Chapter 16: A People's War?

"We, the governments of Great Britain and the United States, in the name of India, Burma, Malaya, Australia, British East Africa, British Guiana, Hong Kong, Siam, Singapore, Egypt, Palestine, Canada, New Zealand, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales, as well as Puerto Rico, Guam, the Philippines, Hawaii, Alaska, and the Virgin Islands, hereby declare most emphatically, that this is not an imperialist war." Thus went a skit put on in the United States in the year 1939 by the Communist party.

Two years later, Germany invaded Soviet Russia, and the American Communist party, which had repeatedly described the war between the Axis Powers and the Allied Powers as an imperialist war, now called it a "people's war" against Fascism. Indeed almost all Americans were now in agreement—capitalists, Communists, Democrats, Republicans, poor, rich, and middle class—that this was indeed a people's war.

Was it?

By certain evidence, it was the most popular war the United States had ever fought. Never had a greater proportion of the country participated in a war: 18 million served in the armed forces, 10 million overseas; 25 million workers gave of their pay envelope regularly for war bonds. But could this be considered a manufactured support, since all the power of the nation—not only of the government, but the press, the church, and even the chief radical organizations—was behind the calls for all-out war? Was there an undercurrent of reluctance; were there unpublicized signs of resistance?

It was a war against an enemy of unspeakable evil. Hitler's Germany was extending totalitarianism, racism, militarism, and overt aggressive warfare beyond what an already cynical world had experienced. And yet, did the governments conducting this war—England, the United States, the Soviet Union—represent something significantly different, so that their victory would be a blow to imperialism, racism, totalitarianism, militarism, in the world?

Would the behavior of the United States during the war—in military action abroad, in treatment of minorities at home—be in keeping with a "people's war"? Would the country's wartime policies respect the rights of ordinary people everywhere to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness? And would postwar America, in its policies at home and overseas, exemplify the values for which the war was supposed to have been fought?

These questions deserve thought. At the time of World War II, the atmosphere was too dense with war fervor to permit them to be aired.

For the United States to step forward as a defender of helpless countries matched its image in American high school history textbooks, but not its record in world affairs. It had opposed the Haitian revolution for independence from France at the start of the nineteenth century. It had instigated a war with Mexico and taken half of that country. It had pretended to help Cuba win freedom from Spain, and then planted itself in Cuba with a military base, investments, and rights of intervention. It had seized Hawaii, Puerto Rico, Guam, and fought a brutal war to subjugate
the Filipinos. It had "opened" Japan to its trade with gunboats and threats. It had declared an Open Door Policy in China as a means of assuring that the United States would have opportunities equal to other imperial powers in exploiting China. It had sent troops to Peking with other nations, to assert Western supremacy in China, and kept them there for over thirty years.

While demanding an Open Door in China, it had insisted (with the Monroe Doctrine and many military interventions) on a Closed Door in Latin America—that is, closed to everyone but the United States. It had engineered a revolution against Colombia and created the "independent" state of Panama in order to build and control the Canal. It sent five thousand marines to Nicaragua in 1926 to counter a revolution, and kept a force there for seven years. It intervened in the Dominican Republic for the fourth time in 1916 and kept troops there for eight years. It intervened for the second time in Haiti in 1915 and kept troops there for nineteen years. Between 1900 and 1933, the United States intervened in Cuba four times, in Nicaragua twice, in Panama six times, in Guatemala once, in Honduras seven times. By 1924 the finances of half of the twenty Latin American states were being directed to some extent by the United States. By 1935, over half of U.S. steel and cotton exports were being sold in Latin America.

Just before World War I ended, in 1918, an American force of seven thousand landed at Vladivostok as part of an Allied intervention in Russia, and remained until early 1920. Five thousand more troops were landed at Archangel, another Russian port, also as part of an Allied expeditionary force, and stayed for almost a year. The State Department told Congress: "All these operations were to offset effects of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia."

In short, if the entrance of the United States into World War II was (as so many Americans believed at the time, observing the Nazi invasions) to defend the principle of nonintervention in the affairs of other countries, the nation's record cast doubt on its ability to uphold that principle.

