

## Book Review

# The United States and the Origins of the Cold War

by John Lewis Gaddis  
Columbia University  
\$3.95 pb.

Over the past five years there have appeared an inordinate number of books on the origins of the Cold War. This is understandable. The frustrations of recent American foreign policies, most notably the war in Vietnam, have caused thoughtful Americans to call into question the context within which these policies have been formed. Unfortunately for the sake of better understanding the past, however, a distressing proportion of the recent volumes are without scholarly merit. This is particularly true of the influential New Left "revisionist" works, which purport to show that a militant, expansionist United States foisted the Cold War upon a Soviet Union whose sole concern was national security. Most of these books, in fact, are little more than propaganda tracts gussied up with academic paraphernalia. John L. Gaddis' *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* is something else. Though the author treats the revisionists far more seriously than the facts warrant, his is probably the best single volume on the subject now available.

Gaddis is sharply critical of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's wartime diplomacy, which he holds responsible for misleading the American people as to Soviet intentions. Roosevelt knew that Stalin meant to dominate Eastern Europe when the fighting ended, according to Gaddis, and thought there was very little the United States could do about it. He tried, through personal diplomacy and material generosity (Lend Lease, for instance), to

minimize the Russian dictator's suspicions of the West, in hopes of rendering this domination less onerous for the peoples involved. In his zeal to win the war as quickly and efficiently as possible, however, FDR failed to prepare the public for such an eventuality and encouraged the notion that Stalin sought *nothing* that would conflict with American war aims. Thus when Soviet intentions became clear at the war's end, both Congress and the American people reacted strongly to what they regarded as Russian duplicity.

Harry S. Truman, in *Origins*, had to deal with Roosevelt's chickens when they came home to roost. Gaddis argues convincingly that Truman at first tried to continue the Rooseveltian policy of accommodation with the Russians. But a combination of Stalin's heavy-handedness, Truman's own natural pugnacity, the increasing hostility of some of his key advisers, and congressional rumblings pushed him into ever more belligerent positions. This in turn caused Stalin — who understood Roosevelt to have implicitly sanctioned Soviet goals — to believe that the United States now sought to deprive Russia of the fruits of victory. The result was a kind of symmetrical elevation of hostilities: both sides interpreted specific acts by the other as threatening, and every retaliation heightened the tension that much more.

Gaddis' conclusion is that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union desired the Cold War, but both contributed to it out of fear, mutual suspicions, and misunderstanding, as well as genuinely conflicting goals. The basic error on the part of the United States, in his view, is that Americans incorrectly interpreted Russian

actions in Eastern Europe as but the prelude to world conquest. Stalin, on the other hand, saw in United States' policies toward Eastern Europe and defeated Germany some devious plot, the purpose of which was to undermine Soviet security. All coalitions tend to come apart when the common danger is ended, and the war-born partnership between two such different societies was no exception.

Gaddis' book is stimulating and provocative throughout, however one may disagree with him. His emphasis upon the importance of Congress is particularly significant, for many scholars have written as though the Truman Administration operated in a vacuum. This reviewer parts company with the author on a number of issues: I think he underestimates the degree to which Roosevelt had moved to a "tougher" position by the time of his death, for instance, and his account of how American policymakers tried to coerce Russia economically seems to me unconvincing. There are some factual lapses as well. Unaccountably Gaddis repeats the myth concocted by revisionists that Secretary of State James F. Byrnes advised Truman in April 1945 that possession of the atomic bomb would enable the United States "to dictate its own terms at the end of the war" (p. 251), as though Byrnes were referring to Russia. The source for this remark, Truman's *Memoirs*, permits no doubt that in context Byrnes was referring not to Russia, but to Japan. The difference is crucial. Despite such slips, this book is very much worth reading.

Robert James Maddox

## Book Review

# The Politics of War

the World and U.S. Foreign  
Policy: 1943-1945

by Gabriel Kolko  
Vintage, \$3.45

In our present age of recurrent East-West tensions, it is pertinent to re-examine the origins of our frightful cold war. In *The Politics of War*, Gabriel Kolko joins a host of New Left historians in flagellating the United States for single-handedly initiating the cold war.

