



At the Highest Levels

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc. or its Licensors. Please see [copyright information](#) at the end of this document.

Written in part during the crucial years 1989 to 1991, *AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS* keeps its promise to provide readers with an insider's view of what happened at key policy meetings, superpower summits, and supposedly secret conversations at the end of the Cold War. With its direct quotes and uncannily close descriptions of the talks, actions and plans of leaders like George Bush, Mikhail Gorbachev, James Baker, and Edward Shevardnadze, historian Beschloss and journalist Talbott reveal their amazing access to the world of people who have made recent history.

Beginning with newly inaugurated President Bush's decision to order a "pause" in dealing with the Soviets in early 1989, which intensely angered a Gorbachev interested in change and development, Beschloss and Talbott chronicle how the leaders of the two superpowers tried, with often unexpected results, to end the decade-long enmity between their two nations.

AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS fluently narrates how the personal resolve of top players influenced their reactions to still breathtaking events: the fall of the Berlin Wall, the collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe, fresh and sweeping new agreements about limiting nuclear and conventional forces, and finally the breakup of the Soviet Union. All are presented from the perspective of the people at the centers of political power. The book's focus could not be more appropriate for the era of George Bush, who placed such great emphasis on personal contacts, and achieved his biggest triumph—the forging of the anti-Saddam coalition—following this strategy.

Ultimately, Beschloss and Talbott warn of the pitfalls of such an approach. They notice that Bush and Gorbachev fell from power because of large-scale domestic problems which their personal efforts could not mitigate. This negative outcome notwithstanding, like Bush and Gorbachev, *AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS* operates from the premise that it is people who shape history.

Sources for Further Study

Arms Control Today. XXIII, March, 1993, p.30.

Chicago Tribune. January 31, 1993, XIV, p.3.

The Christian Science Monitor. July 29, 1993, p.14.

Foreign Affairs. LXXII, Summer, 1993, p.200.

Los Angeles Times Book Review. March 21, 1993, p.7.

The New York Times Book Review. XCVIII, February 14, 1993, p.9.

The New Yorker. LXVIII, February 1, 1993, p.105.

Newsweek. CXXI, February 1, 1993, p.62.

At the Highest Levels: At the Highest Levels

Publishers Weekly. CCXL, January 4, 1993, p.64.

Time. CXLI, February 15, 1993, p.62.

The Wall Street Journal. March 8, 1993, p. A10.

Copyright Notice

©2009 eNotes.com, Inc.

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this work covered by the copyright hereon may be reproduced or used in any form or by any means graphic, electronic, or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, Web distribution or information storage retrieval systems without the written permission of the publisher.

For complete copyright information, please see the online version of this work:

<http://www.enotes.com/highest-levels-salem>