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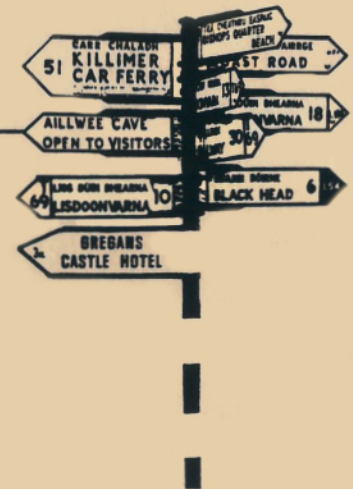


University of California
Institute of Global Conflict
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The Social Construction of the "Soviet Threat": A Study in the Politics of Representation

by

Charles E. Nathanson



Working Paper No. 10
Series edited by James M. Skelly

First Annual Conference on
Discourse, Peace, Security and
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Ballyvaughn, Ireland
August 9-16, 1987

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The conference held at Ballyvaughn, Ireland, in August 1987 was the beginning of an on-going international intellectual interchange on topics related to the discourse of peace and security and international society. It will include annual meetings, the second to be held in summer 1988, again in Ballyvaughn. Sponsored by the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, the conferences are intended to foster general inquiry into these scholarly topics and to stimulate research and teaching that incorporates these perspectives at University of California campuses. This year's series of working papers comprises the writings which seventeen authors submitted to their colleague-participants in preparation for the 1987 conference. Some have been updated somewhat before publication here. Some have been published elsewhere and are reissued here by permission. The Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation hopes that these working papers will help to interest even more scholars in pursuing these lines of thought.

James M. Skelly
Series Editor

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The Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation is an interdisciplinary Multicampus Research Unit of the University of California, established by the Regents in June 1983. The mission of the IGCC is to promote research and teaching on international conflict and cooperation, with particular emphasis on threats and avoidance of nuclear war. The IGCC Central Office is located at the University of California, San Diego.

**The Social Construction of the "Soviet Threat":
A Study in the Politics of Representation**

This paper also appears in the Fall 1988 issue of Alternatives. An earlier version appears in Multilingua, also in the Fall of 1988. The paper was originally given at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association in San Antonio, Texas, 26-31 August 1984. The author is greatly indebted to colleagues Steven Hahn, James Skelly, and Tracy Strong for their contributions to the ideas presented here, and to the IGCC for a research grant to develop a course on nuclear weapons and American society, co-taught with Skelly.

Introduction

"The Soviet threat" has provided a frame of reference for American politics since shortly after the end of World War II. Demonstrating, measuring, and responding to "the threat" have been subjects of intense concern and debate. The reality of "the threat" has been taken for granted. Towards the end of the 1980s, however, the leadership of the Soviet Union began a novel campaign. Summarizing its intent in May 1988, Georgi Arbatov, the director of Moscow's Institute for the Study of the U.S.A. and Canada, told an American audience: "We are going to do something terrible to you — we are going to deprive you of an enemy."¹

To understand what the United States has at stake in this campaign, the present article examines the origins and reproduction of "the Soviet threat" in American politics. This is not an analysis of whether or not the threat is or has been "real." Rather, it is a study of how Americans have come to regard it as real. The distinction is crucial: we are dealing with the sociology of knowledge and the politics of representation. We are interested in seeing how and why a society constructs an enemy.

Western accounts of the origins of the Cold War have tended to follow a "realist" format that by-passes this question.² For the orthodox, Soviet actions were there to be read transparently as unambiguous signs of a threat to the national security of the United States. For the revisionists, the interests and prejudices of American policymakers were equally transparent, flowing directly and unproblematically into anti-Soviet policies and actions. Common to both types of account has been the realist assumption that actions, interests, or prejudices *speak for themselves*, requiring neither interpretation nor translation into a publicly persuasive language.

¹ *Time*, 23 May 1988, Vol. 131 (21): 25.

²For two notable exceptions, each acutely sensitive to the role of interpretive frameworks, see Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), and Melvyn P. Leffler, "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 89: 2 (April 1984): 346-381.

But this assumption distorts the nature of political behavior, removing from it what is quintessentially political: the need for persuasive acts of representation.

"The Soviet threat" did not exist as a potent force in American politics in 1945. No one had yet constructed a persuasive representation of it. Many different interests and prejudices might have used such a representation as a rallying point; without it, however, they remained relatively fragmented, speechless, and powerless. It is well-known, for example, that many Americans, including many officials in the War and State Departments, were deeply anticommunist in ideology and anti-Soviet in their policy orientation. Many more were sceptical about the chances for continuing U.S.-Soviet cooperation after the end of the war. These antipathies and doubts were heightened in 1945 as the Soviets established Communist-dominated governments in Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria while appearing unceremoniously quarrelsome at the opening sessions of the United Nations.

But influential interests and prejudices were also working in an opposite direction. By its wartime bravery and victories, the Soviet Union had built up an enormous amount of American good-will. In Washington and throughout the country, there was also a widespread desire for peace, a great reluctance to undertake any actions that might jeopardize it, and, especially in New Deal circles, a recognition that continued domestic reform required peaceful relations with the one nation firmly committed to policies of economic planning and social egalitarianism. Most important, U.S. intelligence reports were then presenting a picture of the Soviet Union as responsive to American actions, concerned primarily with security on its own borders, and incapable of sustaining a military attack on any area of vital interest to the United States.

In the face of this kind of ambiguous evidence and contradictory sentiment, it was difficult to make a persuasive case for either (a) the existence of a Soviet threat to the national security of the United States or (b) unproblematic accommodation of Moscow. And whatever interests or prejudices may have been at work in the background, a persuasive case is precisely what was needed if any of them was to be realized in American policy. The erratic character of the new Truman administration's foreign policy in 1945 — its fruitless alternation between threatening and conciliating the Soviets on virtually every issue from Poland to the atomic bomb — perfectly reflects this ambiguity. Thus Truman scolded Molotov mercilessly over Poland in April and then sent Harry Hopkins to Moscow in June to smoothe things over. And after saying nothing about Soviet actions in Rumania and Bulgaria for months, the administration spoke out strongly in June, only to end the year by deciding to settle for insignificant concessions before giving the Soviets what they wanted: U.S. recognition of all three communist governments.³

³A.W. DePorte, *Europe Between the Superpowers: The Enduring Balance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979), 97-98, 106, 118-19.

The name of the game in Washington in 1945 was still mutual accommodation through negotiation. However reluctant some American policymakers were to play that game, they were compelled to do so until they could find a way to define another.

Between February and September of 1946, these policymakers did find a new definition of the situation. In a top-secret survey prepared over the summer and presented to President Truman in September, White House special counsel Clark Clifford was able to report an official consensus: the Soviet Union desired world domination and was incapable of being conciliated. The report firmly advised against any policy of compromise, urging instead a massive program of rearmament centered on atomic and chemical weapons.

This dramatic shift in the nature of the game was not a response to any change in the character of Soviet behavior. Rather, policymakers had found a new language, or script, for interpreting the meaning of Soviet behavior *and* for guiding their responses to it in a manner that might satisfy their own institutional interests and ambitions.⁴ The new script was provided by George Kennan in his secret cable from Moscow in February. Soviet actions that had previously been seen as ambiguous, debatable, and open to negotiation could now be represented in a more certain and lurid light.

The conviction of a Soviet threat began to emerge at this point and in such a way as to create the conditions for its continual reproduction. Very soon, nothing the Soviet Union did, or might reasonably have done, would be capable of dislodging the conviction. Moreover, given the nature of the new script, every move the United States made to combat the perceived threat would actually work to enhance the perception of it.

The aim here is to show how this self-generating, self-confirming reality was constructed and subsequently maintained. The essential problem is to understand (1) why Kennan's initial readers preferred a threat-based to a negotiation-based script and (2) why this preference came to be so widely and rapidly endorsed. It will be suggested that the new script's success derived from its ability to mobilize and bring together two broad coalitions. One coalition, based in the War and State Departments, saw "the Soviet threat" as a resource for justifying American reliance upon atomic weapons and overcoming the nation's isolationist tradition in peacetime. The other coalition, based on opposition to New Deal reforms, saw "the Soviet threat" as resource for combatting the new role which the federal government had begun to assume in redistributing power and privilege in American society. In the coming together of these two coalitions, the

⁴The concept of a script and its function of guiding interpretation and performance are developed at greater length by the author in a forthcoming book. See Charles E. Nathanson, *In Sympathy with Labor: Adam Smith and the Making of a Liberal Society* (New Haven: Yale University Press, forthcoming).

proponents of mutual accommodation through negotiation were defeated, American political culture was transformed, and two great dilemmas of power which had perplexed Americans in the first half of the twentieth century were effectively circumvented for the foreseeable future.

To understand how so much had come to be at stake in the construction of "the Soviet threat," it is necessary to recall important dimensions of the American political scene in 1945.

Dilemmas of Power In the Republic

The United States in 1945 was an eighteenth-century republic experiencing a twentieth-century identity crisis. The crisis, which had been brewing for several decades, concerned the nature and uses of the powers of the federal government at home and abroad. Despite efforts to do so, the Roosevelt administration's twelve years of rule did not succeed in creating a new identity for the government at home or for America's role in the world. Indeed, the New Deal reforms and Roosevelt's wartime agreements with allies served to accentuate, rather than resolve, the inherited dilemmas of power.

It was the advent of nuclear weapons at the end of World War II that brought these dilemmas to a head; and it was Kennan's definition of the Soviet threat and the uses made of his telegram that finally shaped a new character for the American state. The republican legacy, the Roosevelt legacy, and the arrival of the atomic bomb are thus the three dimensions of the American political scene in 1945 that must now be reviewed.

The Republican Legacy

For a twentieth-century nation-state, the United States was unusual in the degree of its antipathy to concentrations of power in any form, public or private. Hostility to concentrated power, and to the forms of dependency which such power produces, had of course been a prominent characteristic of the republican tradition from its earliest beginnings. A citizen, according to Aristotle, was one who actively participated with fellow citizens in a process of ruling and being ruled. Any form of dependency on the power of others corrupted this process by requiring the citizen to serve his superior rather than the common good. The spread of dependency throughout the polity was thus synonymous with a process of corruption leading to tyranny. The pronounced tone of historical pessimism in republican thought was due to the recognition that this process of corruption could never be prevented for long.⁵

⁵For Aristotle's concept of citizenship, see *The Politics*, edited and translated by Ernest Barker (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), III.i-vi., especially iv.7-15 and vi.9, and also IV.xi.6-8 and VII.ix.7. On the history of republican theory and practice, see J.G.A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975). An

In the United States, however, special circumstances of geography and history encouraged the belief that the dangers of dependency and concentrated power might be avoided well into the future.⁶ After all, Americans were a people who had never known concentrated power in any native form, feudal or monarchical. The country formed a society of separate states long before there was a central government, and this government owed its origin to a successful rebellion against a foreign rather than an indigenous power. Once founded, the nation was committed in its constitution to keep power checked and widely dispersed; and it was blessed with an almost endless frontier in which to nourish personal independence and secure its material foundation. To keep this frontier open for settlement by free, virtuous, and independent citizens, the government successfully conducted a series of wars, including a civil war; and never in all these victories had it been necessary to resort to a large and potentially corrupting professional army. The virtuous spirit of citizen-soldiers had been sufficient. This was the kind of cultural momentum that allowed the United States to carry the ideological predilections and political habits of the eighteenth-century into the twentieth.

At this point, however, the republican inheritance began to lose its magic. One incorrigible problem was the growth of the large corporation.⁷ National in its scope, seemingly unresponsive to local concerns and indifferent to any welfare but its own, here was an undeniably anti-republican force, a great instrument of corruption and subjection. Against its malevolent

important earlier work is Zera S. Fink, *The Classical Republicans: an Essay in the Recovery of a Pattern of Thought in Seventeenth Century England* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1945).

⁶This paragraph draws on Pocock, *op. cit.*, chpt. 15; Gordon S. Wood, *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1969); Drew R. McCoy, *The Elusive Republic: Political Economy in Jeffersonian America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1980); Richard H. Kohn, *Eagle and Sword: The Beginnings of the Military Establishment in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1975); and Russell F. Weigley, *Towards an American Army: Military Thought from Washington to Marshall* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962).

⁷Out of a large secondary literature on the subject, the spirit of this republican dilemma is perhaps best depicted by Grant McConnell, *Private Power and American Democracy* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970). On early premonitions of the danger of corporate power, see McCoy, *op. cit.*, esp. 253-59. The tenuous moral position of the modern corporation in the Republic is conveyed most sharply, of course, in the language of those who fought the corporation's growing power. Thus Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis dissenting in *Liggett vs. Lee*: "The prevalence of the corporation in America has led men of this generation to act, at times, as if the privilege of doing business in corporate form were inherent in the citizen; and has led them to accept the evils attendant upon the free and unrestricted use of the corporate mechanism as if these evils were the inescapable price of civilized life and, hence, to be borne with resignation. Throughout the greater part of our history a different view prevailed. Although the value of this instrumentality in commerce and industry was fully recognized, incorporation for business was commonly denied long after it had been freely granted for religious, educational and charitable purposes. It was denied because of fear. Fear of encroachment upon the liberties and opportunities of the individual. Fear of the subjection of labor to capital. Fear of monopoly. Fear that the absorption of capital by corporations, and their perpetual life, might bring evils similar to those which attended *mortmain*. There was a sense of some insidious menace inherent in large aggregations of capital, particularly when held by corporations." Quoted in Henry A. Wallace, *Whose Constitution: An Inquiry into the General Welfare* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1936), 165-66.

powers, no republican antidote seemed to work. Efforts to break it up by anti-trust measures were usually too late and too feeble. Efforts to tame it by mild federal regulation were easily circumvented. But the stronger measures of nationalization or federal control which some were beginning to advocate threatened to substitute a public for a private tyranny.

This was the *first* great dilemma of republican power in the twentieth-century: it seemed impossible not to use, and equally impossible to use, the power of the federal government against the ever-increasing power of the private corporation without destroying the nation's republican character.