During and after World War II, Kolko asserts, the United States pursued ego-centric economic policies designed to promote "American global interests" through a "world capitalist state" under American supervision. The author further argues that the United States provoked and browbeat Russia, not because the Soviets were totalitarian, but because it posed a threat to America's capitalist hegemony — especially in Eastern Europe. Through Kolko's economic blind-

ers, then, American policy was uniformly selfish and irrationally anti-Soviet.

For example, at Yalta, American objectives were "primarily economic in content," to further United States imperialism by promoting favorable American trade patterns. At Potsdam, Russian support was sought not only to conquer Japan, which many believed would require "perhaps a million or more men," but to render America "very tangible military aid" to protect "American interests in Manchuria." The author concludes that America wished to solidify its economic supremacy in China via an Open Door policy and a free port at Dairen.

According to Kolko, another theme pervading Potsdam was the insatiable American desire to introduce atomic weapons. Truman is portrayed as licking his chops "to drop the first bomb as soon as it was ready." Furthermore, "The Americans decided to use the bomb as a known and now predictable factor of

war, an economical means of destroying vast numbers of men, women, and children, soldiers, and civilians. Well before August, 1945, they had reduced this to a routine." (For an antidote to these staggering Machiavellian speculations, see Herbert Feis, *The Atomic Bomb and the End of World War II*.)

Kolko contrasts the belligerent and mercenary American policy with that of the benign and "anti-revolutionary" Soviet Union. Moderate Russia disregarded Poland and Yugoslavia and "had no intention of Bolshevizing Eastern Europe in 1945 if — but only if — they could find alternatives."

But as traditional historians see it, Russia was heavily involved in East European affairs. As early as 1941, Stalin insisted that the disputed land east of the Curzon line be granted to the Soviet Union after the war. Molotov further suggested that Soviet boundaries should extend into East Prussia. At the Teheran Conference in 1943, Russia reiterated this demand for East Prussian territory. By early 1945, Stalin recognized the Lublin government, a Soviet based regime, as the legitimate government of Poland. Furthermore, he demanded that the

## The Bootblack Stand



Dr. George Washington Plunkitt, our prize-winning political analyst, is celebrating the publication of his new book, which is now available at *avant-garde* bookstores throughout New Jersey. Dr. Plunkitt's book is about the importance of altruism in politics and it is titled *What's in It for Me?* Although Dr. Plunkitt expects to earn ten million dollars from sales of his new book, he has agreed to continue to advise public figures through this column. Address all correspondence to The Bootblack Stand, c/o The Establishment, R.R. 11, Box 360, Bloomington, Indiana 47401, Continental U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Plunkitt:

Lately we have been hearing a lot of apple pie and mommery from the POW's even while millions of oppressed Indians are starving under the guns of U.S. mar-

shalls at Wounded Knee and while no one raises a squeak about the tons of litter left by our government on the virginally beautiful face of the moon. Well, there is a stench about it all, a moral stench!!!

Not one of these POW's has yet paused to thank people like Jerry Rubin, David Dellinger, Abbie Hoffman, Arthur Bremer, or me for ending that goddamn war. We sacrificed for years to end that war, many of us imperiling our careers and mental well-being. Yet not a word of gratitude has come from these ingrates.

Not only are these guys war criminals, as Phil Berrigan has so eloquently said, but they are also very poorly bred. What kind of family would raise a person so lacking in amenities, social graces, and gracious living? Crud!

Power to the People  
Jane Fonda, A.B.

Dear Citizen Fonda:

I think you have fallen hard for another of Dick's tricks. How can we be sure the war is over? I mean really, really over. And if it is over, what is Nixon up to anyway?

— GWP

Dear Mr. Plunkitt:

As the whole world must know by now, at the height of the Vietnam war, I decided to oppose it by abstaining from all solid food until I brought that heinous

war to an end and a conclusion. So now history will fain record that I am the first man ever to end a war by becoming emotionally involved with juices and lingonberry yogurt. I have lost so many pounds and even ounces that if I stand sideways and stick out my tongue, I am often mistaken for a zipper and occasionally for a skinny clown.