What seemed clear at the time was that the United States was a democracy with certain liberties, while Germany was a dictatorship persecuting its Jewish minority, imprisoning dissidents, whatever their religion, while proclaiming the supremacy of the Nordic "race." However, blacks, looking at anti-Semitism in Germany, might not see their own situation in the U.S. as much different. And the United States had done little about Hitler's policies of persecution. Indeed, it had joined England and France in appeasing Hitler throughout the thirties. Roosevelt and his Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, were hesitant to criticize publicly Hitler's anti-Semitic policies; when a resolution was introduced in the Senate in January 1934 asking the Senate and the President to express "surprise and pain" at what the Germans were doing to the Jews, and to ask restoration of Jewish rights, the State Department "caused this resolution to be buried in committee," according to Arnold Offner (American Appeasement).

When Mussolini's Italy invaded Ethiopia in 1935, the U.S. declared an embargo on munitions but let American businesses send oil to Italy in huge quantities, which was essential to Italy's carrying on the war. When a Fascist rebellion took place in Spain in 1936 against the elected socialist-liberal government, the Roosevelt administration sponsored a neutrality act that had the effect of shutting off help to the Spanish government while Hitler and Mussolini gave critical aid to Franco. Offner says:
... the United States went beyond even the legal requirements of its neutrality legislation. Had aid been forthcoming from the United States and from England and France, considering that Hitler's position on aid to France was not firm at least until November 1936, the Spanish Republicans could well have triumphed. Instead, Germany gained every advantage from the Spanish civil war.

Was this simply poor judgment, an unfortunate error? Or was it the logical policy of a government whose main interest was not stopping Fascism but advancing the imperial interests of the United States? For those interests, in the thirties, an anti-Soviet policy seemed best. Later, when Japan and Germany threatened U.S. world interests, a pro-Soviet, anti-Nazi policy became preferable. Roosevelt was as much concerned to end the oppression of Jews as Lincoln was to end slavery during the Civil War; their priority in policy (whatever their personal compassion for victims of persecution) was not minority rights, but national power.

It was not Hitler's attacks on the Jews that brought the United States into World War II, any more than the enslavement of 4 million blacks brought Civil War in 1861. Italy's attack on Ethiopia, Hitler's invasion of Austria, his takeover of Czechoslovakia, his attack on Poland--none of those events caused the United States to enter the war, although Roosevelt did begin to give important aid to England. What brought the United States fully into the war was the Japanese attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, on December 7, 1941. Surely it was not the humane concern for Japan's bombing of civilians that led to Roosevelt's outraged call for war--Japan's attack on China in 1937, her bombing of civilians at Nan king, had not provoked the United States to war. It was the Japanese attack on a link in the American Pacific Empire that did it.

So long as Japan remained a well-behaved member of that imperial club of Great Powers who-in keeping with the Open Door Policy--were sharing the exploitation of China, the United States did not object. It had exchanged notes with Japan in 1917 saying "the Government of the United States recognizes that Japan has special interests in China." In 1928, according to Akira Iriye (After Imperialism,), American consuls in China supported the coming of Japanese troops. It was when Japan threatened potential U.S. markets by its attempted takeover of China, but especially as it moved toward the tin, rubber, and oil of Southeast Asia, that the United States became alarmed and took those measures which led to the Japanese attack: a total embargo on scrap iron, a total embargo on oil in the summer of 1941.

As Bruce Russet says (No Clear and Present Danger): "Throughout the 1930s the United States government had done little to resist the Japanese advance on the Asian continent," But: "The Southwest Pacific area was of undeniable economic importance to the United States—at the time most of America's tin and rubber came from there, as did substantial quantities of other raw materials."

Pearl Harbor was presented to the American public as a sudden, shocking, immoral act. Immoral it was, like any bombing—but not really sudden or shocking to the American government. Russett says: "Japan's strike against the American naval base climaxxed a long series of mutually antagonistic acts. In initiating economic sanctions against Japan the United States undertook actions that were widely recognized in Washington as carrying grave risks of war."
Putting aside the wild accusations against Roosevelt (that he knew about Pearl Harbor and didn't tell, or that he deliberately provoked the Pearl Harbor raid—these are without evidence), it does seem clear that he did as James Polk had done before him in the Mexican war and Lyndon Johnson after him in the Vietnam war—he lied to the public for what he thought was a right cause. In September and October 1941, he misstated the facts in two incidents involving German submarines and American destroyers. A historian sympathetic to Roosevelt, Thomas A. Bailey, has written:

Franklin Roosevelt repeatedly deceived the American people during the period before Pearl Harbor. ... He was like the physician who must tell the patient lies for the patient's own good ... because the masses are notoriously shortsighted and generally cannot see danger until it is at their throats. ... 