This dilemma was compounded by a second. The world was getting smaller. The oceans no longer guaranteed American security, Europe's colonial appetite threatened the foreign markets thought necessary to American prosperity. Gradually, the nation was becoming involved in the kinds of commercial, diplomatic, and military rivalry which it had formerly been able to regard with high-minded indifference.⁸ By the time Wilson finally dragged the country into a European war that most Americans didn't understand and mistakenly believed he was trying to avoid, most of the elements of the second dilemma were apparent.⁹

To engage in an imperialist scramble for colonies seemed a path of corruption — and also difficult since the good spots were taken — but to try to make the countries of the world over into peace-loving democracies seemed a lunatic fantasy. If America didn't play the game of global power politics, then it would soon become an isolated and impoverished fortress, forced to adopt rigid, centralized controls over its political and economic life. If the game was taken up, however, then America would need the proper institutional tools, and these were not likely to fit the republican mold. An enlarged professional military establishment, the development of air power, a

⁸The subject is notoriously complex and still awaits comprehensive treatment from the perspective of American republicanism. On the debate in the early Republic over the importance of foreign markets and free trade for preserving republican virtue, and on the relation of this debate to foreign and military policy, see the suggestive material in McCoy, *op. cit.*, esp. 76-104, 144-45, 171-178, 197-199, 205-208, 218-223, 237-244. On the fitful efforts in the half-century after the Civil War to make America over into an active world power and the republican dilemmas thus posed, see material in Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977), chpts. 9 and 10, and *Towards an American Army, op. cit.*, chpts. 7 and 9; Samuel P. Huntington, *The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations*, (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), chpts. 9 and 10; Walter LaFeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansionism, 1860-1898*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1967), 85-101; and Walter Karp, *The Politics of War: The Story of Two Wars Which Altered Forever the Political Life of the American Republic [1890-1920]* (New York: Harper Colophon, 1980).

⁹ The Wilson story is told brilliantly from a republican perspective by Karp, *op. cit.*, 119-344. The characterization of the republican dilemma in the next paragraph draws upon evidence in the following: Huntington, *op. cit.*, chpts. 9-11; Karp, *op. cit.*, *passim.*; McConnell, *op. cit.*, 60-70; McCoy, *op. cit.*, *passim.*; William H. McNeill, *The Pursuit of Power: Technology, Armed Force, and Society since A.D. 1000* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), chpt. 9; J. Samuel Walker, *Henry A. Wallace and American Foreign Policy* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1976), chpts. 1-4, esp. 41-42; Weigley, *The American Way of War*, chpt. 11.

devaluation of the role of citizen-soldier, an increase in the powers of the executive, and more of that cozy collaboration between government and big business that had proved so indispensable in World War I: all these seemed essential to the exercise of world power in an age of modern warfare. From the perspective of its republican past, there appeared to be no genuinely American choice.

The *second* dilemma, in short, was that the United States did not know how to become, or how not to become, a world power while still preserving, in either case, its republican character.

The Roosevelt Legacy

In its twelve years of rule, the Roosevelt administration attempted to resolve these dilemmas within a republican framework, and the attempt failed. The initial and major effort, of course, was to use the powers of the federal government to bring the large corporation under some degree of democratic control and, at the same time, redistribute material and political resources to groups that had not shared notably in either. For many people in the Roosevelt camp, economic depression was seen as a punishment for the republican sin of allowing too much arbitrary power to the corporations.¹⁰ It was declared repeatedly that consumers, industrial workers, and small farmers had all been disenfranchised by the power of big business; and this imbalance of political power had led to a shortage of mass purchasing power. The capacity to produce had consequently outgrown the capacity to consume. Since market forces could no longer be expected to correct this imbalance, government action was required. The government would have to foster democratic economic planning; encourage union organization and collective bargaining; redistribute income through income tax, social security, and minimum wage legislation; and provide jobs through public works.¹¹ Otherwise, the imbalance of power which

¹⁰See, for example, Wallace, *Whose Constitution*, esp. chpt. 12, and also his *New Frontiers* (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1934), esp. chpts. 4-12; Rexford G. Tugwell, *The Battle for Democracy* (New York: Columbia U. Press, 1935). Ellis W. Hawley, *The New Deal and the Problem of Monopoly* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 11-12; and Theodore Rosenof, *Patterns of Political Economy in America: The Failure to Develop a Democratic Left Synthesis, 1933-1950* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1983), esp. Part I. Justice Cardoza's comment analyzing the depression is representative: "There is a widespread belief that the existing unemployment is the result, in large part, of the gross inequality in the distribution of wealth and income which giant corporations have fostered; that by the control which the few have exerted through giant corporations, individual initiative and effort are being paralyzed, creative power impaired and human happiness lessened..." Quoted in Wallace, *Whose Constitution*, 161.

¹¹This analysis and these policy goals appear in the writings of what may be called "the republican left wing" of the New Deal, including especially Wallace, Tugwell, and the economic planners in and out of office who were closely associated with them. On the need for restoring a republican balance against corporate power by means of democratic economic planning, in addition to the works cited above, see Tugwell's "The Principle of Planning and the Institution of Laissez-Faire," *American Economic Review*, March 1932, Vol. 22, supplement. For secondary works on this brand of New Deal planning and the fears it aroused, see especially Hawley, *op. cit.*; Otis L. Graham, *Toward a Planned Society: From Roosevelt to Nixon* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), chpt. 1; and Marion Clawson, *New Deal Planning: The National Resources Planning Board* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981). It is important that this

had already produced an economic disaster for the Republic might soon produce a political disaster as well.

The claim that the efforts of the New Deal failed has a quite specific meaning in the present context. The terms of judgment which have often engaged historians — whether the New Deal saved capitalism, or initiated the welfare state, or shaped the course of liberalism for the coming decades — were not primarily the terms of judgment which preoccupied contemporaries. What concerned them was whether the New Deal was an effective or legitimate instrument of republican renewal; and it was in this sense, for proponents and opponents alike, that the New Deal failed.

In the eyes of opponents, Roosevelt rapidly assumed the shape of a would-be tyrant who was leading the country into socialism. When southern whites saw unions advocating equal pay for blacks and whites, they called it communistic. When business interests saw that they would not be allowed to control economic planning, they called it socialistic. When rural areas, small towns, and small businesses throughout the country saw their tax money diverted to the urban poor, they called it socialistic and communistic. To a wave of strike activity by the United Mine Workers, Sen. Edward Cox of Georgia told the Senate: "I warn John L. Lewis and his communistic cohorts that no second-hand 'carpetbagging expedition' in the Southland, under the banner of Soviet Russia, will be tolerated." And in debate over Fair Labor Standards legislation, Rep. Martin Dies of Texas declared: "There is a racial question here. Under this measure what is prescribed for one race must be prescribed for others, and you cannot provide the same wages for the black man as for the white." By the time Roosevelt proposed his plan to enlarge the Supreme Court, even many New Deal allies began to fear a dictatorship. Each group threatened by the new uses of government had a different set of complaints, but all could agree on one thing: Roosevelt and his "pinko" supporters were destroying the Republic.¹²

kind of thinking continued in official circles throughout the 1930s and into the war period, found an important new resource in the publication of John Maynard Keynes' *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money* (1936), and would have had a vigorous proponent in the White House after the war if Wallace had won the vice-presidential nomination in 1944. On the influence of Keynes on New Deal planners and the development of a business response, see Robert Collins, *The Business Response to Keynes, 1929-1964* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981).

¹² A comprehensive account of the widespread and diverse sources of resistance to the New Deal has yet to be written. The rhetoric of patriotic republicanism and anti-communism that united these otherwise divergent interests became a crucial factor in the politics of the early Cold War (see below). For suggestive material on the use of anticommunist rhetoric to defend pre-New Deal positions of power, privilege, and influence, see Hawley, 143, 151-158, 165, 395-398; Ronald A. Mulder, *The Insurgent Progressives in the United States Senate and the New Deal, 1933-1939* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), esp. chpts. 5-8; James T. Patterson, *Congressional Conservatism and the New Deal: The Growth of the Conservative Coalition in Congress, 1933-1939* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1967), esp. 195; Alan Brinkley, *Voices of Protest: Huey Long, Father Coughlin, and the Great Depression* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1982); Harvey L. Levenstein, *Communism, Anticommunism and the CIO*, (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), esp. chpts. 4 and 5; James Boylan, *The New Deal Coalition and the Election of 1946* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1981), esp. 135ff.; and James A. Gross, *The Making of the*

In the eyes of many on the left in the New Deal, however, its initial efforts had not come even close to restoring a republican balance of power. Their key program, democratic economic planning, had been obstructed from the start by business interests and then destroyed by a conservative Supreme Court. Indeed, they claimed with some justification that corporate control over the economy was actually increasing as a result of mergers and acquisitions. Collective bargaining, on the other hand, was tied up in the courts and then interrupted by the war before the scope of labor's rights could be established. If it turned out that bargaining was to be limited to wage issues and working conditions, then corporations would be free to raise prices and further undermine purchasing power. In this view, the country was as vulnerable as ever to the abuse of power by the corporations and their proto-fascist allies.¹³

Clearly, the New Deal's attempt to resolve a republican dilemma actually served to polarize the political language and practice of republicanism. This polarization quickly spilled over into widely divergent conceptions of America's role as a world power. To New Dealers like Secretary of Agriculture and then Vice-President Henry Wallace, the Republic could not be saved from the abuse of power at home unless there was also a New Deal around the globe for the common man.¹⁴ The problem, as Wallace outlined it in his wartime pamphlet, "The Price of Free World Victory," was the imbalance of power on a global scale caused by the exploitative practices of European imperialism and its corporate allies. International cartels, monopolies, and protective tariffs were keeping prices high and consumption low, frustrating the desire of people everywhere for a higher standard of living. The inevitable consequence was the spread of fascism and communism; and these could come to America, too, unless rising global purchasing power provided a market for its agricultural and manufacturing surpluses.

National Labor Relations Board, Vol. 2: The Reshaping of the National Labor Relations Board: National Labor Policy in Transition, 1937-1947 (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981).

¹³On the increasingly strident language and unfinished agenda of the New Deal's leftwing, see Hawley, *op. cit.*, Part IV; Walker, *op. cit.*, chpts. 7 and 8; Alonzo L. Hamby, *Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), chpt. 1; and Norman D. Markowitz, *The Rise and Fall of the People's Century: Henry A. Wallace and American Liberalism, 1941-1948* (New York: The Free Press, 1973), chpts. 1 and 2. An interesting example of these concerns was Thurman Arnold's fear that the partial reforms of the New Deal had produced a "Broker State," the policies of which would further undermine the republican character of the polity. In a 1944 article, "The Coming Economic Conflict," Arnold, who had been director of the antitrust division of the Justice Department, warned that stringent public regulation and renewed antimonopoly activity would be needed to protect the consumer from "irreconcilable pressure groups, each seeking a larger share of the diminishing national income, each destroying purchasing power in order to maintain artificial prices for itself while the increasing number of the unorganized and insecure compel the government to provide subsidies out of the same diminishing national income." Quoted in Markowitz, 58.

¹⁴Cf. Markowitz, *op. cit.*, chpt. 2; Walker, *op. cit.*, chpts. 7 and 8; and Richard J. Walton, *Henry Wallace, Harry Truman, and the Cold War* (New York: Viking Press, 1973), chpt. 1.

Thus, for Wallace and the left-wing multitudes he spoke for, the war against fascism had also to be a war against international corporate power:

International cartels that serve American greed and the German will to power must go. Cartels in the peace to come must be subjected to international control for the common man, as well as being under adequate control by the respective home governments.

The great danger, as Wallace saw it, was that corporate influence might lead America to side with reactionary forces around the world in an effort to pick up and put together again the disintegrating colonial empires of Europe. The common people of what later came to be called the Third World would then be forced into a revolutionary alliance with Russia as their only hope. At that point, America might have to seek war with Russia or find itself increasingly isolated. What had to be avoided, above all, was a Russian-American confrontation after World War II. Given a spirit of mutual accommodation between these two nations, then America might be able to draw upon its own revolutionary and republican past to support the aspirations of common people everywhere, including those of its own citizens at home.¹⁵

For anti-New Dealers, America's world role looked quite different. Until Pearl Harbor, and even after, many were reluctant to support American participation in the war on the grounds that it would only enhance Roosevelt's grab for power and lead further to a socialist dictatorship.¹⁶ Henry Luce's famous article in *Life*, "The American Century," was designed to answer this fear.¹⁷ For Luce, an active role for America in the world was indispensable if the New Deal and its uses of governmental power were to be defeated. If America won the war in a really big way, Luce argued, the devastation suffered by all the Great Powers of Asia and Europe would allow this nation to inherit their markets and fields for entrepreneurial activity on a colossal scale. As he put it,

¹⁵"The Price of Free World Victory," later known as "The Century of Common Man," was first delivered as a speech to the Free World Association in New York City on May 8, 1942, six months after the United States entered the war. *PM*, a leftwing New York newspaper, published it twice. It appeared as an ad in *The Washington Post* and *Women's Wear Daily*. Issued next as a pamphlet, it sold 20,000 copies in a few weeks. Federal agencies then distributed hundreds of thousands of copies. The speech was widely interpreted at the time as a New Deal answer to Henry Luce's "The American Century" (see below), but more recent interpreters have tended to discount the differences between the global visions of Wallace and Luce. For a critical comment on this tendency, see Markowitz, *op. cit.*, 53-54 and references. The Wallace speech has been reprinted in Peter G. Filene, ed., *American Views of Soviet Russia, 1917-1965* (Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1968), 190-196. It is best read in the context of his other wartime and post-war speeches. For example: "We shall decide some time in 1943 or 1944 whether to plant the seeds of World War No. III. That war will be probable if we fail to demonstrate that we can furnish full employment after this war comes to an end and fascist interests motivated largely by anti-Russian bias get control of our government. Unless the Western democracies and Russia come to a satisfactory understanding before the war ends, I very much fear that World War No. III will be inevitable..." (quoted in Walton, 15).

¹⁶See Mulder, *op. cit.*, 302-304; and also Wayne S. Cole, *Roosevelt and the Isolationists, 1932-45* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

¹⁷*Life*, 17 February 1941, Vol. 10, 61-63.

For example, we think of Asia as being worth only a few hundred millions a year to us. Actually, in the decades to come Asia will be worth to us exactly zero — or else it will be worth to us four, five, ten billions of dollars a year.

The rest of the century could be America's. Enormous prosperity at home would then make social reform unnecessary. It is true that the United States would have to take "a very tough attitude to hostile governments," but the country would be so rich that "[f]or every dollar we spend on armaments, we should spend at least a dime in a gigantic effort to feed the world..."

The purpose in citing these wartime documents is not to make a case for any purely economic explanation of postwar American foreign policy. Luce and Wallace were continuing the republican debate over the proper extent and use of governmental power; and each had come to understand, with considerable foreboding, that how America eventually defined and pursued its role in the world might very well determine the political character and even survival of the Republic at home. The two great republican dilemmas of power — concentrations of power at home and projections of power abroad — now appeared to be joined and fused as one interdependent dilemma. But the issues were no more resolved at the end of the New Deal than they had been at its beginning. The relation between the issues and the overall stakes were now much clearer, but everything crucial to the outcome had yet to be decided.

