

## REVISIONIST HISTORIANS COLD WAR VIEWS

by Jean M. Zawitoski\*

Through the 1950's, one view of the origin, development, and cause of the Cold War predominated among the historians of the Western world and was generally accepted as an unimpeachable account of the hostility, duplicity and aggressiveness with which the Soviet Union confronted the free world's efforts to establish peace. This historical perspective, dominating the thinking of statesmen and citizens alike, provided a convincing justification for the United States' foreign policy of containment, initiated in 1947 and lasting through the Vietnam War. It was not until the 1960's that a second historical interpretation began to contend with the former "orthodox" view, and this new version of history was appropriately named "revisionist."<sup>1</sup> Because the revisionists challenged the premises upon which the policy of containment was formulated, this perspective raised some provocative questions concerning the propriety and effectiveness of the policy itself. The revisionist challenge was strongly criticized by those who subscribed to the idea of an international communist conspiracy, bent on the destruction of freedom and liberty throughout the globe. It ranged from extreme condemnation, bordering on implications of treason, to the milder accusation of being, at the very least, unrealistic—an utopian view of world affairs. Was it actually and totally utopian, a view that deserved prompt dismissal in this new age of realism, or did it present a more accurate picture of the past that might be helpful in framing a new approach to the conduct of international relations between representatives of two very different and conflicting ideologies?

The Cold War represented an era of Soviet-American tension and hostility that provoked a series of crises in many areas of the world following World War II. Economically and spiritually it strained the resources of America almost to the breaking point, creating deep divisions in the fabric of American national life. Could it have been prevented?

In answer to the question of possible avoidance, the revisionists take the affirmative position and place the onus of responsibility for the origin and development of the Cold War squarely on the shoulders of the United States. They claim that had the United States not responded to events of the post-World War II era from a purely economic and idealistic perspective, good

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph M. Siracusa, *New Left Diplomatic Histories and Historians—The American Revisionists* (Port Washington, N.Y.: Kennikat Press, 1963) pp. 76-79.



relations with the Soviet Union would have been possible and the Cold War averted.

Certainly, there is no unanimity of opinion among these revisionist historians with regard to the precise beginning of the Cold War. D. F. Fleming sees its origin in the rough handling of Molotov by Truman shortly after Roosevelt's death. G. Alperovitz places his emphasis upon Truman's use of "atomic diplomacy," which he sees as an arrogant display of power at a time when the United States enjoyed a nuclear monopoly. Walter LaFeber attributes its origin to the delay in the opening of the second front during World War II coupled with the failure of the United States to guarantee that the post-war Soviet borders would be those recognized by the Nazi-Soviet treaty of 1939: viz. Baltic States, parts of Poland, Finland and Rumania.<sup>2</sup>

Despite this obvious area of disagreement, they do obtain a fairly general consensus as to the cause of the Cold War. All agree that the prevailing and ongoing interest of the United States, since the dawn of the 20th century, has been the need to create a commercial empire for the sustenance of democracy and capitalism in the United States.<sup>3</sup> The Soviet recommendations regarding the post-war status of the liberated nations of Eastern and Central Europe, according to the revisionists, would have created exclusive spheres of influence contrary to the economic interests of the United States. The need to insure markets for the United States' surplus goods and capital plus access to sources of raw materials required a freely trading "open door" world, the antithesis to the Soviet proposals. A foreign policy based on resistance to exclusive trading practices became the natural concomitant of these United States economic goals. Coincidentally, because economic control extended political power, Americans believed that world democratic institutions and practices would follow therefrom. Thus, American interests and ideals converged in support of the policy of containment.<sup>4</sup>

In pursuit of these economic and idealistic goals, the revisionists' argument runs, the United States failed to recognize the needs and fears of the Soviet Union, the legitimate basis upon which Soviet foreign policy would and should be determined. Such recognition of those needs would have meant supplying economic assistance for post-war reconstruction and the establishment of an Eastern European sphere of interest or security belt to guard the Soviet Union against a revitalized Germany in the post-war era. It is their contention that Stalin attempted to solve Russia's problem of security and economic recovery in such a way as to minimize conflict with the United States, but that after the death of Roosevelt, who understood this Russian need, America reverted to its policy of "open door" expansion, which effectively "closed the door to any result but the Cold War."<sup>5</sup>

In order to accomplish the restructuring of Eastern and Central Europe in the image and likeness of American institutions, the way to guarantee

<sup>2</sup> Siracusa, pp. 76-89.