One of the judges in the Tokyo War Crimes Trial after World War II, Radhabinod Pal, dissented from the general verdicts against Japanese officials and argued that the United States had clearly provoked the war with Japan and expected Japan to act. Richard Minear (Victors' Justice) sums up Pal's view of the embargoes on scrap iron and oil, that "these measures were a clear and potent threat to Japan's very existence." The records show that a White House conference two weeks before Pearl Harbor anticipated a war and discussed how it should be justified.

A State Department memorandum on Japanese expansion, a year before Pearl Harbor, did not talk of the independence of China or the principle of self-determination. It said:

... our general diplomatic and strategic position would be considerably weakened-by our loss of Chinese, Indian and South Seas markets (and by our loss of much of the Japanese market for our goods, as Japan would become more and more self-sufficient) as well as by insurmountable restrictions upon our access to the rubber, tin, jute, and other vital materials of the Asian and Oceanic regions.

Once joined with England and Russia in the war (Germany and Italy declared war on the United States right after Pearl Harbor), did the behavior of the United States show that her war aims were humanitarian, or centered on power and profit? Was she fighting the war to end the control by some nations over others or to make sure the controlling nations were friends of the United States? In August 1941, Roosevelt and Churchill met off the coast of Newfoundland and released to the world the Atlantic Charter, setting forth noble goals for the postwar world, saying their countries "seek no aggrandizement, territorial or other," and that they respected "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live." The Charter was celebrated as declaring the right of nations to self-determination.

Two weeks before the Atlantic Charter, however, the U.S. Acting Secretary of State, Sumner Welles, had assured the French government that they could keep their empire intact after the end of the war: "This Government, mindful of its traditional friendship for France, has deeply sympathized with the desire of the French people to maintain their territories and to preserve them intact." The Department of Defense history of Vietnam (The Pentagon Papers) itself pointed to what it called an "ambivalent" policy toward Indochina, noting that "in the Atlantic Charter and other pronouncements, the U.S. proclaimed support for national self-determination..."
and independence" but also "early in the war repeatedly expressed or implied to the French an intention to restore to France its overseas empire after the war."

In late 1942, Roosevelt's personal representative assured French General Henri Giraud: "It is thoroughly understood that French sovereignty will be re-established as soon as possible throughout all the territory, metropolitan or colonial, over which flew the French flag in 1939." (These pages, like the others in the Pentagon Papers, are marked "TOP SECRET-Sensitive.") By 1945 the "ambivalent" attitude was gone. In May, Truman assured the French he did not question her "sovereignty over Indochina." That fall, the United States urged Nationalist China, put temporarily in charge of the northern part of Indochina by the Potsdam Conference, to turn it over to the French, despite the obvious desire of the Vietnamese for independence.

That was a favor for the French government. But what about the United States' own imperial ambitions during the war? What about the "aggrandizement, territorial or other" that Roosevelt had renounced in the Atlantic Charter?

In the headlines were the battles and troop movements: the invasion of North Africa in 1942, Italy in 1943, the massive, dramatic cross-Channel invasion of German-occupied France in 1944, the bitter battles as Germany was pushed back toward and over her frontiers, the increasing bombardment by the British and American air forces. And, at the same time, the Russian victories over the Nazi armies (the Russians, by the time of the cross-Channel invasion, had driven the Germans out of Russia, and were engaging 80 percent of the German troops). In the Pacific, in 1943 and 1944, there was the island-by-island move of American forces toward Japan, finding closer and closer bases for the thunderous bombardment of Japanese cities.

Quietly, behind the headlines in battles and bombings, American diplomats and businessmen worked hard to make sure that when the war ended, American economic power would be second to none in the world. United States business would penetrate areas that up to this time had been dominated by England. The Open Door Policy of equal access would be extended from Asia to Europe, meaning that the United States intended to push England aside and move in.

That is what happened to the Middle East and its oil. In August 1945 a State Department officer said that "a review of the diplomatic history of the past 35 years will show that petroleum has historically played a larger part in the external relations of the United States than any other commodity." Saudi Arabia was the largest oil pool in the Middle East. The ARAMCO oil corporation, through Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, got Roosevelt to agree to Lend Lease aid to Saudi Arabia, which would involve the U.S. government there and create a shield for the interests of ARAMCO. In 1944 Britain and the U.S. signed a pact on oil agreeing on "the principle of equal opportunity," and Lloyd Gardner concludes (Economic Aspects of New Deal Diplomacy) that "the Open Door Policy was triumphant throughout the Middle East."