In their quite different attempts to inspire participation in World War II, Wallace and Luce were actually revealing how undeveloped America's sense of itself as a world power continued to be. The fierce debate from 1939 to 1941 over intervention was a virtual replication of the pre-WWI debate over neutrality.¹⁸ Only Pearl Harbor resolved the issue, and even then the United States did not declare war on Germany until Hitler declared war on the United States. As late as September 1941, in defining "the major national objectives of the United States," the Board of Estimate of the Joint Chiefs of Staff was prepared to settle for the maintenance of a balance of power in Europe and Asia.¹⁹ Reflecting in part the desire to balance Russian power and in part a recognition of America's own limited capacity to project power overseas, the Joint Chiefs were accepting, in effect, Nazi control over most of Europe except the British Isles and Japanese control over large parts of Asia. It is true that Roosevelt, in signing the Atlantic Charter a month earlier, had committed the nation to much more ambitious, idealistic, and ambiguous goals. Since

¹⁸See Cole, *op. cit.*, and the review by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "Desperate Times," *New York Review of Books*, 24 November 1983, 37. Four months before Pearl Harbor, the House passed the draft-extension bill by a single vote and 64 Democrats voted against the president. In November, more members of Congress voted against neutrality revision than had voted against Lend-Lease in March. Schlesinger claims the isolationist-interventionist debate was one of the angriest ever. See also Mulder, *op. cit.*, 302-4.

¹⁹Huntington, *op. cit.*, 330-331. On the shift in the view of the Joint Chiefs during the war, see 331-335.

he had neither the military means nor political support to pursue these goals, however, his action tends rather to confirm than contradict the impression that America had not yet grown into the role of a Great Power, let alone a Superpower.²⁰

The Arrival of the Atomic Bomb

The atomic bomb changed all the calculations.²¹ Virtually overnight, American military planners and State Department professionals acquired a resource that seemed to promise power on a global scale. The bomb was much more than a wartime weapon of unprecedented destructive effect. It was also a huge carrot-stick to be dangled or brandished in front of potential allies and enemies alike. To those who might need American protection, there was now something to offer. To those who might thwart America's will and vision, there was now something that could make them think twice.

The dilemma of being both a world power and a republic might now be resolved. The bomb looked as if it could provide just the kind of national security that the citizen-soldier had

²⁰*Ibid.*, 327-331. On the goals of and negotiations around the Atlantic Charter, see Martin Herz, *Beginnings of the Cold War* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1966). In characterizing the United States' general lack of clarity with respect to its role as a world power, Huntington writes of "a failure to appreciate what its long range political goals properly were by a nation immature in the ways of international politics" (327). In *The American Way of War*, Wiegley offers an equally revealing judgment, which links this "immaturity" to republican traditions and points to the break with these traditions that occurred in the Cold War: "...during 1941-45 and throughout American history until that time, the United States usually possessed no national strategy for the employment of force or the threat of force to attain political ends, except as the nation used force in wartime openly and directly in pursuit of military victories as complete as was desired or possible....The United States was not involved in international politics continuously enough or with enough consistency of purpose to permit the development of a coherent national strategy for the consistent pursuit of political goals by diplomacy in combination with armed force. A not unhealthy corollary of this situation was its contribution to civilian predominance over the military in the American government; when the military themselves regarded strategy as narrowly military in content, their temptations to intervene in the making of national policy were proportionately small....During the Cold War and especially the Korean War, the belief that the United States was involved in a protracted conflict with international Communism led to a departure from historic habits and to an effort to form a national strategy for the employment of American power in defense and promotion of the country's political values and interests" xix).

²¹The emphasis here is on calculations, that is, expectations, hopes, plans, and not policies that could be immediately implemented. This paragraph and the two following are based on material from Martin Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: the Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1975); Gregg Herken, *The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb and the Cold War, 1945-1950* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1980); Michael Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War: American Plans for Postwar Defense, 1941-1945* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Perry McCoy Smith, *The Air Force Plans for Peace, 1943-1945* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970); Robert L. Messer, *The End of an Alliance: James F. Byrnes, Roosevelt, Truman, and the Origins of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1982); Barton J. Bernstein, "American Foreign Policy and the Origins of the Cold War," in Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *Politics and Policies of the Truman Administration* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1970), 15-77, and "Roosevelt, Truman, and the Atomic Bomb, 1941-1945: A Reinterpretation," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 90:1 (Spring 1975): 23-69; David Alan Rosenberg, "American Atomic Strategy and the Hydrogen Bomb Decision," *Journal of American History*, Col. 66 (1979-80): 62-87; and Melvyn P. Leffler, "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-48," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 89:2 (April 1984): 346-381.

become incapable of providing under twentieth-century conditions. Almost by definition, the citizen was unprepared to fight until well after a state of national emergency existed; and he was eager to return to civilian life as soon as the emergency was over. He was therefore of little use in preventing emergencies from arising or in projecting the nation's will abroad in peacetime. As Pearl Harbor was thought to show, this situation had left the country vulnerable to a devastating surprise attack.

With the bomb, however, America might always be prepared, even without a large and expensive professional standing army. Security could be had cheaply, efficiently, and democratically. The nation would need only a well-developed air force with military bases and transit and landing rights around the world. From this strategic frontier, it would be possible to control both oceans, keep hostile powers far from American territory, and carry out swift and devastating attacks on enemy homelands if and when that necessity arose. In the midst of the strategic bombing campaigns of World War II, even before they knew about the new weapon, Air Force planners had begun to develop this global strategy, seeing it as a way to overcome the deficiencies of the pre-war military establishment and promote the creation of an independent Air Force. After its use on Japan, the atomic bomb rapidly became central to this new way of thinking about national security and the institutional ambitions associated with it.²²

These great expectations immediately encountered a host of bureaucratic, technical, and political obstacles. Intense inter-service rivalry over a much-reduced military budget threatened to block the necessary build-up of strategic bombers. The military capabilities of the bomb were questioned. Tests had to be conducted but no stockpile of weapons existed. Bomb assembly teams dispersed, and problems developed with the nuclear reactors. Secretary of State Byrnes failed in his effort to extract concessions from the Soviet Union on the basis of atomic diplomacy. Moral qualms about the new weapon began to surface in many quarters. Most important, there was a widespread (but not universal) desire in military and civilian circles not to jeopardize the possibility of post-war agreements with the Soviet Union.²³

Arriving in the context of the republican and New Deal legacies, the atomic bomb actually set off a vast political "chain-reaction" with unpredictable consequences. Dispute, rivalry, anxiety, ambiguity, and self-doubt within the government and the public raised dozens of hard questions

²²On these military plans, see especially Smith, Sherry, Rosenberg, and Leffler as cited above.

²³On the failure of Byrnes' efforts to use the bomb as a diplomatic resource with the Russians, see Messer, *op. cit.*, and also Bernstein, "Roosevelt, Truman...", 62-69. On inter-service rivalry, technical difficulties, and strategic doubts about reliance upon nuclear weapons, see Sherry, *op. cit.*, chpts. 4 and 7, esp. 205-232, and Rosenberg, *op. cit.* On concern over agreements with the Soviet Union, see below and Leffler, *op. cit.*, esp. 352, 357, and Sherry, chpt. 7.

and provided few reassuring answers.²⁴ Truman's cabinet was itself deeply divided on the wisdom of pursuing an atomic policy. In two prescient memorandums to Truman in September, retiring Secretary of War Henry Stimson urged that atomic information be shared immediately and directly with the Soviet Union.²⁵ Declaring that "the chief lesson" he had learned in a long life was that "the only way you can make a man trustworthy is to trust him," Stimson warned:

In many quarters [the atomic bomb] has been interpreted as a substantial offset to the growth of Russian influence on the continent. We can be certain that the Soviet government has sensed this tendency....Britain in effect already has the status of partner with us in the development of this weapon. Accordingly, unless the Soviets are voluntarily invited into partnership upon a basis of cooperation and trust, we are going to maintain the Anglo-Saxon bloc over against the Soviet in possession of this weapon...

Whether Russia gets control of the necessary secrets of production in a minimum of say four years or a maximum of twenty years is not nearly as important to the world and civilization as to make sure that when they do get it they are willing and cooperative partners among the peace-loving nations of the world...

To put the matter concisely, I consider the problem of our satisfactory relations with Russia as not merely connected with but as virtually dominated by the problem of the atomic bomb. Except for that problem of the control of that bomb, those relations, while vitally important, might not be immediately pressing. The establishment of relations of mutual confidence between her and us could afford to await the slow progress of time. But with the discovery of the bomb, they became immediately emergent. Those relations may be perhaps irretrievably embittered by the way in which we approach the solution of the bomb with Russia. For if we fail to approach them now and merely continue to negotiate with them, having this weapon rather ostentatiously on our hip, their suspicions and their distrust of our purposes and motives will increase.. [O]ur objective must be to get the best kind of international bargain we can — one that has some chance of being kept and saving civilization not for five or for twenty years, but forever....

Since the crux of the problem is Russia, any contemplated action leading to the control of this weapon should be primarily directed to Russia. It is my judgment that the Soviets would be more apt to respond sincerely to a direct and forthright approach made by the United States on this subject than would be the case if the approach were made as part of a general international scheme, or if the approach were made after a succession of express or implied threats or near threats in our peace negotiations....

²⁴Much of the dispute, rivalry, and doubt was reflected in Cabinet-level discussions and in the diaries and memorandums of high-ranking officials. See, for example, John Morton Blum, ed., *The Price of Vision: The Diary of Henry A. Wallace, 1942-1946* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973), 471, 474, 476, 481-487, 489-494, 496-504, 505-511, 515-517, 545-553. Also of relevance are Barton J. Bernstein, "Roosevelt, Truman...", esp. 59-62, 65, 67; Robert Karl Manoff, "Covering the Bomb: The Nuclear Story and the News," *Working Papers*, May-June, 1983; Herken, *op. cit.*, and *Counsels of War* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1985), chpts. 1-5; and Sherwin, *op. cit.*

²⁵Stimson's two memorandums to Truman on September 12, 1945, are reprinted in Barton J. Bernstein and Allen J. Matusow, eds., *The Truman Administration: A Documentary History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 220 ff.. Excerpts also appear in Walton, *op. cit.*, 53-54.

In his notes concerning the Cabinet's discussion of Stimson's proposal on September 21, Henry Wallace counted nine votes in favor, four opposed, and one indefinite. Navy Secretary James Forrestal had a different count, finding six individuals in agreement with Stimson, seven opposed, and one favoring delay.²⁶

Evidently, even with the bomb, the old republican dilemma was not automatically going to disappear. For those who wanted to develop a global military strategy based on atomic weapons, simple "balance of power" arguments would not suffice to overcome the doubts and divisions. The main problem was that the United States did not yet see an enemy worthy of the bomb: a foreign threat so obvious, compelling, and anti-republican in nature that it could serve to galvanize the political will of the nation in righteous indignation.²⁷ This was the way America had always mobilized resources for war, developing the bomb itself out of fear that Hitler might acquire it, then using it primarily as an alternative to the invasion of Japan and the certain death of thousands of American troops at the hands of enemy that had already attacked American territory. In peacetime, in the absence of such "deserving enemies," the necessary "will" would be difficult to mobilize. Already the country was behaving in true republican fashion: turning its attention inward, withdrawing and demobilizing its troops, slashing military expenditures, seeking a balanced budget, and refusing to pass legislation for Universal Military Training.²⁸

In addition, however, there was also the problem that the clear and present danger in the fall and winter of 1945 was obviously domestic, not international. Policy planners in the War and State Departments and a few White House aides and Cabinet members might be quarreling over the implications of the bomb and Soviet-American relations, but most of Washington was worrying about a massive wave of labor strikes and how to prevent a recurrence of depression in the absence of wartime demand.²⁹ Government and private forecasters, for example, were citing

²⁶Blum, *op. cit.*, 482-484 and 485-487; and Barton J. Bernstein, "The Quest for Security: American Foreign Policy and International Control of Atomic Energy, 1942-1946," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 60 (1973-74): 1016-1019. Within the War Department, the response to Stimson's proposal was not favorable; see Sherry, *op. cit.*, 212-13.

²⁷Wallace's notes of the Cabinet meeting on 21 September indicate that Stimson offered a long defense of Russia, saying that the United States had nothing that Russia wanted and that she had nothing the United States wanted. Stimson said also that America's relationship with Russia during recent months had been improving, and President Truman agreed.

²⁸On the difficulties that this situation was creating for military planners, see Sherry, *op. cit.*, Rosenberg, *op. cit.*.

²⁹David Brody, *Workers in Industrial America: Essays on the 20th Century Struggle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), chpt. 5. See also Blum, *op. cit.*, 475-6. Also on concerns over a renewed depression after the war, see Collins, *op. cit.*; Rosenof, *op. cit.*, Part II, and George Lipsitz, *Class and Culture in Cold War America* (South Hadley, Mass.: J.F. Bergin, 1982), 120-121. Also on the strikes, and the anti-labor reaction which they provoked not only in business circles but also in rural and small-town America, see Boylan, *op. cit.*, chpt. 3 and p. 50, notes 10-13.

the need for a 30 to 50 percent increase in consumer purchasing power above pre-war levels. At the same time, in November, striking autoworkers at General Motors were making the unprecedented demand for a 30 percent increase in wages with no price increase unless the company could prove it necessary.

The significance of the strikes extended well beyond the numbers: 4,630 work stoppages involving 4.9 million workers and almost 120 million worker/days of lost production in the year after V-J Day. At issue was the scope of collective bargaining and the nature of post-war unionism. In the forefront of labor thinking was "a national planning effort" that would make organized labor "a co-equal with management" with the government serving as an "arbiter" between them. The GM strike pursued this strategy. By extending the scope of bargaining to prices and profits, union leaders hoped to show that they were not a "special interest" but rather a force of "republican virtue" working for "the common good."³⁰

In recognition of these kinds of concern, the Senate voted overwhelmingly (77 to 10) in favor of a remarkable full employment bill. The bill contained strong provisions for economic planning and automatic government spending at levels necessary to insure full employment. It also recognized the need to control monopolistic practices and monitor the distribution of national income.³¹ Indeed, the redistribution of power and privilege that had begun under Roosevelt seemed as if it was going to continue even though Harry Truman, not Henry Wallace, had succeeded to the presidency.³²

Already, however, the bomb's political "chain-reaction" had begun to intrude into these domestic matters. A growing concern with "atomic spies" and the loyalty of government employees was adding new significance to the anti-New Dealer's old claim that there were too many communists and communist sympathizers in the government and the industrial unions.³³

³⁰On the development of organized labor's strategy during and at the end of the war, see Brody, *op. cit.*, 175-82, and on the GM strike and the company's precedent-setting negative response, 183ff. On the Truman administration's response to the strike, see Boylan, *op. cit.*, 37-39.

³¹For the most recent account of the history of the Full Employment Bill, including the role of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in writing the more conservative House version, which eventually became law, see Collins, *op. cit.*. Also Stephen Kemp Bailey, *Congress Makes a Law* (New York, 1964). Truman withdrew Administration support for the original version of the bill in the midst of floor debate.