<sup>3</sup> William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (N.Y.: Dell Publishing Company, 1962) pp. 207-211.

<sup>4</sup> Siracusa, p. 79.

<sup>5</sup> Williams, p. 229.



economic interests and expectations, Truman listened only to those who wanted a hard line adopted toward the Soviet Union.<sup>6</sup> The feasibility of the effect of adopting this policy was enhanced by the atom bomb monopoly and the perceived threat that it imposed. Alperovitz even goes so far as to suggest that the use of the atom bomb on Japan was a political decision intended to demonstrate United States' power to the Soviet Union in an effort to intimidate them into accepting American demands in regard to Eastern Europe.<sup>7</sup>

This use of "atomic diplomacy," coupled with the increasingly belligerent and aggressive verbal assaults levelled at the Soviet Union beginning with Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech in 1946, caused a hardening of Soviet attitudes and increased fear and suspicion in regard to the anti-Soviet bloc plan espoused by Churchill.<sup>8</sup> As a forerunner to the employment of this strategy, the revisionists point to the termination of lend-lease aid to Russia and the American refusal to grant the Soviet request for a six billion dollar loan for post-war reconstruction. The result of this strategy was to put the Soviet Union on the defensive in her relations with the Western world. Insult was added to injury when Truman used the occasion of extending the Marshall Plan to aid Greece and Turkey for a formal announcement of the Truman Doctrine, which was "the first time in history that encirclement of a great power was openly proclaimed."<sup>9</sup>

In focusing the responsibility for the Cold War on the United States, the revisionists employ the particular adage which suggests to whom much is given, much is demanded. As World War II drew to a close, the United States enjoyed a position of unprecedented power vis-a-vis the Soviet Union. Therefore, it is argued, there was a corresponding responsibility attached thereto that required a thorough exploration of all possible alternatives to the Cold War, an exercise the United States declined to pursue. Had an effort been made to overcome the Soviet Union's fear and suspicion of Western intentions, which dated back to the Bolshevik Revolution and included United States and British exclusionary practices during World War II, a firm basis for friendship and cooperation would have been established for post World War II diplomacy. America's response in the form of the containment policy was the worst possible psychological reaction to a weakened, wartorn ally; in the eyes of the Soviet leaders, this policy simply verified Marx's prophecy. Its consequence was to "strengthen the hand of every die-hard Marxist and every extreme Russian nationalist among the Soviet leadership . . . giving Stalin total power over the Soviet people."<sup>10</sup>

Having been denied American economic assistance, other than on terms which would have permitted outside influence over Soviet affairs, the Russians had no alternative but to adopt postwar policies that would guarantee their

<sup>6</sup> D. F. Fleming, "The Cold War and its Origins" *Containment and the Origins of the Cold War*, Ed. Edwin C. Rozwenc and Kenneth Lindfors (Boston: D. C. Heath and Company, 1967) pp. 108-109.

<sup>7</sup> Siracusa, p. 86.

<sup>8</sup> Cecil V. Crabb, Jr., *American Foreign Policy in the Nuclear Age* (N.Y.: Harper & Row, 1972) pp. 192-194.

<sup>9</sup> Fleming, p. 110.

<sup>10</sup> D. F. Fleming, *Issues of Survival* (N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972) pp. 10-12.



freedom of action in vital economic and strategic spheres. Consequently, the Soviet national interest required the creation of buffer states between Germany and the Soviet Union for security purposes, and the installation of Communist systems over Eastern Europe to meet economic requirements as well. This is the explanation given for the formation and development of the Cominform in Eastern Europe, France and Italy; it arose out of the need to back Molotov's plan for Eastern European reconstruction and was Stalin's answer to the Marshall Plan in the West. When Czechoslovakia was seized by the communists in 1948, it was considered by the West to be a continuation of the pattern that had begun in Poland and confirmed their misguided opinion that the Soviet Union was resorting to world conquest.<sup>11</sup> The revisionists state that no world conquest was intended; it was simply a Russian move to consolidate those areas already under Soviet control by virtue of the presence of the Red Army. In the absence of a peace treaty, this activity was a security move against a possible German resurgence.