Historian Gabriel Kolko, after a close study of American wartime policy (The Politics of War), concludes that "the American economic war aim was to save capitalism at home and abroad." In April 1944 a State Department official said: "As you know, we've got to plan on enormously increased production in this country after the war, and the American domestic market can't
absorb all that production indefinitely. There won't be any question about our needing greatly increased foreign markets."

Anthony Sampson, in his study of the international oil business (*The Seven Sisters*), says:

By the end of the war the dominant influence in Saudi Arabia was unquestionably the United States. King Ibn Sand was regarded no longer as a wild desert warrior, but as a key piece in the power-game, to be wooed by the West. Roosevelt, on his way back from Yalta in February 1945, entertained the King on the cruiser Quincy, together with his entourage of fifty, including two sons, a prime minister, an astrologer and flocks of sheep for slaughter.

Roosevelt then wrote to Ibn Sand, promising the United States would not change its Palestine policy without consulting the Arabs. In later years, the concern for oil would constantly compete with political concern for the Jewish state in the Middle East, but at this point, oil seemed more important.

With British imperial power collapsing during World War II, the United States was ready to move in. Hull said early in the war:

Leadership toward a new system of international relationships in trade and other economic affairs will devolve very largely upon the United States because of our great economic strength. We should assume this leadership, and the responsibility that goes with it, primarily for reasons of pure national self-interest.

Before the war was over, the administration was planning the outlines of the new international economic order, based on partnership between government and big business. Lloyd Gardner says of Roosevelt's chief adviser, Harry Hopkins, who had organized the relief programs of the New Deal: "No conservative outdid Hopkins in championing foreign investment, and its protection."

The poet Archibald MacLeish, then an Assistant Secretary of State, spoke critically of what he saw in the postwar world: "As things are now going, the peace we will make, the peace we seem to be making, will be a peace of oil, a peace of gold, a peace of shipping, a peace, in brief . . . without moral purpose or human interest . . ."

During the war, England and the United States set up the International Monetary Fund to regulate international exchanges of currency; voting would be proportional to capital contributed, so American dominance would be assured. The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development was set up, supposedly to help reconstruct war-destroyed areas, but one of its first objectives was, in its own words, "to promote foreign investment."

The economic aid countries would need after the war was already seen in political terms: Averell Harriman, ambassador to Russia, said in early 1944: "Economic assistance is one of the most effective weapons at our disposal to influence European political events in the direction we desire... ."
The creation of the United Nations during the war was presented to the world as international cooperation to prevent future wars. But the U.N. was dominated by the Western imperial countries- the United States, England, and France-and a new imperial power, with military bases and powerful influence in Eastern Europe-the Soviet Union. An important conservative Republican Senator, Arthur Vandenburg, wrote in his diary about the United Nations Charter:

The striking thing about it is that it is so conservative from a nationalist standpoint. It is based virtually on a four-power alliance. . . . This is anything but a wild-eyed internationalist dream of a world State.... I am deeply impressed (and surprised) to find Hull so carefully guarding our American veto in his scheme of things.

The plight of Jews in German-occupied Europe, which many people thought was at the heart of the war against the Axis, was not a chief concern of Roosevelt. Henry Feingold's research (The Politics of Rescue) shows that, while the Jews were being put in camps and the process of annihilation was beginning that would end in the horrifying extermination of 6 million Jews and millions of non- Jews, Roosevelt failed to take steps that might have saved thousands of lives. He did not see it as a high priority; he left it to the State Department, and in the State Department anti-Semitism and a cold bureaucracy became obstacles to action.

Was the war being fought to establish that Hitler was wrong in his ideas of white Nordic supremacy over "inferior" races? The United States' armed forces were segregated by race. When troops were jammed onto the Queen Mary in early 1945 to go to combat duty in the European theater, the blacks were stowed down in the depths of the ship near the engine room, as far as possible from the fresh air of the deck, in a bizarre reminder of the slave voyages of old.