But now that I have ended the Vietnam war I have decided to get involved in still another battle for human justice. I am getting active in the gay lib movement. Last week a young gay couple, Ralph and Sid Bflum, were refused help at a local family planning organization. Now isn't it about time we take pregnancy for the serious disease that it is? Isn't it about time we help troubled young couples like Ralph and Sid to lead normal married lives free of the dread of unwanted children. What can I do to help?

Peace and Freedom  
Brother Dick Gregory

Dear Mr. Gregory:

It seems to me that what the protest movement really needs is some cross-fertilization. I suggest that you marry Gloria Steinem and become pregnant. Your child is bound to be a jackass, and then you will have marshalled to your cause the women's fever, the buffoons, and a radicalized 4-H.

— GWP

Polish boundary be extended westward at German expense. To guarantee Soviet hegemony, American and British observers were not allowed entry into Poland.

Possibly Stalin's most deceitful and homicidal act, one which Kolko explains away, was the massacre of over 10,000 Polish officer-prisoners in the Katyn Forest during the early stages of the war. This was decimation on such a grand scale that, according to one survivor, some Russian soldiers committed suicide rather than obey orders to execute the Poles and pile them into mass graves. When these graves were discovered in 1943, the Polish government-in-exile requested an investigation. Russia promptly denied culpability, severed diplomatic relations with this London based administration, and organized a puppet government in Russia to assume postwar leadership in Poland.

After the war, Kolko insists that the anti-Nazi forces in France and Italy should have eventually formed communist states — had not the United States coerced them into following a different course. That these leftist elements constituted only a tiny minority of France's and Italy's population is irrelevant to an author determined to glorify and expand the radical tradition.

Kolko's devil theory of history (with America as the devil) is clearly an inadequate model to describe cold war origins. Yet this Manichaeian view, replete with conspiracies and deceptive documents, is accepted by most revisionists with only minor variations. For example, New Left guru Denna Frank

Fleming traces cold war origins back to the American failure to join the League of Nations. Revisionists David Horowitz and Gar Alperovitz detect hatred and fear of Russia in America's decision to drop the atomic bomb (see Michael Amrine's indicting review of Alperovitz's *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam* in *The New York Herald Tribune*, July 18, 1965). Fortunately, few revisionists display the imagination of David Leslie Hoggan, who unmasks British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain as a warmonger bullying the pacifist Adolf Hitler.

Bud Folsom

ROSENBLATT

(continued from page 4)

We focus primarily on Mrs. Loud because, like Harriet, she runs her show. She answers everybody's questions, and solves all problems. She arranges airplane tickets, reminds the children of their school calendar, reinforces various routines, even fetches a spoon for her youngest, Michele. She insists on the role of stabilizer and organizer — "I've got enough mutinous troops around here" — and the others concede her that role eagerly. In fact, they make her assumption of it necessary, a fine courtesy, by affecting chaos and disorder at every opportunity. Even when the Louds simply walk together, they lope distractedly, like water birds in an open zoo.

The principal difference between the two women is that Harriet used to urge on the maturity of her boys, to the point of the show's survival through David's and Ricky's marriages. Of course, Harriet had the advantage over Pat of being confined by her director to the business of making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for seven or eight years, and her benign toleration of everybody else's changes was born partly of circumstance. Mrs. Loud, quite openly, does not wish her family to change. When Kevin returns from overseas, he shows signs of independence which Pat resents, and tries to tease him out of. She much prefers her neurotic Lance, who is down and out in Europe and writes home for money. On the phone, Pat tells Bill to wire another fifty, and when Bill protests, "he's got to do it for himself," she treats his comment as an aphorism.

This difference aside, however, Pat and Harriet could play each other. More than any superficial similarity, they share the fundamental condition of being simultaneously the firm foundations of their families and the romantic idols in which great dreams have been invested. Each is her Juno, of O'Casey's play, married to a dreamer and bungler whose wildest dream (and biggest bungle?) was she herself. Now the object of the dream must become the solidifying agent because the dreamer goes on dreaming. The stability of the family depends entirely on her who initially had been the end of romance, and now encourages romance in others (the tap dancers, the