³²On the dramatic events surrounding the vice-presidential nomination at the 1944 Democratic Party Convention, see Markowitz, *op. cit.*, chpt. 3. Wallace virtually assured opposition to his nomination from Southern delegates, if it was not already certain, by insisting in his speech: "The future belongs to those who go down the line unswervingly for the liberal principles of both political and economic democracy, regardless of race, color or religion. The poll tax must go. Equal educational opportunities must come. The future must bring equal wages for equal work regardless of sex and race." See his address in *Congressional Record*, 78 Congress, 2 Session, p. A3490.

³³On the loyalty issue and the intensification of the domestic anticommunist movement at the end of the war, see Alan D. Harper, *The Politics of Loyalty: The White House and the Communist Issue, 1946-1952*, (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Publishing, 1969), chpt. 3; Lawrence S. Wittner, *Cold War America:*

Here was the first sign of the powerful synergism that was to develop between those who opposed the New Deal and/or feared its extension and those who hoped to use the bomb to refashion America's military establishment. This synergism would soon create an anticommunist atmosphere so intense that any advocacy of either peaceful relations with the Soviet Union or an extension of New Deal reforms risked the charge of treason.³⁴ For this to happen, however, a crucial ingredient was still needed: a persuasive representation of the Soviet threat.

The Cold War Script and Its Readers

Who were the Russians? What did they want and what would they settle for? Could you negotiate with them? Could you trust them? In response to a State Department request for an interpretive analysis of what could be expected from future Soviet foreign policy, George Kennan set out to answer these questions in his "Long Telegram" of February 22, 1946.³⁵ Others in the

From Hiroshima to Watergate (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973), chpt. 4; Boylan, *op. cit.*, 35, 41, 44-45, 135ff.; Levenstein, *op. cit.*, chpt. 12; and Earl Latham, *The Communist Controversy in Washington: From the New Deal to McCarthy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966). On the activity of communists in government and labor unions in the thirties and during the war, see Latham, chpts. 3-7; Levenstein, *op. cit.*, chpts. 1-2 and 6-9; and Boylan, *op. cit.*, 75-77. On anticommunist investigations by Congressional committees and executive agencies during this same period, with some indication of the anti-New Deal motives of the investigators, see Robert K. Carr, *The House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1945-1950* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), chpt. 1; Levenstein, chpts. 4-5; Latham, 28-38, 363-65, 381-86 and *passim.*; and references in note #12 above.

³⁴See material from the operations of the Loyalty Review Board in Harper, *op. cit.*; e.g., p. 50, where "favoring peace and civil liberties" was taken as evidence by an informer that a government employee was advocating the Communist Party line.

³⁵Kennan's cable was classified until 1971. Perhaps for that reason, most accounts of the origins of the Cold War have bypassed the telegram and focused on Kennan's Mr. "X" article, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25 (July 1947), 566-582, which appeared too late to influence the decisive shift in American policymaking that is described here. In 1977, however, Daniel Yergin's analysis highlighted the significance of the telegram. See *op. cit.*, 168-71 and *passim*. The full text of the cable is reprinted in Thomas H. Etzold and John Lewis Gaddis, eds., *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945-1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 50-63.

Kennan's views were actually formulated years before and had their roots in what Yergin calls "the Riga axioms." (See chpt. 1, and also Lloyd C. Gardner, *Architects of Illusion: Men and Ideas in American Foreign Policy, 1941-49* (Chicago: Quadrangle 1970), chpt. 10, esp. 279-80, 288-90.) This tends to confirm what is suggested by the rhetorical strategy of the telegram: Kennan was not basing his judgments on an examination of Soviet behavior in the context of events during and after the war. Rather, he assumed that Soviet behavior was predetermined and thus not responsive to the actions of other nations. This was the fundamental tenet of the "Riga axioms" as they were developed after the Bolshevik Revolution and used as the basis for the American policy of non-recognition of the new regime. For example: "Their aim is world-wide revolution....Their doctrines aim at the destruction of all governments as now constituted" (quoted by Yergin, p. 19, from DeWitt Clinton Poole, who worked on Russian affairs in the State Dept. in 1919). For Kennan and others sharing this outlook, Soviet behavior would remain fixed and frozen in this mold for as long as the regime lasted.

After diplomatic recognition of the Soviet Union in 1933, and partly as a consequence of the new factors and personalities that were brought into American policymaking with the New Deal and World War II, the "Riga axioms" and those who professed them were partially shunted aside. (See Yergin, chpt. 2.) For a variety of reasons that have been described here, Kennan's telegram came at the right moment to serve as a crucial

U.S. government had been trying to answer the same questions for months, but they kept coming up with mixed, ambiguous answers.³⁶ The more they looked at actual Soviet behavior and tried to interpret it in the context of what other countries like Great Britain and the United States were doing or had done, the harder it was to eliminate the ambiguity.³⁷ *And as long as the ambiguity was recognized, negotiations were also seen as reasonable and necessary.* Kennan eliminated the ambiguity. By establishing an overall design behind Soviet behavior, he made it seem unnecessary to attend to the contextual complexities of that behavior.

The "Long Telegram"

Kennan began by deducing the basic features of "Post War Soviet Outlook" from the material "Put Forward by Official Propaganda Machine." The first and main feature was Soviet leaders' belief that the "USSR still lives in antagonistic 'capitalist encirclement' with which in the long run there can be no permanent peaceful coexistence." Quoting a speech from Stalin in 1927 which referred to a "battle" between a socialist center and a capitalist center for command of the world economy, Kennan implied, and later said explicitly, that nothing had changed in the

resource for the reassertion of the "Riga axioms." The immediate occasion prompting the telegram was a speech by Stalin on 9 February 1946, which caused alarm in the West. Kennan was asked by officials in the State Department to provide an explanation. For a description and interpretation of Stalin's speech, see Yergin, 166-67; see also the comments by Henry Wallace in note #37 below.

³⁶E.g.: "The problem of Russian capabilities and intentions is so complex, and the unknowns are so numerous, that it is impossible to grasp the situation and describe it in a set of coherent and well-established conclusions" — Gerold T. Robinson, Chief, Research and Intelligence, State Department, 10 December 1945, cited in Yergin, 138. For the general ambivalence, confusion, and contradictions in American policy and pronouncements with respect to Russia in the period from September through December 1945, see Yergin, chpts. 5 and 6, and also DePorte, *op. cit.*, chpt. 6. For the uncertainty surrounding analysis of Russian intentions and capabilities in this period, see Leffler, *op. cit.*, 357, 359-362, 365 and note #53, and Yergin, 165-66. See also this text below.

³⁷ E.g.: At the London Foreign Ministers Conference in September 1945, the Russians made a bid for recognition of their supremacy of influence (and/or control) in the Balkans, especially with respect to Rumania and Bulgaria. The U.S. delegation's Eastern European specialists strenuously urged Sec. Byrnes to resist this Soviet "trap," but this put Byrnes in the awkward position of denying to Russia on its borders the kind of influence (and/or control) that the U.S. seemed at that moment to be claiming over Japan and islands in the Pacific and that Russia had conceded to the United States and Great Britain over Italy and to the latter over Greece. Byrnes appears to have been aware of the apparent contradiction. (On this, see Yergin, *op. cit.*, 131-32 and Messer, *op. cit.* For U.S. policymakers' attitude about American supremacy in the Western Hemisphere at the time, see Leffler, *op. cit.*, 354.) Similarly, Stalin's speech of 9 February 1946 — the one that indirectly led to the "Long Telegram" (see above) — was interpreted by some as a reversion to Stalin's 1928 policy of isolation as well as representing a commitment to remilitarization. However, to someone like Wallace, who was inclined to interpret Soviet behavior in the context of recent American behavior and as a response to that behavior, Stalin's speech assumed a different significance. "I told him [William Bullitt, former Ambassador to Russia] that I thought this [speech] was accounted for in some measure by the fact that it was obvious to Stalin that our military was getting ready for war with Russia; that they were setting up bases all the way from Greenland, Iceland, northern Canada, and Alaska to Okinawa, with Russia in mind. I said that Stalin obviously knew what these bases meant and also knew the attitude of many of our people through our press. We were challenging him and his speech was taking up the challenge." (See Blum, *op. cit.*, 547 and also 549-50.) These were the kinds of contextual interpretation of Soviet behavior that Kennan attempted to circumvent and make irrelevant in his telegram.

regime's outlook. The regime, according to Kennan, still believed that: the "[c]apitalist world is beset with internal conflicts," these conflicts "inevitably generate wars" and, therefore, capitalist intervention against the USSR "must...be forestalled at all costs."

Kennan's point was not simply that these beliefs were false but that they were baseless. If they had been at all responsive to reality, Soviet leaders would have abandoned these beliefs long ago. This point was decisive for Kennan so it may be worthwhile recalling that at that very moment the U.S. War Department was in the process of carrying out its policy of encircling the Soviet Union with military bases.³⁸ The primary purpose of these bases was, at the first outbreak of hostilities, to allow planes loaded with nuclear bombs to strike swiftly and thoroughly at every major city in the Soviet Union. Moreover, the United States was also experiencing at that moment the most extensive labor-capital conflict in its history and was by no means free of the worry of renewed depression.

Nevertheless, Kennan believed he had found decisive evidence of the "Kremlin's neurotic view of world affairs." This view derived from "basic inner-Russian necessities" and had "indeed, little to do with conditions outside Russia." At the bottom of this neurosis was an "instinctive Russian sense of insecurity," which began long ago with exposure to the depredations of fierce nomadic peoples and was heightened when Russia came in contact more recently with "the more competent, more powerful" and "economically advanced West." Unfortunately, Russia's leaders had learned from this history "to seek security only in patient and deadly struggle for total destruction of rival power, never in compacts and compromises with it."

Marxist dogma, according to Kennan, was therefore indispensable to Russia's present rulers, who would use it as a guide to all their actions at home and abroad. Marxism justified their paranoia, their self-imposed isolation, their restriction of objective information from and about the outside world, their constant build-up of the military and police power of the state, and their "fluid and constant pressure to extend [the] limits of Russian police power" beyond their borders.

In their efforts to expand, they would work on both an official and a subterranean plane.

For the moment, these efforts are restricted to certain neighboring points conceived of here as being of immediate strategic necessity, such as Northern Iran, Turkey and possibly Bornholm. However, other points may at any time come into question, if and as concealed Soviet political power is extended to new areas. Thus a "friendly" Persian Government might be asked to grant Russia a port on [the] Persian Gulf. Should Spain fall under Communist control, [the] question of [a] Soviet base at Gibraltar Strait might be activated. But such claims will appear on official level only when unofficial preparation is complete.

³⁸Rosenberg, *op. cit.*, 64; Leffler, *op. cit.*, 350-354; and Sherry, *op. cit.*, 204.

This view of Soviet behavior has, of course, become so ingrained through constant repetition that it may be difficult to see how much interpretive work Kennan was actually doing. No modern Great Power has lived entirely within its own borders. Certainly, Germany, France, Britain, and the United States did not do so in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. There have almost always been alliances with neighboring states and sometimes with distant ones (to say nothing of out-right imperialist rule). Naval bases and warm water ports have been seen as a necessity. Russia is unusual in the degree to which it has not relied upon these arrangements. Indeed, it was just this relative isolation that Kennan used as evidence of Russian paranoia. Now, however, he had also made suspect any Russian attempt to establish alliances or bases beyond its borders. Such moves were evidence of "the natural and instinctive urges of Russian rulers" to extend the limits of their police power. Moreover, whenever they succeeded, it would constitute a sign of previous subterranean machinations, for no nation could be expected voluntarily and in its own interests to seek friendship with the Soviet Union.

Kennan was in the process of creating an interpretive straight-jacket from which Soviet leaders could not escape no matter what they did. Every aspect of their policy was subjected to the same schema. If they participated in international organizations like the UN, it was not because they saw it as "a mechanism for a permanent and stable world society," as the United States presumably did, but because they saw an "opportunity of extending Soviet power or of inhibiting or diluting the power of others." In international economic matters, their "underlying policy" would be autarchy. However, if they received the "large scale long term credits" they had been seeking from the West, they would probably "do lip service" to "building up international economic exchanges."

On the subterranean plane, their policies would be much worse. They would infiltrate "labor unions, youth leagues, women's organizations, racial societies, religious societies, social organizations, cultural groups, liberal magazines, publishing houses, etc." They would set poor "against rich, black against white, young against old." They would attempt to "disrupt national self-confidence" and "hamstring measures of national defense." As for the "colonial backward, or dependent peoples...particularly violent efforts will be made to weaken the power and influence of Western Powers....On this level, no holds will be barred."

What, then, should the United States do to defend itself? Kennan wrote of this as "the greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced," but he did not have in mind the traditional meaning of diplomacy. The United States was dealing with a regime "seemingly inaccessible to considerations of reality in its basic reactions." It was, moreover, "fanatically committed to the belief that with [the] U.S. there can be no permanent *modus vivendi*...that our traditional way of life [must] be destroyed, the international authority of our state be broken." This was not the kind of

political force one talked to reasonably, in a spirit of negotiation and compromise. "Impervious to [the] logic of reason, it is highly sensitive to [the] logic of force."

The great diplomatic difficulty to which Kennan referred was thus the challenge of being able to use force so skillfully, even up to the brink of war if necessary, that one ultimately got one's way without actually having to go to war.

Soviet power...does not take unnecessary risks...Thus, if [the] adversary has sufficient force and makes clear his readiness to use it, he rarely has to do so. If situations are properly handled there need be no prestige-engaging showdowns.

Kennan admitted that this was not a "pleasant" picture, but he took encouragement from several things. First, the Soviets were "still by far the weaker force." Transfers of power were particularly difficult for them, and the problems of governing their recent territorial acquisitions would impose "additional strains." He thus implied that by skillful use of force the United States might be able to help transform the character of the regime. Second, he thought the American public would respond to the challenge if it was adequately educated to the "realities" of the Russian situation. He warned, however, that the "[p]ress cannot do this alone. It must be done mainly by [the] Government, which is necessarily more experienced and better informed..." Finally, he couldn't see

what we would be risking. Our stake in this country...is remarkably small. We have here no investments to guard, no actual trade to lose, virtually no citizens to protect, few cultural contacts to preserve.

Kennan did have one fear, however, with which he closed the telegram. "After all, the greatest danger that can befall us in coping with this problem of Soviet communism," he wrote, "is that we shall allow ourselves to become like those with whom we are coping."

The Readers

For centuries, the West read the world through Holy Scripture. Together with the commentaries of the Church Fathers, the Bible taught the peoples of Christendom how to interpret what was going on "out there" and how to respond. Above all, it provided the conviction of Providence. Whatever happened, God had a hand in it.

Kennan's "Long Telegram" has been called "the bible" of American foreign policy-makers. It was. Above all, it provided the conviction that there was an All-Powerful Enemy "out there." Whatever happened, the Enemy had a hand in it.

