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**Jerrold Zacharias and PSSC<sup>1</sup>**

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In 1956 with NSF support Jerrold Zacharias, a notable professor of physics at MIT, called into existence the Physical Sciences Study Committee and launched the largest effort ever to change and improve the teaching of physics in American high schools. Zacharias had a talent for eliciting bold ideas from the best physicists of his day and then inspiring them to put their ideas into action. PSSC was just one of many instances when he did this. He was a member of that cohort of physicists whose accomplishments in World War II empowered them with confidence and authority that they applied with great effect in the early years of the Cold War.<sup>2</sup> More than passive agents of the government, they influenced it to respond to various crises with broader vision and higher idealism than were associated with conventional views of defense. PSSC exemplifies their ability to spin the straw of Cold War tension and fear into the gold of major educational reform. I will describe some memorable aspects of the man and his times, and how he and Francis Friedman shaped the early efforts of PSSC.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>I thank my MIT colleagues John Belcher and Michael Feld for their hospitality and encouragement.

<sup>2</sup>Charles H. Holbrow, Scientists, Security, and Lessons from the Cold War, *Physics Today* **59**(7), 39-44 (2006).

<sup>3</sup>*PSSC Remembered* – An AAPT Online Publication at <http://www.aapt-doorway.org>.