lot of discussion about what it means to be friends. At the end of the play do you think Honeyman and Botvinnik are friends?
3. Honeyman argues that being friends might be detrimental to their ability to be negotiators. Do you think that friendship might provide grounds for negotiation, or is it an obstacle? Do you think they have achieved anything at the end of the play?

About the Production

1. For this production, playwright Lee Blessing gave his permission for the character of Botvinnik to be played by a woman. How does it change the experience of the play to have Botvinnik a woman? What lines and moments do you think play in a different way because of the gender difference?
2. The set is very stark cut outs with projections. How do the projections and set work together to create the setting of the play?
3. There are interludes with music and projections between each of the four scene of the play. How do these interludes work to transition between the scenes?

About the History

1. The play was inspired by a real walk in the woods taken by Paul Nitze and Yuli Kvitsinsky during arms control negotiations. How does it affect your experience of the play to know that these events are based on real negotiations?
2. Before the play could you have named the number of nuclear weapons Soviets and Americans had in the 1980s? Could you have named the number of nuclear weapons we have now? Do you think fears about nuclear war have disappeared since the end of the Cold War?
3. In spite of the vast differences and often challenging rhetoric of the Cold War the negotiations between both Nitze and Kvitsinsky (and Honeyman and Botvinnik in the play) seem to have been based on establishing genuine respect, trust and a language of negotiation. Do you think the language of discourse between opposing political parties or countries with different political systems has improved or gotten worse since the Cold War? Are there any lessons to be learned from the Cold War for our current politicians?

References and Further Reading

Books

- *The Hawk and the Dove* – Nicholas Thompson
- *From Hiroshima to Glasnost* – Paul Nitze

Articles

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- “Bonn Discloses Soviet Moves on New Missile Offer,” *New York Times*, Nov. 20, 1983.
- “Agreeing on More than the Dinner Menu?” William Beecher, *Boston Globe*, Aug. 2, 1985.

Films

- *Countdown to Zero*
- *Trinity and Beyond*
- “The Presidents: Regan,” *American Experience* on PBS
- http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/presidents/video/reagan_27.html#v155
- “Race for the Superbomb,” *American Experience*, PBS
- <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/bomb/index.html>