The conviction that one is dealing with a genuine enemy can be as up-lifting to the soul as the presence of a genuine friend, especially when the soul in question is suffering from a republican conscience. Kennan had been saying the same sorts of things for a long time, during

and before the war, but no one paid much attention.³⁹ Roosevelt had not been interested, the United States did not yet have the atomic bomb, and no Soviet troops were stationed in Eastern or Central Europe. Most American officials at that time were still reading the world through a republican script, hoping the republican hope for a harmonious postwar world order. Now, however, Kennan's message was greeted with an enthusiasm suggesting relief.

Secretary of State Byrnes called it a "splendid analysis." The director of the Office of European Affairs, H. Freeman Matthews, told Kennan it was "magnificent," adding, "I cannot overestimate its importance to those of us here struggling with the problem." The naval attache in Moscow recommended it to his superiors because the "problem transcends diplomacy." Copies were rushed to U.S. diplomatic missions around the world, to General Eisenhower, Secretary of War Robert Patterson, and top War Department Planners. Navy Secretary James Forrestal had hundreds of copies made and sent "all over town." Leaked to a number of journalists in an effort to shape public opinion as Kennan had urged, the telegram became the source for an article in *Time*, which included a map labelled "Communist Contagion" showing Iran, Turkey, and Manchuria as "infected" and Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Afghanistan, and India as "exposed."⁴⁰

On the whole, however, efforts to alert American public opinion to "the Soviet threat" developed slowly, ran into resistance, and did not have a discernible effect for some time.⁴¹ Rather, it was on readers within the foreign policymaking establishment that the "Long Telegram" worked its most immediate and significant effects. The difference in the concerns voiced by American foreign policymakers before and after the arrival of Kennan's telegram is dramatic.

Before the telegram, three major concerns had inhibited policymaking and prevented it from taking a clear direction.⁴² First, there was a concern not to antagonize the Soviet Union

³⁹Frustrated at the direction of U.S. policy and the lack of attention to his views, Kennan mentioned to colleagues in January 1946 that he was considering resigning soon from the Foreign Service. See C. Ben Wright, "Mr. 'X' and Containment," *Slavic Review*, Vol. 35 (March 1976): 12.

⁴⁰The enthusiastic response to the telegram, including the news leak, is described by Yergin, *op. cit.*, 170-71.

⁴¹For the confused state of public opinion on the issue of Soviet-American relations, and the way officials were eventually able to "clarify" the situation once they had arrived at consensus themselves, see the interesting material in Yergin, *op. cit.*, 171ff.

⁴²The following analysis relies heavily upon material contained in the important article by Leffler, *op. cit.*, whose research is based on massive numbers of recently declassified documents (see 347, note 5). The documents, as reported by Leffler, indicate a significant shift in the statements of policymakers in the spring and summer after the arrival of the telegram. Leffler, however, does not attribute this shift to the telegram. Instead, he explains the shift in terms of growing concern over "economic and political conditions throughout Europe and Asia" and the opportunity which these conditions created for "communists [to] take power, even without direct Russian intervention..." (363, 365). It is worth noting that the telegram itself, by emphasizing Soviet subversive methods of expansion, may have helped to mobilize and justify an American response to the political and economic conditions in Europe and Asia.

unnecessarily and thereby jeopardize the possibility for agreements. Numerous expressions of this concern appear in the records of senior military planners, who apparently thought at this time that Soviet leaders were capable of responding positively to signs of American restraint. Sometimes, to be sure, this concern was overridden by other considerations.⁴³ On other occasions, however, the concern proved decisive. Out of sensitivity to Russian fears, the Joint PostWar Committee recommended not using U.S. installations in Alaska for staging expeditionary forces, and this recommendation was accepted. So was the recommendation of Generals Eisenhower, Lincoln, and other officers against creating a central economic authority for Western Europe because it might appear to be an anti-Soviet bloc.⁴⁴

Second, there was a concern to analyze the character of Soviet postwar intentions. Significantly, efforts in this direction were unable to produce clear evidence of aggressive intent towards either the continental United States or any other area considered to be of major importance, such as Eurasia. Civilian officials and military strategists were in nearly universal agreement that the Soviets desired to avoid military engagement and were not making any preparations for war.⁴⁵ As late as September 1947, the CIA was still concluding that the Soviets would not seek to conquer Western Europe because they recognized their inability to control hostile populations and would fear triggering a war with the United States that could not be won.⁴⁶ Throughout 1945, there had been a high degree of apprehension over Soviet long-term intentions and an almost constant state of moral apoplexy over Soviet actions in Eastern Europe, the Balkans, the Near East, and Manchuria. No one thought these actions were nice or that it would be easy, in the words of Charles Bohlen, Kennan's colleague at the American Embassy in Moscow, to integrate "the policies of a dictatorship, directed virtually exclusively towards the

⁴³E.g.: In the summer of 1945, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy finally overruled the senior member of the Joint Strategic Survey Committee who had advised not to build an airbase in Iceland because it would frighten the Russians. McCloy charged that the official, General S.D. Embrick, had "a rather restricted concept of what is necessary for national defense." (*Ibid.*, 352.)

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, 357. The first decision was made in April, the second in June 1945. For evidence that civilian officials were influenced by similar concerns, see Yergin, *op. cit.*, 100-105, 109-110, 114, 117-119, 129, and chpt. 6.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, 359. In October 1945, the Joint Intelligence Staff predicted that the Soviet Union would seek to avoid war for five to ten years. Despite confrontation over the Soviet troops remaining in Iran in April 1946 and the concern over a communist uprising in France in May, military intelligence continued throughout '46 to believe that the Soviet Union did not want war, was not preparing for war, and would avoid any steps, such as supporting a *coup*, which might bring on a war.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, 359. The CIA added that the Soviets would prefer to gain hegemony by political and economic means.

furtherance of the national interest of the Soviet state, with the principles of world cooperation and international morality..."⁴⁷

Before Kennan's telegram, however, intelligence analysts and strategic planners were inclined to see even the most troubling of these Soviet actions as efforts to establish an effective security system.⁴⁸ Many assessments noted that, despite their large gains during the war, the Soviets had still not achieved a safe security zone, especially on their southern periphery. In this light, in fact, it was still possible for a Foreign Service officer to acknowledge that the Soviet quest for bases in the Dardenelles did not differ in substance from the American quest for bases in the Atlantic and Pacific.⁴⁹ According to one historian's recent and apparently exhaustive survey of the relevant documents,

...the still prevailing outlook at the end of 1945 was to dismiss the role of ideology in Soviet foreign policy yet emphasize Soviet distrust of foreigners; to stress Soviet expansionism but acknowledge the possibility of accommodation; to abhor Soviet domination of Eastern Europe but discuss Soviet policies elsewhere in terms of power and influence; and to dwell upon the Soviet preoccupation with security yet acknowledge doubts about ultimate Soviet intentions.⁵⁰

Third, and finally, there was a concern with assessing Soviet military capabilities; and these assessments left American officials feeling extremely confident. The Soviets had no long-range strategic air force, no atomic bomb, and meager air defenses. The Soviet navy was considered ineffective except for its submarine forces. War Department analysts estimated that the Soviet Union would require approximately fifteen years to overcome wartime losses in manpower and industry, ten years to redress the shortage of technicians, five to ten years to develop a strategic air force, fifteen to twenty-five years to construct a modern navy, ten years to refurbish military transport, ten years or less to quell resistance in occupied areas, fifteen to twenty years to establish a military infrastructure in the Far East, three to ten years to acquire the atomic bomb, and an unspecified number of years to overcome the vulnerability of the Soviet rail network and petroleum industry to long-range bombing. Analysts were aware of Soviet superiority in manpower, but they doubted her ability to mount and sustain a surprise attack or to overcome

⁴⁷The Bohlen quotation is from Yergin, *op. cit.*, 165.

⁴⁸Leffler, *op. cit.*, 365. It must be emphasized that many officials, high and low, didn't believe in the possibility of working out agreements with the Soviets and were convinced they wanted world domination. The argument here merely insists that opinion was divided and confused, and policymaking was therefore inhibited.

⁴⁹See Leffler's "Reply" in the same issue, 396.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 365.

acute logistical problems in any attempt to overrun Eurasia.⁵¹

Given these three considerations — the concern with the effects of American behavior on Soviet behavior, the uncertainty as to Soviet intentions towards areas of greatest interest to America, and the certainty as to Soviet military weakness — it was obviously difficult for policymakers to make decisive recommendations. No matter what their hopes, fears, or institutional interests may have been, they were certainly not in position to approach the president, Congress or the American public with alarm-ringing proposals. Neither diplomatic belligerence nor a conventional or nuclear military build-up could be easily justified in terms that Americans might find persuasive. To arrive at greater certainty, it would have been necessary to test the Soviets by making serious proposals that recognized their legitimate security needs.⁵²

The "Long Telegram" made these three inhibiting considerations seem irrelevant. If Soviet leaders were "seemingly inaccessible to considerations of reality"; and if their "neurotic" world view derived from "basic inner-Russian necessities," then there was little point in worrying about the effects of American behavior on their attitudes. No effort at accommodation would ever make them more agreeable and might actually encourage their appetite. Moreover, if their deepest instincts impelled them to seek "the total destruction of rival power"; and if they were "committed fanatically to the belief that with [the] U.S. there can be no permanent *modus vivendi*," there was little point in fussing over Soviet intentions in any particular instance. It was the overall design that mattered, and if the U.S. waited to respond only to outright aggression, the nation might find itself in so weak a position that it would be too late to do anything. Finally, if the Soviet

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 361. For assessments of Soviet economic weakness, see 362. In his comments on Leffler's article, John Lewis Gaddis raised the following objection: "Leffler fails to distinguish clearly enough, in my view, between the Russian military threat to North America, which he correctly says no one took very seriously at the time, and the possibility that the Red Army might overrun Western Europe....Although intelligence reports discounted the probability of a deliberate attack in Europe, they by no means disregarded the possibility of hostilities beginning as the result of accident or misperception. And, given Soviet conventional force superiority at that time, the Russians would have had the capability to overrun most of Western Europe in a matter of weeks, a fact all American war plans during this period took for granted." (See "Comments," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 89:2 (April 1984, 384.) With respect to Eurasia, however, Leffler had noted that: "Despite Soviet superiority in manpower, General Eisenhower and Admiral Forest E. Sherman doubted that Russia could mount a surprise attack, and General Lincoln, Admiral Cato Glover, and Secretaries Patterson and Forrestal believed that Soviet forces would encounter acute logistical problems in trying to overrun Eurasia — especially in the Near East, Spain, and Italy" (361). As for war occurring through accident or misperception, see "Reply," 396-97, where it is noted that, because of the initiatives the United States was taking to rebuild Western Europe in 1948, there was an increased likelihood of war. However: "When American officials talked about war arising out of a miscalculation...they meant that they might underestimate the Soviet perception of threat engendered by American actions or that the Soviets might underestimate the West's determination to carry out its goals even if it meant war." (See also 373-374.) In other words, it was the outlook and actions of American policymakers after the "Long Telegram" had worked its effects that altered the calculations of the likelihood of accidental war.

⁵² The failure to make such proposals, especially with respect to a settlement of the German problem, was the basis of Walter Lippmann's criticism of American foreign policy in 1946 and 1947. See his "A Year of Peacemaking," *Atlantic Monthly*, December 1946, and *The Cold War* (New York: Harper & Bros., 1947), esp. 60-62; and comments below.

Union relied upon subterranean preparations; and if it was able to expand its influence by exploiting other countries' internal weaknesses, there was little point in feeling reassured by the Soviet's present, limited military capabilities. These capabilities were only one aspect of Soviet strategy and probably not the most important aspect for some time. From this perspective, an indefinite and potentially negotiable threat could suddenly assume terrifying, non-negotiable proportions.

In the weeks immediately following the reception and circulation of the "Long Telegram," a remarkable shift of perception in policymaking circles occurred along just these lines.⁵³ One hears the resonances of Kennan again and again in the documents of this period. For example, by the end of March, General John E. Hull, director of the Operations Division, was telling his theatre commanders that the Soviets were "constitutionally incapable of being conciliated." By April, an important subcommittee of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee had decided that Soviet suspicions were "not susceptible of removal." By July, in a summary report to the president, the Joint Chiefs of Staff was declaring the Soviet objective to be "world domination."⁵⁴

It was as if policymakers had emerged from darkness and confusion into the light. They were no longer interested in exploring ways of accommodating the Soviet Union's legitimate strategic requirements or considering how American initiatives might influence Soviet policy.⁵⁵ According to Leffler, both the quantity and quality of the Joint Chiefs' studies on Soviet intentions "seem to have declined during 1946." More time was spent on estimating Soviet capabilities, and some of the most thoughtful earlier studies on intentions were withdrawn from consideration. Information from previous studies that indicated Soviet weaknesses was now deleted, as in the JCS's July report to the president. During this period from April to July, high-ranking military officers began to pressure Secretary of State Byrnes to avoid diplomatic concessions, and it was also at this time that defense officials influenced the drafting of the Baruch Plan on international control of atomic weapons.⁵⁶

⁵³Historians have frequently noted that U.S. policymakers' attitudes towards the Soviet Union "crystallized" and "hardened" in early 1946. See, for example, John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); Yergin, *op. cit.*, 192, 217, 219-220, chpts. 9 and 10; Hamby, *op. cit.*, 118. For the most detailed documentation of this shift, however, see Leffler, *op. cit.*, 366-69 and *passim*.

⁵⁴Leffler, *op. cit.*, 366.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, 369.

⁵⁶On decline of studies of Soviet intentions, *ibid.*, 368, note 59; on withdrawal of the most thoughtful earlier studies, 367, note 56; on the deletion of information concerning Soviet weakness, 369; on pressure on Byrnes, 370; see also Yergin, *op. cit.*, 183-186; on influence of the military in drafting Baruch Plan, 371; see also Barton J. Bernstein, "Quest for Security," 1033-44; and Herken, *op. cit.*

The "Long Telegram" focused the minds, stiffened the resolve, and released the imagination of American foreign policymakers. It gave them a language, backed up by the authority of a diplomatic expert, with which to describe "the Soviet threat" and frame their responses to it. Perhaps the best way to appreciate the full significance of these effects is to look at the document that actually summarized the way dozens of officials translated Kennan's message into policy proposals in the spring and summer of 1946. That document is the memorandum which Clark Clifford, a White house special counsel, and George Elsey, another White House aide, wrote for Truman over the summer and presented in September.⁵⁷ Responding to the president's request for a report on the state of Soviet-American relations, they began in June to send out formal questionnaires to the relevant top-ranking civilian and military personnel. What Clifford and Elsey got back was Kennan-plus.