The Revisionists argue contrary to the orthodox view that Russia violated the terms of the agreement at Yalta in 1945, which concerned the disposition of the occupied countries of Eastern Europe. They assert that it was the United States who violated the spirit, if not the letter of those agreements. They cite the visit of Churchill to Moscow in October of 1944, during which time post-war "spheres of influence" were discussed. Stalin, they claim, accepted the division as proposed by Churchill, and as evidence of his good faith, permitted free elections in Hungary in which the old ruling classes won. Also, Stalin did nothing to interfere with the British intervention in Greece in late 1944, during which time the communist faction was defeated and a pro-British government installed. The communist revolution in Bulgaria, contrary to common belief, was already well underway before the Yalta Conference met; the implication being that the Soviet Union had no control over these events.<sup>12</sup>

The Yalta Conference, conducted in a spirit of good will and camaraderie between Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill, tacitly recognized Stalin's right to Poland as a Russian sphere of influence when the participants agreed to the elimination of any pro-Nazi elements from participation in the "free elections" to be held in that country. Therefore, after Roosevelt's death, when Truman and Churchill protested Soviet conduct in Eastern Europe, it was in violation of the "agreement" reached at Yalta, a confirmation of Churchill's earlier meeting and agreement reached in Moscow in 1944.<sup>13</sup> In rejecting the Polish government in exile in London, Stalin was only carrying out what had heretofore been agreed upon. The Polish exiles had formerly been associated with the Nazi regime, and they had been decidedly anti-Russian. As further evidence of the good faith of the Soviet Union, revisionists point to the concessions made by Stalin at Yalta with regard to United Nations voting procedures; also

<sup>11</sup> Fleming, *The Cold War and its Origins*, p. 112.

<sup>12</sup> Walter LaFeber, *America, Russia and the Cold War* (N.Y.: Wiley, 1968) pp. 10-18.

<sup>13</sup> Crabb, pp. 190-193.



the fulfillment of his promise made at that time to enter the war against Japan within 90 days of the cessation of hostilities in Europe.<sup>14</sup>

The conclusion to be reached from the revisionist interpretation, as stated herein, is that American economic interests dictated an imperialistic foreign policy that had nothing to do either with communist ideology, or the failure to reach some accommodation with Russia on a new balance of power following the war. The real goal of containment was the elimination of communist systems everywhere. It was merely a new version of the historical opposition to Marxism, which began in 1918 with Allied intervention in the internal affairs of Russia, in an attempt to overthrow Lenin's regime, and continued through the Thirties. The United States refusal to recognize the existence of the Soviet Union until fifteen years after the revolution and the British-French refusal to enter into a collective security pact with Russia against Nazi aggression give testimony to the disdain of the Western powers. During the war years, the delay in instituting the second front, the failure to allow Soviet participation in the surrender and occupation of Italy and Japan, and the exclusion of Russia from the sharing of information concerning the development of atomic energy all contributed to the natural suspicion Russia held toward Western intentions.<sup>15</sup>

While the revisionists sublimate the role of communist ideology as a determinant in Soviet foreign policy, they emphasize the messianic anti-communistic nature of the democratic ideology by attributing to it an inspirational quality capable of solidifying support for every action taken by the Truman administration. In the context of totalitarianism versus democracy, every event that occurred could be fitted into this concept, precluding any discussion of alternate views in terms of balance of power or realistic threats to American national security. By March of 1948 the formal espousal of the Truman Doctrine of 1947 had blossomed fully into a devil theory expressed in terms of a universal moral principle.<sup>16</sup>

If one is to accept the revisionists' interpretation, without qualification, it is necessary to grant the accuracy of the assumptions upon which it is based.

With regard to the Soviet Union's concern for the security of its borders, Russia has the world's longest and most exposed frontier. The frontier along the Central Russian plains affords maximum exposure to attack. Twice in this century German forces had taken advantage of this geographical vulnerability. For a weakened Russia, with geographically indefensible borders, national interest would naturally lie in the direction of political unification with surrounding territories.<sup>17</sup> Before World War I, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania had been provinces of Russia. At the time of the Bolshevik Revolution, Germany had forcibly annexed these provinces. During subsequent years of intervention, the Allies encouraged the establishment of these three countries as part of the "cordon sanitaire" to contain the U.S.S.R. Peace treaties were

<sup>14</sup> Siracusa, pp. 85-86.

<sup>15</sup> Crabb, pp. 192-195.

<sup>16</sup> Fleming, *The Cold War and its Origins*, pp. 112-113.