The Red Cross, with government approval, separated the blood donations of black and white. It was, ironically, a black physician named Charles Drew who developed the blood bank system. He was put in charge of the wartime donations, and then fired when he tried to end blood segregation. Despite the urgent need for wartime labor, blacks were still being discriminated against for jobs. A spokesman for a West Coast aviation plant said: "The Negro will be considered only as janitors and in other similar capacities. . . . Regardless of their training as aircraft workers, we will not employ them." Roosevelt never did anything to enforce the orders of the Eair Employment Practices Commission he had set up.

The Fascist nations were notorious in their insistence that the woman's place was in the home. Yet, the war against Fascism, although it utilized women in defense industries where they were desperately needed, took no special steps to change the subordinate role of women. The War Manpower Commission, despite the large numbers of women in war work, kept women off its policymaking bodies. A report of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, by its director, Mary Anderson, said the War Manpower Commission had "doubts and uneasiness" about "what was then regarded as a developing attitude of militancy or a crusading spirit on the part of women leaders... ."

In one of its policies, the United States came close to direct duplication of Fascism. This was in its treatment of the Japanese-Americans living on the West Coast. After the Pearl Harbor attack, anti- Japanese hysteria spread in the government. One Congressman said: "I'm for catching every
Japanese in America, Alaska and Hawaii now and putting them in concentration camps. ... Damn them! Let's get rid of them!"

Franklin D. Roosevelt did not share this frenzy, but he calmly signed Executive Order 9066, in February 1942, giving the army the power, without warrants or indictments or hearings, to arrest every Japanese-American on the West Coast-110,000 men, women, and children-to take them from their homes, transport them to camps far into the interior, and keep them there under prison conditions. Three-fourths of these were Nisei-children born in the United States of Japanese parents and therefore American citizens. The other fourth-the Issei, born in Japan-were barred by law from becoming citizens. In 1944 the Supreme Court upheld the forced evacuation on the grounds of military necessity. The Japanese remained in those camps for over three years.

Michi Weglyn was a young girl when her family experienced evacuation and detention. She tells (Years of Infamy) of bungling in the evacuation, of misery, confusion, anger, but also of Japanese-American dignity and fighting back. There were strikes, petitions, mass meetings, refusal to sign loyalty oaths, riots against the camp authorities. The Japanese resisted to the end.

Not until after the war did the story of the Japanese-Americans begin to be known to the general public. The month the war ended in Asia, September 1945, an article appeared in Harper's Magazine by Yale Law Professor Eugene V. Rostow, calling the Japanese evacuation "our worst wartime mistake." Was it a "mistake"—or was it an action to be expected from a nation with a long history of racism and which was fighting a war, not to end racism, but to retain the fundamental elements of the American system?

It was a war waged by a government whose chief beneficiary—despite volumes of reforms—was a wealthy elite. The alliance between big business and the government went back to the very first proposals of Alexander Hamilton to Congress after the Revolutionary War. By World War II that partnership had developed and intensified. During the Depression, Roosevelt had once denounced the "economic royalists," but he always had the support of certain important business leaders. During the war, as Bruce Catton saw it from his post in the War Production Board: "The economic royalists, denounced and derided ... had a part to play now. ..."

Catton (The War Lords of Washington) described the process of industrial mobilization to carry on the war, and how in this process wealth became more and more concentrated in fewer and fewer large corporations. In 1940 the United States had begun sending large amounts of war supplies to England and France. By 1941 three-fourths of the value of military contracts were handled by fifty-six large corporations. A Senate report, "Economic Concentration and World War II," noted that the government contracted for scientific research in industry during the war, and although two thousand corporations were involved, of $1 billion spent, $400 million went to ten large corporations.

Management remained firmly in charge of decision making during the war, and although 12 million workers were organized in the CIO and AFL, labor was in a subordinate position. Labor-management committees were set up in five thousand factories, as a gesture toward industrial democracy, but they acted mostly as disciplinary groups for absentee workers, and devices for
increasing production. Catton writes: "The big operators who made the working decisions had decided that nothing very substantial was going to be changed."

Despite the overwhelming atmosphere of patriotism and total dedication to winning the war, despite the no-strike pledges of the AFL and CIO, many of the nation's workers, frustrated by the freezing of wages while business profits rocketed skyward, went on strike. During the war, there were fourteen thousand strikes, involving 6,770,000 workers, more than in any comparable period in American history. In 1944 alone, a million workers were on strike, in the mines, in the steel mills, in the auto and transportation equipment industries.