In his covering letter to the president, Clifford noted the "remarkable agreement among the officials with whom I have talked and whose reports I have studied."⁵⁸ The following observations from the concluding section of the memo represent some of these areas of agreement:

⁵⁷The full memorandum is in the Harry S. Truman Papers, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Missouri. The conclusions of the memo are reprinted in Etzold and Gaddis, *op. cit.*, 64-71. Truman received the full report on September 24. Given Kennan's frequent claim that his views as expressed in the "Long Telegram" and Mr. "X" article were misinterpreted, especially with respect to the militarization and universalization of containment, it is worth noting his comments on the summary conclusions of the report. In response to questions from George Elsey on September 13 — "Have we omitted any imp. element of the Report? Was tone of report o.k.? miscellaneous suggestions?" — Kennan replied in writing, "I think the general tone is excellent and I have no fault to find with it." He offered no substantive criticism in the six-page reply. (I am grateful to Bart Bernstein for calling this correspondence to my attention and sending a copy of it. The originals are in the George Elsey Files, Papers of Harry S. Truman, Harry S. Truman Library, 13 February and 16 February.)

⁵⁸Quoted in Yergin, *op. cit.*, 244. The questionnaire was sent to the Secretaries of State, War, Navy, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Attorney General, the Director of Central Intelligence, and other Administration officials. The background to the preparation of the memorandum is discussed in Yergin, 234, 241-242. The individual responses from the State and War Departments are also discussed (242-44). These indicate quite clearly how the interpretive framework of the "Long Telegram" was being used to justify a variety of institutional ambitions and a new conception of American national security. For the State Department, according to Yergin, the local dimensions of any question were now secondary to the grand scheme of incipient East-West conflict. The department's policy guide said, "We must conduct a global policy and not expect to advance our interests by treating each question on its apparent merits as it arises." According to Chester Nimitz, chief of naval operations, Soviet naval activity — actual or potential, whether it was in the Arctic or Pacific oceans, in the Baltic, Black, or Mediterranean seas — threatened U.S. security. The Russians, he said, were preparing for such ventures as attempting "to neutralize" Britain by blockade, bombardment, and invasion, and were aiming to launch submarine raids against American coastal cities. As a response, the Navy recommended the development of major U.S. naval presences in the Atlantic and Mediterranean. The War Department insisted that the Russians fully expected and even wanted a war, and held the Soviet Union responsible for most of the world's troubles. The United States needed to be ready for imminent Russian "use of armed forces on a global scale. Security preparations in light of this estimate must be both political and military."

[Soviet leaders] believe that a war with the United States and the other leading capitalistic nations is inevitable. They are increasing their military power and the sphere of Soviet influence in preparation...and they are trying to weaken and subvert their potential opponents by every means at their disposal....

The language of military power is the only language which disciples of power politics understand....Compromise and concessions are considered, by the Soviets, to be evidences of weakness and they are encouraged by our 'retreats' to make new and greater demands.

The main deterrent to Soviet attack on the United States, or to attack on areas of the world which are vital to our security, will be the military power of this country....The Soviet Union's vulnerability is limited due to the vast area over which its key industries and natural resources are widely dispersed, but it is vulnerable to atomic weapons, biological warfare, and long-range air power. Therefore...the United States must be prepared to wage atomic and biological warfare. A highly mechanized army, which can be moved either by sea or by air, capable of seizing and holding strategic areas, must be supported by powerful naval and air forces....

The United States....should entertain no proposal for disarmament or limitation of armament as long as the possibility of Soviet aggression exists...[P]roposals on outlawing atomic warfare and long-range offensive weapons would greatly limit United States strength, while only moderately affecting the Soviet Union...

The United States should support and assist all democratic countries which are in any way menaced or endangered by the U.S.S.R....Providing military support in case of attack is a last resort: a more effective barrier to communism is strong economic support....Our efforts to...bring about economic unification of countries now divided by occupation armies are also directed toward the re-establishment of vigorous and healthy non-communist economies....

Within the United States, communist penetration should be exposed and eliminated whenever the national security is endangered. The armed forces, government agencies and heavy industries are the principal targets for communistic infiltration at present....

There must be such effective coordination within the government that our military and civil policies concerning the U.S.S.R., her satellites, and our Allies are consistent and forceful. Any uncertainty or discrepancy will be seized immediately by the Soviets and exploited at our cost.

Our policies must also be global in scope. By time-honored custom, we have regarded "European Policy," "Near Eastern Policy," "Indian Policy," and "Chinese Policy" as separate problems to be handled by experts in each field. But the areas involved, far removed from each other by our conventional standards, all border on the Soviet Union and our actions with respect to each must be considered in the light of overall Soviet objectives.

The American people should be fully informed about the difficulties in getting along with the Soviet Union, and the record of Soviet evasion, misrepresentation, aggression and militarism should be made public....

American policymakers had defined, at last, an active and challenging role for themselves, their institutions, and their country in world affairs, even though they had to eliminate much of the distinction between peacetime and wartime in order to do it. It is important to remember, however,

that the progress made between December or February, when they were confused and divided, and September, when they were convinced and united, was not the result of the Soviets doing anything different. Indeed, there were, and would continue to be, numerous signs of Soviet weakness, moderation, and circumspection. In the period from April to July, for example:

*Intelligence analysts reported Soviet troop withdrawals from several occupied areas;

*Ambassador Smith from Moscow called attention to an absence of hostility in the Soviet press, a moderate speech by Stalin at the UN, continuing demobilization, efforts at mediation in China and Iran, and the settlement of border problems with Afghanistan;

*General Lincoln acknowledged that, at the foreign ministers meeting in Paris, the Soviets had been willing to make numerous concessions concerning Tripolitania, the Dodecanese, and Italian reparations;

*Generals Clay and Echols and Secretary of War Patterson noted once again that it was the French and not the Russians who were obstructing agreement on united control of Germany.⁵⁹

During this same period, the Soviets ceased pressing for territorial adjustments with Turkey, and after late summer they did not again ask for a revision of the Montreaux Convention or the acquisition of bases in the Dardenelles. This behavior continued throughout the winter and into 1947 when our intelligence analysts noted more than a half-dozen instances of Soviet moderation or concessions.⁶⁰

At the very time the Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan were being framed and approved, the Military Intelligence Division was observing that the Soviets had limited their involvement in the Middle East, diminished their ideological rhetoric, and given only moderate support to Chinese communists.⁶¹ The occasion for the Truman Doctrine, of course, was not any instance of Soviet behavior but a note from the British indicating that they were terminating their aid program to Greece. The Greek communists never received assistance or moral support from Stalin, who

⁵⁹These examples are taken from Yergin, 191, 212-13, 226, 243-44; and Leffler, 367-68.

⁶⁰Leffler, *op. cit.*, 367-68, 394-96.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, 368.

abided by his 1944 agreement with Churchill.⁶² In fact, both the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan were pre-programmed in the "Long Telegram" and Clifford memo, regardless of what the Soviets did.

What had changed was not Soviet behavior but the American method of interpreting it. Policymakers now knew how to discount signs of Soviet weakness, moderation, and conciliation. As Ambassador Smith cautioned in one of his cables, Washington should not be taken in by the apparent move toward "correct relationships." The Russians had the same "predatory aims," they were simply following different tactics.⁶³ With this scriptural mindset, officials could feel fully justified in pursuing their own ambitious agenda.

Of course, it is impossible to know what might have occurred if the United States had offered the Soviets a genuine peace proposal. The point is that this wasn't going to happen. To counter what they had been taught to see as the Kremlin's global design, American foreign policymakers developed a global design of their own. It would come to be known as "containment"; and as Walter Lippmann soon realized, "containment" entailed a rejection of the historic function of Great Power diplomacy.⁶⁴ There would be no diplomatic settlement of World War II. American and Russian armies would remain facing one another in the center of Europe, and each nation would use the presence of the other's troops as justification for extending and consolidating its own power.

Cold War Performances

The problem was how to implement the new script. The American public was not prepared in 1946 for the script's implications. Nor was President Truman ready to ask Congress to

⁶²Yergin, *op. cit.*, 279-82, 288-89, 295.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 243-44, and Leffler, *op. cit.*, 368-69.

⁶⁴When "containment" was broached in public for the first time with Kennan's "Mr. X" article, Lippmann responded in *The Cold War* (1947): "At the root of Mr. X's philosophy about Russian-American relations and underlying all the ideas of the Truman Doctrine there is a disbelief in the possibility of a settlement of the issues raised by this war. Having observed, I believe quite correctly, that we cannot expect 'to enjoy political intimacy with the Soviet regime,' and that we must 'regard the Soviet Union as a rival, not a partner in the political arena,' and that 'there can be no appeal to common purposes,' Mr. X has reached the conclusion that all we do is to 'contain' Russia until Russia changes, ceases to be our rival, and becomes our partner. The conclusion is, it seems to me, quite unwarranted. The history of diplomacy is the history of relations among rival powers, which did not enjoy political intimacy, and did not respond to appeals to common purposes. Nevertheless, there have been settlements....A genuine policy would, therefore, have as its paramount objective a settlement which brought about the evacuation of Europe....The communists will continue to be communists. The Russians will continue to be Russians. But if the Red Army is in Russia, and not on the Elbe, the power of the Russian communists and the power of the Russian imperialists to realize their ambitions will have been reduced decisively" (60-62). But so would American power have been reduced. For a contemporary statement by a East European of a similar settlement policy, see George Konrad, *Antipolitics* (New York: Holt and Company, 1984).

support the large military build-up and overseas commitments that the script called for. After reading the Clifford report and memo, Truman requested all the copies and placed them under lock and key.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the new script had time on its side. So long as the foreign policy establishment was set against making any concessions to Soviet security needs, U.S.-Soviet relations were bound to deteriorate; and so long as these policymakers were eager for the American public to be informed about Soviet subversion and expansion, the domestic anticommunist movement was bound to prosper. Through the interaction of these foreign and domestic processes, the president, Congress and the public-at-large would eventually see what was required of them, believing that the nature of the Soviet threat, and not the dictates of a script, was leading them to the proper conclusions. To understand how this happened, it is not necessary to resort to a conspiracy theory or even assume that policymakers were in control of the process. To a large extent, they could abandon the initiative to unfolding events and merely follow the outlines of the script as relevant occasions arose.

The *first* great task required by the script was the elimination from the political process of more sympathetic interpretations of Soviet behavior. This was painful but not terribly difficult. By the spring of '46, Henry Wallace was the only remaining member of the cabinet to believe strongly in the need for U.S.-Soviet accommodation. He was also the only one to insist on explaining to Truman how instances of Soviet belligerence might reasonably be seen as responses to American actions.⁶⁶ In September, however, Truman came under pressure from the foreign policymaking establishment to fire Wallace. The occasion was Wallace's speech to a Democratic Party rally in New York on the possibility of peaceful relations with the Soviets. Although Truman had gone over the speech page by page in advance and given his consent, its hopeful message was in conflict with a hardline speech given in Germany by Secretary of State Byrnes. Knowing Wallace to be the spokesman for the party's leftwing, Truman wanted his support in the up-coming congressional election campaign, but State Department protests and Byrnes' threat to resign left the president little choice. A week later, he asked for Wallace's resignation.⁶⁷

⁶⁵Yergin, *op. cit.*, 245.

⁶⁶Markowitz, *op. cit.*, 176-181. Wallace's most strenuous effort of this kind came in the form of a long letter to Truman on 23 July, reprinted in Blum, *op. cit.*, 589-603. It included a critique of the Baruch plan for international control of atomic energy along lines that Stimson had already argued the previous September.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, 181-191; Yergin, *op. cit.*, 245-55. Wallace's speech at Madison Square Garden, "Peace — and How to Get Peace," is reprinted in Filene, *op. cit.*, 167-173. It should be noted that the speech was on September 12, twelve days before the Clifford memo was presented to Truman, but not before the consensus reflected in the memo had been achieved. In the speech, Wallace attempted to maintain a balanced position. Thus: "Russia must be convinced that we are not planning for war against her, and we must be certain that Russia is not carrying on territorial expansion or world domination through native Communists faithfully following every twist and turn in the Moscow party line." Or: "...we should recognize

The Clifford memo warned that signs of discrepancy and uncertainty within the government would be exploited by the Soviet Union. Wallace's dismissal significantly reduced that danger. From then on, the Truman administration would speak with a much more unified voice on questions relating to the Soviet Union. Since most of the reliable information on Soviet weakness, moderation, and good faith was contained in classified government reports and cables, the public, including most of Congress, could find out about these matters only if officials wanted to tell them. But this is precisely what officials were not inclined to do and what the script told them not to do. They weren't lying or concealing information so much as protecting the citizen from the pit of ambiguity out of which they had just climbed.⁶⁸

This official effort to promote consensus received indirect but important assistance from the domestic anticommunist movement that was gathering force around the congressional elections and would continue after the Republicans' victory. It was the first time in thirty years that the Republicans had won control of both the House and the Senate; and their success was widely attributed, in part, to the use of charges of disloyalty and subversion in the federal government. Many groups and individuals contributed to these charges, including the National Association of Manufacturers with its expensive ad campaign and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, which was beginning its annual series of reports on communist influence in labor unions, schools, libraries, and the entertainment industry as well as the government. Sometimes, this anticommunism took a moderate and subtle form, as when Charles Wilson, the president of General Motors, told the Senate Labor Committee that only by confining collective bargaining to "its proper sphere," that is, wages and working conditions and not prices or profits, could "what we have come to know as our American system" be saved from a social revolution "imported from east of the Rhine...." Sometimes, it took a crude form barely distinguishable from racism and anti-unionism. But

that we have no more business in the (political) affairs of Eastern Europe than Russia has in the (political) affairs of Latin America, Western Europe and the United States....[W]hether we like it or not, the Russians will try to socialize their sphere of influence just as we try to democratize our sphere of influence." Or: "...we must insist on an open door for trade throughout the world. There will always be ideological conflict — but that is no reason why diplomats cannot work out a basis for both systems to live safely in the world side by side." Nevertheless, from within the policymaking consensus, the speech was now heard as appeasement.