<sup>17</sup> Vernon Aspaturean, "Soviet Foreign Policy" *Foreign Policy in World Politics* 2nd Ed. (N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962) p. 133.



signed with the "new states" in 1920, but the United States did not recognize the independence of those nations. They insisted that they were parts of the Russian State until the 1930's. The Soviet Union re-established her authority over these provinces in 1939, under the terms of the Nazi-Soviet non-aggression pact, and she fully intended to hold on to them after World War II. Russia had learned her lessons of World War I very well.<sup>18</sup> Once more, during the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, Poland had acquired and incorporated large slices of Russia, taking advantage of that nation's internal discord.<sup>19</sup> In 1934, Poland had signed a mutual assistance treaty with Germany that lasted through the Munich crisis. Polish territory in the west extended as far as the Oder River, encompassing thousands of Germans in their annexations. The port of Danzig was almost completely German and had rallied to the Nazis in 1933.<sup>20</sup> In terms of the State system, it is understandable that with the absence of a friendly power on its vulnerable border, the Soviet's national security dictated its moves to insure a regime in Poland, over which it could have control. By the Nazi-Soviet Pact, Stalin had acquired one-half of Poland, and by the time the Yalta Conference took place, the Red Army was completing the liberation of that nation. This was the reality the Western world declined to face, and a vague "Declaration on Liberated Europe," calling for free elections and democratization in these countries was relied upon to establish post-war stability. In addition, once again, the United States put all of its eggs into one basket by advocating yet another international organization, the United Nations. Secretary of State Hull optimistically saw this organization as a panacea for international problems when he said:

There will no longer be need for spheres of influence, for alliances, balance of power or any of the other special arrangements through which, in the unhappy past, the nations strove to safeguard their security or promote their interests.<sup>21</sup>

This evidence would not seem to support the revisionists' contention that Roosevelt acquiesced in Soviet demands regarding spheres of influence. At that time, Roosevelt's main concern appeared to be insuring the participation of the Russians in the war against Japan and obtaining agreement on the formation of the United Nations. He mistakenly believed that settlement of the political question about post-war boundaries and influence could wait until the end of the war and be handled on the basis of friendship, good will and mutual trust through the mediation of a newly created international organ.<sup>22</sup>

The validity of the revisionist argument concerning the Soviet need for security on her Western frontiers is granted, but it is hard to reconcile the Soviet pressure on Iran early in 1946 with a security requirement. Nor does

<sup>18</sup> Williams, p. 212.

<sup>19</sup> Leonard Mosely, *On Borrowed Time* (N.Y.: Random House, 1969) p. 200.

<sup>20</sup> Mosely, p. 203.

<sup>21</sup> John Spanier, *American Foreign Policy Since W.W. II* (N.Y.: Praeger Publishing, 1973) pp. 22-26.

<sup>22</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt, The Soldier of Freedom 1940-1945* (N.Y.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970) pp. 564-573.



security satisfactorily explain Soviet pressure on Turkey, as early as 1945, when demands were issued for the cession of several Turkish districts lying on the Turkish-Russian frontier, a joint Russo-Turkish administration of the Dardanelles, and a leasing to the U.S.S.R. of bases for naval and land forces. These actions, coupled with the guerilla warfare in Greece between communist and anti-communist factions in the fall of 1946, would indicate Soviet expansionism toward the Middle East.<sup>23</sup> How far must we assume Soviet security to be involved?

As far as the pre-World War II basis of Soviet suspicion and hostility toward the Western powers goes, evidence does exist to support the claim of American intervention in the Bolshevik Revolution, a claim denied for years by the United States. In fact, in 1933, the U.S. Department of State produced documents to show that Wilson had supplied troops, at the request of Britain and France, merely to secure war supplies against German seizure when Russia made a separate peace with Germany prior to the end of World War I. This display of American innocence was prompted by the pressures of private interests in the United States, who were interested in expanded trade relations with the Soviet Union.<sup>24</sup> To insure a more friendly climate of opinion, the State Department attempted to show that Wilson did not intend American forces to be used in any direct interference in the internal affairs of the Russian State. However, a later State Department document indicates otherwise. In 1973, a State Department Bulletin, relating the history of the Soviet Union, refers to the Revolution and to Lenin and the communist party's nationalization of all land, factories, banks, railroads and other sectors of the economy, adding that "troops from other countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Japan and the United States intervened, but Lenin's regime survived."<sup>25</sup>

Certainly, the delay in United States' recognition of the Soviet Union did nothing to change the suspicion of Western intentions. However, when the revisionists point to the West's refusal to enter into a collective security pact with Russia during the 1930's, through the League of Nations, little notice is given to the fact that the League had been stigmatized by Russia as a stronghold of capitalist imperialism for as long as fifteen years after its formation. It was only when Germany withdrew from the League in 1934 that Russia joined this international organization, and it is difficult to believe that she did so for anything other than narrow self-interest.<sup>26</sup>

The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of 1939 has frequently been cited by orthodox historians as a justification for Western attitudes toward the Soviet Union; but I believe the revisionists' point, that Munich was a watershed in the intensification of fear and suspicion of the West, must be conceded. While the United States was not a direct party to that agreement, certain

<sup>23</sup> Crabb, p. 194.