When the war ended, the strikes continued in record numbers—3 million on strike in the first half of 1946. According to Jeremy Brecher (Strike!), if not for the disciplinary hand of the unions there might have been "a general confrontation between the workers of a great many industries, and the government, supporting the employers."

In Lowell, Massachusetts, for example, according to an unpublished manuscript by Marc Miller ("The Irony of Victory: Lowell During World War II"), there were as many strikes in 1943 and 1944 as in 1937. It may have been a "people's war," but here was dissatisfaction at the fact that the textile mill profits grew 600 percent from 1940 to 1946, while wage increases in cotton goods industries went up 36 percent. How little the war changed the difficult condition of women workers is shown by the fact that in Lowell, among women war workers with children, only 5 percent could have their children taken care of by nursery schools; the others had to make their own arrangements.

Beneath the noise of enthusiastic patriotism, there were many people who thought war was wrong, even in the circumstances of Fascist aggression. Out of 10 million drafted for the armed forces during World War II, only 43,000 refused to fight. But this was three times the proportion of C.O.'s (conscientious objectors) in World War I. Of these 43,000, about 6,000 went to prison, which was, proportionately, four times the number of C.O.'s who went to prison during World War I. Of every six men in federal prison, one was there as a C.O.

Many more than 43,000 refusers did not show up for the draft at all. The government lists about 350,000 cases of draft evasion, including technical violations as well as actual desertion, so it is hard to tell the true number, but it may be that the number of men who either did not show up or claimed C.O. status was in the hundreds of thousands—not a small number. And this in the face of an American community almost unanimously for the war.

Among those soldiers who were not conscientious objectors, who seemed willing fighters, it is hard to know how much resentment there was against authority, against having to fight in a war whose aims were unclear, inside a military machine whose lack of democracy was very clear. No one recorded the bitterness of enlisted men against the special privileges of officers in the army of a country known as a democracy. To give just one instance: combat crews in the air force in the European theater, going to the base movies between bombing missions, found two lines—an officers' line (short), and an enlisted men's line (very long). There were two mess halls, even as they prepared to go into combat: the enlisted men's food was different—worse—than the officers'.
The literature that followed World War II, James Jones's *From Here to Eternity*, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22*, and Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* captured this GI anger against the army "brass." In *The Naked and the Dead*, the soldiers talk in battle, and one of them says: "The only thing wrong with this Army is it never lost a war."

Toglio was shocked. "You think we ought to lose this one?"

Red found himself carried away. "What have I against the goddam Japs? You think I care if they keep this fuggin jungle? What's it to me if Cummings gets another star?"

"General Cummings, he's a good man," Martinez said.

"There ain't a good officer in the world," Red stated.

There seemed to be widespread indifference, even hostility, on the part of the Negro community to the war despite the attempts of Negro newspapers and Negro leaders to mobilize black sentiment. Lawrence Wittner (*Rebels Against War*) quotes a black journalist: "The Negro . . . is angry, resentful, and utterly apathetic about the war. 'Fight for what?' he is asking. 'This war doesn't mean a thing to me. If we win I lose, so what?'" A black army officer, home on furlough, told friends in Harlem he had been in hundreds of bull sessions with Negro soldiers and found no interest in the war.

A student at a Negro college told his teacher: "The Army jim-crows us. The Navy lets us serve only as messmen. The Red Cross refuses our blood. Employers and labor unions shut us out. Lynchings continue. We are disenfranchised, jim-crowed, spat upon. What more could Hitler do than that?" NAACP leader Walter White repeated this to a black audience of several thousand people in the Midwest, thinking they would disapprove, but instead, as he recalled: "To my surprise and dismay the audience burst into such applause that it took me some thirty or forty seconds to quiet it."

In January 1943, there appeared in a Negro newspaper this "Draftee's Prayer":

Dear Lord, today

I go to war:

To fight, to die,

Tell me what for?

Dear Lord, I'll fight,

I do not fear,

Germans or Japs;
My fears are here.

America!

But there was no organized Negro opposition to the war. In fact, there was little organized opposition from any source. The Communist party was enthusiastically in support. The Socialist party was divided, unable to make a clear statement one way or the other.

A few small anarchist and pacifist groups refused to back the war. The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom said: "... war between nations or classes or races cannot permanently settle conflicts or heal the wounds that brought them into being." The Catholic Worker wrote: "We are still pacifists... ."