⁶⁸An example of the ambiguity from which citizens needed to be rescued is contained in a letter which John Foster Dulles received in September 1946 from members of the Committee on Foreign Relations in Detroit, an affiliate of the Council on Foreign Relations. They were inviting Dulles to help clarify the situation because "frankly we are pretty much at sea. Two or three times after rather extended discussions with well-informed discussion leaders we have come to the conclusion that the United States and Russia can 'get along' and live in the same world, enjoying a reasonable amount of peace and harmony. We concluded also that Russia only wants to secure her borders, is internally unprepared for another war, and consequently doesn't want one, and has no intention of grabbing new territory, or trying to evangelize the world toward communism. These are things our committee has believed but we are becoming disillusioned and would like to have someone who knows the answers to help us straighten our thinking." (Quoted in Yergin, *op. cit.*, 172.)

whatever tone it took, the movement was clearly growing. It was no longer a simple reaction against the social changes and ideas that the New Deal had brought into American politics and fostered with the help of communist organizers. It was now enlisting sizable numbers of American Catholics, many of East European background, who were important to the electoral strength of the Democratic Party.⁶⁹

Hoping to calm the situation and to ward off investigations and legislation by the new Congress, Truman acted quickly after the election to name a Temporary Commission on Employee Loyalty. Then, in March 1947, ten days after the Truman Doctrine speech, he followed the commission's recommendations, establishing by executive order a federal loyalty program. The order authorized investigations by boards into the political beliefs and associations of all federal employees. Also introduced in the same year was the attorney general's list of "subversive organizations." In addition, the new Congress passed and then overrode a presidential veto of the strongly anti-union Labor-Management Relations (Taft-Hartley) Act of 1947, which included a provision requiring the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) not to certify a labor union if any of its officers was a member of the Communist Party. The NLRB moved quickly to enforce this provision against unions that refused to file the required affidavits.⁷⁰ All these actions helped to legitimize the growing concern over internal security and the protection of "atomic secrets"; and they heightened suspicion concerning anyone who might oppose a hardline approach to the Soviet Union.

But, again, it is difficult to see what else Truman could have done. He was the leader of a party that had promoted the rights of organized labor and negotiated the wartime agreements at Yalta; and each of these achievements had involved a partnership of sorts with communists. In the postwar situation, the *combined* effects of these past partnerships were casting doubt on the competence and will of the Democrats to defend at home, or to advance in the world, "the American way of life." Of course, Truman might have deflated this criticism in another manner, but it would have required the boldest statesmanship. As Lippmann was urging, he might have taken

⁶⁹The Wilson quote may be found in Brody, *op. cit.*, 181. The Chamber of Commerce campaign is described in I. F. Stone, *The Truman Era* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1953), 80-86. Suggestive material on the politics of southern racism in this period — exacerbated by a 1944 Supreme Court decision outlawing white primaries — is in Boylan, *op. cit.*, 85-88. On the use of anticommunism by Republicans and southern Democrats in Congress after the 1946 elections, see Athan Theoharis, *Seeds of Repression: Harry S. Truman and the Origins of McCarthyism* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971) and "The Escalation of the Loyalty Program," in Barton J. Bernstein, ed., *op. cit.*; and on this and the American Catholics, see also Wittner, *op. cit.*, chpt. 4, esp. 88ff.

⁷⁰For a discussion of the administration's political strategy with respect to the veto, as well as the consequences of the act, see Peter Steinberg, *The Great "Red Menace": United States Prosecution of American Communists, 1947-1952* (Westport, Ct.: Greenwood Press, 1984), esp. 44ff., and also Wittner, *op. cit.*, 48 and Levenstein, *op. cit.*; on the setting up of the loyalty program, see Yergin, *op. cit.*, 284ff. and the works of Harper, Latham, and Theoharis cited above.

the initiative in an effort to overcome the consequences of Yalta. Declaring that no agreement there was meant to sanction the permanent occupation of Europe, he might have urged the evacuation of *all* foreign troops in conjunction with a dramatic settlement of the German problem that recognized the security and reparation requirements of both France and Russia.⁷¹ But that would have set Truman in opposition to the plans of the State and War Departments, and there is no evidence that he ever contemplated such a battle.

Without that kind of effort, it seems unlikely that anything could have derailed the growing "Red scare."⁷² Wallace's fearful prediction turned out to be correct. The conviction of a Soviet threat was eliminating from Washington not only communists but also that crucial strand of the republican tradition that had been concerned as much with private as with public concentrations of power. From this strand had come not only the Populist, Progressive, and New Deal attacks on corporate power, but also Wallace's own special global vision for the future: a world in which communists and republicans might be uneasy allies, correcting each other's deficiencies in a common struggle against the forces of reaction.

This vision, which had always been problematic, now had no chance of being realized. In the soon to be dominant rhetoric of American politics, the business of America would be business, and republican freedom would become almost synonymous with "free enterprise." Whereas the "active principle" of a republican commonwealth in the Jeffersonian tradition had been the perpetual struggle against oligarchy and privilege, against private monopoly and arbitrary power, now the "active principle" would be a perpetual celebration and defense of the free society that America had supposedly perfected. As the authors of NSC-68 put it in 1950:⁷³

⁷¹Lippmann, *The Cold War*, *op. cit.*, 39: "I am contending that the American diplomatic effort should be concentrated on the problem created by the armistice — which is on how the continent of Europe can be evacuated by the three non-European armies which are now inside Europe....It is to the Red Army in Europe, therefore, and not to ideologies, elections, forms of government, to socialism, to communism, to free enterprise, that a correctly conceived and soundly planned policy should be directed." On how difficult and perhaps unwise such a solution might have been, see the thoughtful discussion by DePorte, *op. cit.*, chpt. 8. For a recent discussion of the German problem in connection with the development of the Marshall Plan, see Charles L. Mee, Jr., *The Marshall Plan: the Launching of the Pax Americana* (Simon and Schuster, New York, 1984).

⁷²By the spring of 1947, Kennan was expressing concern that the public reaction had gone too far in the direction of a "hysterical sort of anti-communism," which he said he "deplored." See Yergin, *op. cit.*, 284. On the relatively contained character of domestic anticommunism before 1946, see the judgment of Theoharis, *op. cit.*, 7-8.

⁷³Etzold and Gaddis, *op. cit.*, 392. NSC-68 was classified until 1975. Officially titled as "United States Objectives and Programs for National Security," it has been described as "the most elaborate effort made by the United States officials during the early Cold War years to integrate political, economic, and military considerations into a comprehensive statement of national security policy." (Etzold and Gaddis, 383.) Authored by a small, special State and Defense Department study group headed by Paul Nitze, who replaced Kennan as head of the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department in January 1950, NSC-68 was an attempt to overcome the Truman-imposed anti-inflation budget constraints and achieve the extensive military build-up called for in the Clifford memo. The outbreak of the Korean War became the occasion for achieving these objectives. For useful discussions of NSC-68, see Paul Y. Hammond, "NSC-68: Prologue

Our free society, confronted by a threat to its basic values, naturally will take such action, including the use of military force, as may be required to protect those values. The integrity of our system will not be jeopardized by any measures, covert or overt, violent or non-violent, which serve the purposes of frustrating the Kremlin design..."

If this was the moment in which the large corporation finally obtained a relatively secure place for itself in the polity, it should be noted that it did not do so on its own efforts or merits, but rather as a consequence of a global anticommunist strategy that was evolved by others and backed up by nuclear weapons.

The *second* great task called for by the script was an enormous increase in the resources devoted to military power and overseas commitments. Those who have written about this achievement have tended to cast the main actors at the time in impressive roles, whether of hero or villain. In the heroic role, there is Dean Acheson and his aide, Paul Nitze, struggling nobly against the fiscal conservatism of capitalism and the isolationist myopia of Congress and the public. As villains, these same figures may be seen deliberately exaggerating the Soviet menace in order to accomplish some supposed ulterior design, such as rescuing capitalism from a trade deficit or recession, or defeating authentic socialist and communist movements in Western Europe.

What may be overlooked in these accounts is the degree to which all the pertinent events — the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the formation of NATO, the decisions to increase the atomic stockpile, to rely heavily upon nuclear weapons, to produce the H-Bomb, and eventually to triple the size of the military budget — were script-driven. As the post-war economic crisis in Europe deepened and requests for various forms of assistance arrived in Washington in early 1947, planners at the State Department had an opportunity to respond in the manner that the Clifford memo had already advised;⁷⁴ and when the United States moved to bolster Greece and

to Rearmament," in Warner R. Schilling, Paul Y. Hammond, and Glen H. Snyder, *Strategy, Politics, and Defense Budgets* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), and Jerry W. Saunders, *Peddlers of Crisis: The Committee on the Present Danger and the Politics of Containment* (Boston: South End Press, 1983), chpt. 1. See also Leffler, *op. cit.*, 373-378, on the now perceived need for greater military capabilities given the extensive overseas commitments that the United States was making.

⁷⁴For discussions of this response, see DePorte, *op. cit.*, 124-141, and Mee, *op. cit.*, *passim*. DePorte notes: "The planners of the proposal [i.e., the Marshall Plan] tried to avoid giving the impression, which they believed was a fault of the Truman Doctrine, that it was crudely military and ideological and simply an instrument of anticommunism....Certainly there was more in the Marshall proposal than containment. The economic prosperity and political stability of Western Europe were important to the United States for more than one reason. But it was clear to the public on both sides of the Atlantic, from the context and the follow-up, that the new policy, like the Truman Doctrine, was part of the emerging response to what was perceived as a multiple Soviet and Communist threat. It is not likely that Congress would have approved the program on any other basis....Though the American offer was nominally open to the Soviet Union as to other European countries, there could have been little expectation that it would join in the required cooperative response, or if it did, that the program would have received congressional and public support in the United

Turkey and proposed the Marshall Plan, Stalin now had an opportunity to do what he had refrained from doing but perhaps always desired. During the summer of 1947, he put an end to multi-party democracy in Hungary; early in 1948, he did the same in Czechoslovakia; and as a response to the Marshall Plan's proposed economic integration of Western Europe, he established the Cominform in September 1947.⁷⁵ After these events, Congress was more than ready to approve the Marshall Plan in March 1948;⁷⁶ and when Moscow blockaded Berlin in June, aiming to discourage the formation of a West German state, the West began negotiations in July to establish NATO and provide an American nuclear guarantee in the event of an attack.⁷⁷

Each of these Soviet actions could have been interpreted as responses to U.S. actions and as consistent with traditional Russian concerns for a secure buffer zone against the West,⁷⁸ but Americans tended to read them scripturally as evidence of an aggressive Kremlin design for world domination.⁷⁹ If there were lingering doubts on this matter, they were mostly dispelled when the Soviets successfully tested an A-Bomb in August 1949, the Chinese Communists came to power in the winter and North Korea invaded South Korea in June 1950. Kennan's early analysis seemed prophetic, but Kennan himself had by now rejected it. He no longer believed the Soviets had a world design. He thought they were sometimes only responding to Western actions. And on reading NSC-68, he was most concerned about its military emphasis and its rejection of serious diplomatic initiatives.⁸⁰

States. As it turned out, the Russians did refuse and forced their satellites to do so, so that the onus of the division of Europe fell on them" (135).

⁷⁵DePorte, *op. cit.*, 119-21. In the background was also the failure of the wartime Allies at the Moscow Conference in December 1946 to define a common policy for the future of Germany.

⁷⁶Mee, *op. cit.*, 236-45.

⁷⁷DePorte, *op. cit.*, 152-3, 139-41.

⁷⁸E.g., *ibid.*, chpts. 6 and 7; Yergin, *op. cit.*, 324ff.

⁷⁹Between 1945 and 1947, the percentage of the public perceiving Russia as "aggressive" rose from 38 to 66 percent (Yergin, *op. cit.*, 285). A Gallup poll in October 1947 reported that 76 percent of the nation thought Russia was "out to rule the world" (cited by Wittner, *op. cit.*, 47). By the presidential election of 1948, Henry Wallace, running as a peace candidate on a third-party ticket (the Progressive Party), received only 2.37 percent of the total ballots and more than 4 percent only in New York and California. For a discussion of his campaign, see Markowitz, *op. cit.*, chpt. 8, and Curtis D. MacDougall, *Gideon's Army*, (Marzani & Munsell, New York, 1965) 3 vols.

⁸⁰Yergin, *op. cit.*, 390, 402-3 and note #14, 488, with references to Kennan's *Memoirs*. NSC-68 regarded diplomacy, i.e., "a sound negotiating position," primarily as a "tactic," i.e., "an essential element in the ideological conflict," to be pursued *in conjunction with* a military build-up. Thus: "For some time after a decision to build up strength, any offer of, or attempt at, negotiation of a general settlement along the lines of the Berkeley speech by the Secretary of State could be only a tactic. Nevertheless, concurrently with a decision and a start on building up the strength of the free world, it may be desirable to pursue this tactic both to gain public support for the program and to minimize the immediate risk of war" (Etzold and Gaddis, 423-424). See also 422, 424-426, 429, 432, 434.

The *third* great task that the script called for was the continual reproduction of the Soviet threat. It is tempting to think that the Soviets eventually learned to play the role of seeking world domination and thus actually became the kind of threat that the script represented them to be. This does not seem to be the case, however. If one looks at a map of the world, remembers a little history, and counts, unambiguous evidence of a non-negotiable Soviet threat seems as hard to find in the 1980s as it was in 1945. For example:

*As of 1982, there were 155 countries in the world. The Soviet Union appeared to have a significant degree of influence in 19 of them.

*Seven of these 19 countries — Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Mongolia, Poland, and Rumania — came under Soviet influence/control before or soon after World War II, and all are on or closely related to the Soviet Union's borders.

*Of the twelve other countries, at least nine are among the world's poorest and most desperate, such as Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Cuba, Ethiopia, Laos, Mozambique, Yemen, and Vietnam.

*Between 1945 and 1980, a total of 35 countries came under some degree of Soviet influence at one time or another, but the influence once gained was subsequently lost in 16 of these countries. In terms of population, G.N.P., and power, the losses far outweighed the gains. The losses included China, Indonesia, Egypt, India, and Iraq. As a percentage of world G.N.P., the total G.N.P. of countries with Soviet influence stood at approximately 6 percent in 1979.

*The Soviet Union has been unable to maintain influence over any major Third World country. Consequently, her influence is significantly less today than it was at its height in 1958.

*Except for India, all the world's major military powers and industrialized nations are allied with the United States or expect its aid and protection.⁸¹

⁸¹This material is taken from *The Defense Monitor*, Vol. IX, no. 1 (1982). See the extensive discussion as well as the explanation of "influence" and its measurement. The twelve countries in which the Soviet Union was judged to have "significant" influence in 1982 were: Afghanistan, Angola, Bulgaria, Cambodia, Congo, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, Ethiopia, East Germany, Hungary, Laos, Libya, Mongolia, Mozambique, Poland, Romania, Syria, Yemen (Aden), and Vietnam. The sixteen countries in which the Soviet Union was judged to have had significant influence in the past were: Albania, Algeria, Bangladesh, China, Egypt,

It looks, in other words, as if the rest of the world and the Soviet Union have pretty much gone their own separate ways since 1945. The argument that this would not have happened without active U.S. intervention seems at least questionable since the Soviet Union tended to lose influence in areas the United States stayed out of, such as China, and to gain it in areas where the U.S. intervened, such as Southeast Asia.⁸² More to the point, however, is the way the initial hardening of the East-West divide in Europe encouraged, as Wallace (and Lippmann) predicted, an ideological polarization of local conflicts in the Third World, thus giving the Soviet Union opportunities and incentives for intervention that it otherwise might not have had.