<sup>24</sup> George F. Kennan, *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1961) pp. 76-77, Note 35.

<sup>25</sup> Department of State Bulletin-U.S.S.R., March, 1973. pp. 1-3.

<sup>26</sup> Pitman B. Potter, *An Introduction to the Study of International Organization* (N.Y.: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1948) p. 256.



elements in the United States, such as Charles Lindbergh and Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy, were influential in the decision-making process in Great Britain, a process that led to the appeasement of Hitler in 1938.<sup>27</sup> Pursuing what he perceived to be a threat against the Soviet Union by a coalition of capitalist and fascist nations, it is small wonder that Stalin, in the best tradition of power politics, resorted to the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact for he had no other recourse.

The perception of the revisionists regarding the motivations of the Soviet Union, rooted as they were in a deep and abiding fear, seems to be more acute and realistic than the orthodox view. But the revisionists' presumption that the United States and the West failed to consider these Soviet fears, suspicions and needs, is not substantiated by the available evidence. In an essay completed in September, 1944, prior to the "Mr. X." article, George F. Kennan fully outlined the historical xenophobia that dominated the thinking of the Soviet Union. In this article, he warned that Soviet suspicions were not confined to the United States. Kennan pointed to the isolation and supervision of foreign diplomats in Moscow that extended to foreign communists as well as non-communists.<sup>28</sup> This view was later included in the *Foreign Affairs* article published under the pseudonym, "Mr. X." Further, far from ignoring this basic Soviet attitude, there is every indication that Roosevelt's conduct at Yalta was a direct consequence of guilt feelings over the former United States hostility toward the communist regime. This, in turn, led to his belief that good will and personal diplomacy alone could overcome this suspicion and result in better relations between the two nations.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the most difficult assumption to accept from the revisionists is their insistence that ideology played a very small part as a determinant of Soviet foreign policy. They contend that this consideration must be removed before any proper analysis of Soviet behavior can occur. At the same time, however, they are adamant in their view that it is the system of political economy that sets the terms of the issues to be decided. They admonish the analyst against approaching the international problems that developed following World War II apart from the system in which they were generated. To do so, they argue, would be "to ignore the essence of American foreign policy, which is the intimate and profound relationship between domestic and foreign policy."<sup>30</sup> Certainly, that is sound and realistic advice, but it carries with it the seeds of a serious contradiction in their own methodology. Their consideration of the interrelationship between American domestic and foreign policy and the operation of the American political economy becomes suddenly inoperative as a method of analysis as applied to the Soviet Union. If the political economy of a nation is inseparable from the problems it generates, then it follows logically that the same approach must be used in evaluating

<sup>27</sup> Arnold A. Rogow, *James Forrestal, A Study of Personality, Politics and Policy* (N.Y.: The MacMillan Co., 1963) p. 207. For Lindbergh's involvement, see Mosely, p. 27, and also, Harold Nicolson, *Diaries and Letters 1930-1939* (N.Y.: Atheneum, 1966) pp. 272, 343.

<sup>28</sup> George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (Boston, Toronto: Little, Brown & Co., 1967) pp. 223-227.

<sup>29</sup> Burns, pp. 564-573.

<sup>30</sup> Siracusa, p. 102.



Soviet goals. If one cannot divorce Soviet policy from the system in which it is generated, then communist ideology must be weighed on the same scale as the capitalist economy. "For a system of government that requires centralization of power in order to achieve political unity, the maintenance of that system depends upon a hostile external environment that will justify its concentration of economic power."<sup>31</sup> The Marxist doctrine that preaches capitalist encirclement provides an ideological base for imperialistic motives, and because it has no time-table for its accomplishment, it provides its leaders with a degree of flexibility that effectively disguises its real intentions. What Marxism did for Russia was to give new direction to old traditions based in that nation's historical and cultural past—the traditions of messianism, the Third Rome and Pan-Slavism. To ignore the role ideology played in determining the Soviet course of action is to subscribe to a totally unrealistic and utopian view of Russian purpose.

In regard to the part of the revisionist argument that sees economic determinism as the underlying and overriding factor in American "imperialism" one must point to the anti-militaristic character of the American people. An example is the pressure of public opinion that led to swift demobilization following both World Wars. It is one thing to charge imperialism and quite another to show the capacity of the power to pursue an imperialistic policy. For the United States to have pursued such a policy in opposition to the prevailing public opinion of the time would have been an anachronism. Secondly, if economics had been the sole consideration of the United States, it would seem that the interest of the United States would have been better served had assistance been granted the Soviet Union at the end of World War II. If it is true, as the revisionists claim, that economic control inevitably leads to political control, then the United States goal of maintaining an "open door" policy in Eastern Europe could have been accomplished without a need to force the Soviet Union out of the occupied territory. They would have been in a position to dictate policy by virtue of economic dependency. Moreover, considering the fact that the United States' exports to the nations in question during the pre-World War II era amounted to less than 1% of the total, it is doubtful that this area was of any significant importance to American economic interests.<sup>32</sup>

Of course, there is no doubt that capitalism requires foreign markets and raw material sources, and from time to time, special interest influence on the foreign policy of the United States can be demonstrated. One such set of circumstances can be shown to have existed in Cuba, when Castro began his policy of agrarian reform. American investors saw this as a threat to their private investments, and their influence played no small part in the adoption of sugar quotas that eventually drove Cuba into the arms of Soviet Russia.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>31</sup> George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" *America in the Cold War, Twenty Years of Revolutions and Response 1947-1967* (N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969) p. 39.

<sup>32</sup> Aspaturean, p. 133.

<sup>33</sup> Robert Scheer and Maurice Zeitlin, "The White Paper on Cuba: a Reply" *America in the Cold War, Twenty Years of Revolutions and Response* ed. Walter LaFeber (N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969) pp. 138-151.



straits of Turkey.<sup>36</sup> A firm and quick response to the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962, demonstrating the United States' will to use its power, illustrated best of all the advice given by George F. Kennan in his now famous "Mr. X" essay:

It is a *sine qua non* of successful dealing with Russia that the foreign government in question should remain at all times cool and collected and that its demands on Russian policy should be put forward in such a manner as to leave the way open for a compliance not too detrimental to Russian prestige.<sup>37</sup>

The policy of containment, which developed from that "Mr. X" article, as it was applied to Western Europe, seems to have been the only possible response the United States could have made to what it perceived to be Soviet imperialism. When that same policy began to be extended to the Far East, ignoring the changes that had occurred in Soviet leadership and in the nature of communism itself, it was destined to failure.<sup>38</sup> The Truman Doctrine, in its broad language, committed the United States to the defense of "free peoples" everywhere, and should have been reevaluated in light of the increasing polycentrism of communism and the Sino-Soviet dispute of 1962.

The revisionist historians' view of the Cold War, coming as it did in the 1960's, forced a reappraisal of that policy of containment that was long overdue. Consequently, while some of their argument is more realistic than the orthodox version, particularly in regard to Soviet needs for security and recognition of their basically suspicious nature, it is utopian in its belief that the Cold War could have been prevented had the United States not adopted a "get tough" policy. It did produce a more realistic view of the limits of United States' power, and in so doing made a valuable contribution to the security of this country, whose global over-extension was so detrimental to the United States' domestic policies and national spirit. Further, their recommendations for structural and institutional reordering at home as a remedy to more Cubas and Vietnams seems apropos if we are to prevent the rise of another round of extreme nationalism, which can only push the United States into intervening where its national interests are really not involved.

Finally, in this major conflict between nations, struggling for the control of men's minds, the contest is more likely to be won by that nation best able to project an image that shows confidence in its own system and that system's ability to cope successfully with the problems affecting the human species everywhere. The first step toward realization of that goal is taken when a nation begins to look seriously at its own imperfections and tries to remedy those before foisting its imperfect system on a world that is neither ready, willing nor able to make it work. In the final analysis, this has been the major contribution of the revisionist historians; they have acted as the catalyst.

<sup>36</sup> Spanier, John, pp. 30-31.

<sup>37</sup> George F. Kennan, "Mr. X—Twenty Years Later" *America in the Cold War*, Ed. Walter LaFeber (N.Y.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1969) pp. 223-226.

<sup>38</sup> Kennan, "Mr. X—Twenty Years Later", p. 226.



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<sup>38</sup> Kennan, "Mr. X—Twenty Years Later", p. 226.