If the conviction of a Soviet threat were "responsive to reality," to borrow a phrase from Kennan, these geopolitical facts might have had some influence. Under the Reagan administration, however, the United States was as preoccupied as ever with "the Soviet threat."⁸³ To judge by the budget and the rhetoric, U.S. officials believed "the threat" to have increased, not diminished.⁸⁴ To judge by the map, "the threat" looked about as it must have looked in 1945, before the arrival of the "Long Telegram." Though certainly not uninvolved in the affairs of other countries, the Soviet Union still seemed neither intensely interested in nor very competent at

Ghana, Guinea, India, Indonesia, Iraq, North Korea, Mali, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen (Sana), and Yugoslavia. From 1945 to 1980, the number of countries in the world more than doubled (from about 74 to 155). Almost all the new countries were former colonies of Western powers. On the basis of the Kennan-Clifford script, one might have expected far greater Soviet success.

⁸²The difficult case, of course, is Western Europe. Two points are relevant to the present argument. (1) U.S. intelligence analysts did not believe the Soviet Union posed a military threat to Western Europe after the war. Nor did it believe the Soviet Union was encouraging or supporting indigenous communist uprisings or armed takeovers in countries considered to be within the Western sphere of influence, such as France or Greece. (2) Without U.S. intervention, it seems likely that communist and socialist parties would have acquired greater influence, and the tone and substance of politics might well have shifted leftward. However, given the difficulty that the Soviet Union has had in getting its way even in impoverished African countries that it has assisted, it seems unlikely that any Western European country would have capitulated to Soviet control or extensive influence. Once the United States committed itself to intervention, however, the Soviet military threat was bound to grow greater. For example: "In July 1947, intelligence analysts in the War Department maintained that the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan had resulted in a more aggressive Soviet attitude toward the United States and had intensified tensions. These tensions have caused a sharper line of demarcation between West and East tending to magnify the significance of conflicting points of view, and reducing the possibility of agreement on any point.' Intelligence officers understood that the Soviets would perceive American efforts to build strategic highways, construct airfields, and transfer fighter bombers to Turkey as a threat to Soviet security and to the oilfields in the Caucuses....Intelligence analysts also recognized that the Soviets would view the Marshall Plan as a threat to Soviet control in Eastern Europe as well as a death-knell to communist attempts to capture power peacefully in Western Europe....'The whole Berlin crisis,' army planners informed Eisenhower, 'has arisen as a result of...actions on the part of the Western powers'" (Leffler, *op. cit.*, 373; see also 374).

⁸³E.g., W. Scott Thompson, ed., *From Weakness to Strength: National Security in the 1980s* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1980). The volume presents the foreign policies and programs to be pursued by the Reagan Administration in its first term.

⁸⁴E.g., see the address of Jean Kirkpatrick to the Republican National Convention, 20 August 1984, reprinted in the next day's *New York Times*.

projecting power and influence beyond its immediate security zone. In this global realm, the regime accepted losses as well (or as poorly) as any Great Power and gave little evidence of being committed to a grand design. Although such judgments are certainly debatable, it is the absence of vigorous and extensive public debate that has characterized the U.S. response for more than forty years.

What then accounts for the reproduction of "the Soviet threat?" This, too, seems to be a feature of the script itself. Hidden within it are three subtle but dynamic principles of self-reproduction. First, there is *The Principle of the Cat Chasing Its Own Tail*. Given the widespread belief that the Soviet Union will do everything within its capability to destroy the United States, elected and appointed officials, together with their hired consultants, have been more or less obliged to make a variety of "defensive" moves. In addition, however, they have also been more or less obliged to imagine how any move that has just been made might itself be vulnerable to Soviet counter-moves.⁸⁵ Consequently, the more moves the United States has made, the more vulnerable it has perceived itself to be. Thus "the Soviet threat" necessarily grows larger.

There are many examples of this Principle, but one will have to suffice here. In 1946 and '47, the United States began to move its air bases closer to the Soviet Union. In the early 1950s, Albert Wohlstetter at Rand Corporation made the not very difficult discovery that the closer the United States placed its bases to the Soviet Union, the more vulnerable these bases were to a Soviet surprise attack. Here was one of the first great Soviet threats of the fifties: "SAC [the Strategic Air Command] was vulnerable."⁸⁶ Being an inventive and technologically sophisticated society, a free society, the United States then went to work to overcome this vulnerability. One idea was to build intercontinental ballistic missiles and attempt to make them invulnerable to attack. Then, of course, it was necessary to entertain the possibility that the Soviet Union might get missiles first. This was the origin of the second great threat of the fifties: the "missile gap."⁸⁷

It is possible, of course, that Soviet officials realized America's vulnerability to feeling vulnerable and learned how to exploit it. That is, recognizing their own relative military weakness, and feeling safer if the United States didn't see it, they may have bluffed. Thus, though they didn't have militarily effective missiles and wouldn't get them for many years, they did launch "Sputnik" and send Khrushchev to the UN to say, "We will bury you." This kept the United States busy

⁸⁵This is a function, in part, of "worst case analysis." For how this works in practice, see Herbert F. York, "A Personal View of the Arms Race," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Vol. 26 (March 1970): 27-31.

⁸⁶ On the decision to move bases closer to the Soviet Union, see Leffler, *op. cit.*, 372. On Wohlstetter, see Fred Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983), 90-94, 97-110, 117-124, and chpt. 8.

⁸⁷See Kaplan, *op. cit.*, chpts. 9 and 10; and also Herken, *Counsels of War*, *op. cit.*, esp. chpts. 12 and 13.

chasing its own tail for many years.

Second, there is *The Principle of the Ghost of the Republic*. The concept of a "free society" is a necessary part of the script. It is what distinguishes "us" from "them." If the United States did all the things to defend itself that the script seems to call for, however, the nation would very quickly cease to be a free society. Consequently, as the political, social, and economic costs of following the script mount, an equilibrating reaction has occasionally taken over. Officials have tried to slow down, create stability, and conserve resources for "the long haul." Eisenhower's "New Look" and doctrine of "Massive Retaliation" defined one such period of slowdown after the strains of the Korean War and massive build-up called for by NSC-68.⁸⁸ McNamara's doctrine of "Mutual Assured Destruction" and the Kissinger-Nixon program of "detente" and pursuit of arms control marked another slowdown period, following on the heels of the Kennedy missile build-up and the strains of the Vietnam War.⁸⁹

The periods of slowdown, however, have incited political entrepreneurs to charge officials in power with not doing everything they could to counteract "the Soviet threat." Because "the threat" has continued to be taken for granted (though perhaps less talked about) in the slowdown periods, it has remained a powerful political resource for anyone who could spot an area of vulnerability and a potential solution that was not being pursued. Thus "the threat" has been resurrected, and periods of slowdown have been followed by periods of build-up. The Kennedy program of counter-insurgency was, in part, a response to charges of American vulnerability in limited wars because of the non-credibility of the threat of "Massive Retaliation" once the Soviets developed nuclear forces of their own.⁹⁰ Similarly, the Kennedy-McNamara missile build-up was a response to charges that Eisenhower's "New Look" had allowed a "missile gap" to develop.⁹¹ The recent Reagan build-up, actually begun under Carter, acquired its impetus in a similar fashion from the Nixon-Kissinger slowdown.⁹² It is in this sense that there probably cannot be a "stable"

⁸⁸On the "New Look" and "Massive Retaliation," see Richard A. Aliano, *American Defense Policy from Eisenhower to Kennedy: The Politics of Changing Military Requirements, 1957-1961* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1975), esp. chpt. 2.

⁸⁹On the McNamara slowdown and the McNamara build-up, see Kaplan, *op. cit.*, esp. chpts. 22-23; for Kissinger-Nixon and "detente," see Sanders, *op. cit.*, 137-145 and chpt. 5, and John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Reappraisal of Postwar American National Security Policy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), esp. chpts. 9 and 10.

⁹⁰The classic statement of the charge is Maxwell D. Taylor, *The Uncertain Trumpet* (New York: Harper, 1959). See also Aliano, *op. cit.*, 107ff., and Kaplan, *op. cit.*, 196ff. and 328ff.)

⁹¹Desmond Ball, *Politics and Force Levels: The Strategic Missile Program of the Kennedy Administration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), and also the discussions in Aliano, Kaplan, and Herken cited above.

⁹²Sanders, *op. cit.*; Herken, *Counsels*, chpts. 20-27; Gaddis, *op. cit.*, chpt. 11, who concludes his study with the thought: "There would appear, in all of this, to be a stronger connection between domestic politics

strategy. The conception of "the threat" in a "free society" with presidential elections every four years will not allow it.

Finally, there is *The Principle of the Liberal's Best Option*. Although the script calls for a free society, it does not give the political liberal many options. Compared to ancestors like Wallace in the republican script, the liberals in the "threat" script have become shrunken figures. Deprived of political ground to their left by the anticommunist investigations of the late 1940s and '50s, they have found that prospects for influence in Washington require major compromises with both corporate and military power.⁹³ Consequently, instead of pursuing alternatives to the power and privileges of the corporation, they have settled for dependency-producing welfare programs (together with a strenuous commitment to the extension of civil rights); and instead of pursuing alternatives to the Cold War, they have tried to limit its excesses and preserve civil liberties.

One consequence of the liberals' limited political options has been their frequent enthusiasm for a broader range of military options as well as arms control. Thus they have supported: the development and deployment of small, tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield as an alternative to massive strategic bombardment of Russia's cities; the development and deployment of counter-force nuclear weapons as an alternative to counter-value nuclear weapons; counter-insurgency programs as a partial alternative to "Massive Retaliation"; and development and deployment of sophisticated conventional armaments as an alternative to reliance upon nuclear weapons. Given the political balance of forces at any moment, support for these and other military programs may have represented the best available liberal option. Nevertheless, this strategy has contributed significantly to reproducing the conviction of "the Soviet threat" even though the aim of the strategy has often been to restrain United States military behavior, not Soviet military behavior.

Epilogue

This line of reasoning suggests that there might be, in principle, a means of ending the Cold War and the nuclear arms race. These phenomena have not been caused or sustained in any simple, inevitable sense by Soviet behavior. Nor have they been caused or sustained by deep and unalterable forces in American society, though these forces, such as they are, have

and national security policy than has been generally realized...[P]olitical campaigns more often than changing circumstances bring about shifts in official orthodoxies..." (355-56).

⁹³For the "shrinking effect" of anticommunism and the coming of the Cold War on American liberals, see Wittner, *op. cit.*, esp. chpts. 2-5. The formation of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA) in January of 1947 and the publication of Arthur Schlesinger's *The Vital Center* (1949) provide useful markers of the change.

perhaps become deeper and more painful to alter than they were in 1945. Rather, the Cold War and the nuclear arms race appear to depend now, as they did in their origins, on a scriptural conviction nourished in America — and no doubt having its counterpart in Russia⁹⁴ — that a determined Enemy was being driven by its inherent and unalterable nature to expand and eventually rule the world. It is this conviction that produced and sustains the military-industrial-scientific complex, not the other way around. It is this conviction that has fueled the arms race by leading the United States — and no doubt the Soviet Union, but somewhat less competently — to fund research on almost every imaginable weapons-system. It is this conviction that has led the United States to oppose — and the Soviet Union to support — often at great cost and with no obvious national interest at stake, every revolutionary movement in the Third World. Take away the conviction and you will take away everything else — because, in its absence, it would not be possible to mobilize the necessary political "will," social alliances, and economic resources. Leave the conviction in place, however, and you will continue to have everything else. But the only way to remove a conviction is to confront it head-on.

The Central Committee of the Communist Party in the Soviet Union appears to have figured this out. Since the installation of Mikhail Gorbachev as General Secretary, it has been making a concerted effort to remove from American politics the conviction of the Soviet Union as Enemy.⁹⁵ This is as daring as it is surprising, for it entails the dual wager that neither "system" requires an Enemy. Whether or not the strategy succeeds, it shows considerably more self-confidence and less dogmatism on the part of Soviet leaders than the West has generally been willing to grant them. The question is whether the West, and especially the United States, can show a similar degree of self-confidence and ideological flexibility.

The analysis presented above suggests three observations. First, the United States must be prepared to undergo its own period of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, with no greater certainty regarding their direction and ultimate outcome than the Soviet Union enjoys. To open genuine negotiations with the Soviet Union abroad is to reopen genuine politics at home. To cast doubt on "the Soviet threat" is to weaken the broad Cold War coalition that "the threat" made possible and thus to revive the difficult dilemmas that its coming appeared to resolve. The role of the federal government in the economy: questions concerning planning, the development of a public sector, economic democracy, co-management, the character of unions, and the problems of an

⁹⁴Indeed, it could be argued that the Americans borrowed this way of talking about the behavior of nations from the Bolsheviks, who had previously learned it themselves from the West.

⁹⁵In the same news report quoting Georgi Arbatov (see note #1 above), *Time* also printed a map of the world showing 19 recent Soviet peace initiatives in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and Persian Gulf, Asia, Afghanistan, and Europe. For balance, however, the magazine also quoted a warning from former President Richard Nixon's new book, *1999*: "Under Gorbachev, the Soviet Union's foreign policy has been more skillful and subtle than ever before. But it has been more aggressive, not less."

underclass of women, ex-slaves, and recent immigrants; the role of the United States in the world: questions concerning alliances and bases in Europe and the Third World, the place of nuclear weapons in military strategy, and the proper authority of international organizations in matters of global welfare and security; all these will move from the fringe to the center of the political stage and once again will become bitter and divisive issues. Technical advice and solutions will not be sufficient. It will be necessary to make *political and moral choices*, and it will no longer seem certain that there is just one "American way."

Second, such a debate, if it is permitted to occur, will not be merely a repeat performance. Many of the old certainties are gone, and the world looks much different at the end than it did at the beginning of the "American Century." Communists and socialists cannot now suppose that they better understand the direction of history or have any more definite solutions than liberals do. The Pentagon cannot suppose that its nuclear weapons provide an easy and inexpensive answer to American security. The State Department cannot suppose that the world is an American chessboard. American business can suppose very little of anything, and American unions even less. "White supremacy" is gone from the South, and the problem of racial equality has become a fully national issue. This time, in other words, there is a chance that the participants will listen to one another and look more carefully at the world.

Finally, the world knows better what is at stake and will be watching. Despite the Cold War, and perhaps in part because of it, a global community of sorts has been evolving. The satellites put in place by the Superpowers to spy on one another and direct nuclear battles have also created a global audience and made security the chief topic of a global conversation. That was not the case in 1946, and it could make a large difference now in how everyone behaves. In international affairs, the exercise of power and the enjoyment of privilege may never before have operated under so many constraints, however inadequate these still appear to be. This means that if the United States and the Soviet Union do begin to work out the terms of a new security script, the roles which they assign to themselves this time might display what used to be called "a decent respect for the opinions of Mankind."

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*These papers also appear in *Multilingua* (January/April 1988).