The difficulty of merely calling for "peace" in a world of capitalism, Fascism, Communism-dynamic ideologies, aggressive actions-troubled some pacifists. They began to speak of "revolutionary nonviolence." A. J. Muste of the Fellowship of Reconciliation said in later years: "I was not impressed with the sentimental, easygoing pacifism of the earlier part of the century. People then felt that if they sat and talked pleasantly of peace and love, they would solve the problems of the world." The world was in the midst of a revolution, Muste realized, and those against violence must take revolutionary action, but without violence. A movement of revolutionary pacifism would have to "make effective contacts with oppressed and minority groups such as Negroes, share-croppers, industrial workers."

Only one organized socialist group opposed the war unequivocally. This was the Socialist Workers Party. The Espionage Act of 1917, still on the books, applied to wartime statements. But in 1940, with the United States not yet at war, Congress passed the Smith Act. This took Espionage Act prohibitions against talk or writing that would lead to refusal of duty in the armed forces and applied them to peacetime. The Smith Act also made it a crime to advocate the overthrow of the government by force and violence, or to join any group that advocated this, or to publish anything with such ideas. In Minneapolis in 1943, eighteen members of the Socialist Workers party were convicted for belonging to a party whose ideas, expressed in its Declaration of Principles, and in the Communist Manifesto, were said to violate the Smith Act. They were sentenced to prison terms, and the Supreme Court refused to review their case.

A few voices continued to insist that the real war was inside each nation: Dwight Macdonald's wartime magazine Politics presented, in early 1945, an article by the French worker-philosopher Simone Weil:

Whether the mask is labeled Fascism, Democracy, or Dictatorship of the Proletariat, our great adversary remains the Apparatus—the bureaucracy, the police, the military. Not the one facing us across the frontier or the battle lines, which is not so much our enemy as our brothers’ enemy, but the one that calls itself our protector and makes us its slaves. No matter what the circumstances, the worst betrayal will always be to subordinate ourselves to this Apparatus, and to trample underfoot, in Its service, all human values in ourselves and in others.
Still, the vast bulk of the American population was mobilized, in the army, and in civilian life, to fight the war, and the atmosphere of war enveloped more and more Americans. Public opinion polls show large majorities of soldiers favoring the draft for the postwar period. Hatred against the enemy, against the Japanese particularly, became widespread. Racism was clearly at work. *Time* magazine, reporting the battle of Iwo Jima, said: "The ordinary unreasoning Jap is ignorant. Perhaps he is human. Nothing ... indicates it."

So, there was a mass base of support for what became the heaviest bombardment of civilians ever undertaken in any war: the aerial attacks on German and Japanese cities. One might argue that this popular support made it a "people's war." But if "people's war" means a war of people against attack, a defensive war-if it means a war fought for humane reasons instead of for the privileges of an elite, a war against the few, not the many-then the tactics of all-out aerial assault against the populations of Germany and Japan destroy that notion.

Italy had bombed cities in the Ethiopian war; Italy and Germany had bombed civilians in the Spanish Civil War; at the start of World War II German planes dropped bombs on Rotterdam in Holland, Coventry in England, and elsewhere. Roosevelt had described these as "inhuman barbarism that has profoundly shocked the conscience of humanity."

These German bombings were very small compared with the British and American bombings of German cities. In January 1943 the Allies met at Casablanca and agreed on large-scale air attacks to achieve "the destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial and economic system and the undermining of the morale of the German people to the point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened." And so, the saturation bombing of German cities began-with thousand-plane raids on Cologne, Essen, Frankfurt, Hamburg. The English flew at night with no pretense of aiming at "military" targets; the Americans flew in the daytime and pretended precision, but bombing from high altitudes made that impossible. The climax of this terror bombing was the bombing of Dresden in early 1945, in which the tremendous heat generated by the bombs created a vacuum into which fire leaped swiftly in a great firestorm through the city. More than 100,000 died in Dresden. (Winston Churchill, in his wartime memoirs, confined himself to this account of the incident: "We made a heavy raid in the latter month on Dresden, then a centre of communication of Germany's Eastern Front")

The bombing of Japanese cities continued the strategy of saturation bombing to destroy civilian morale; one nighttime fire-bombing of Tokyo took 80,000 lives. And then, on August 6, 1945, came the lone American plane in the sky over Hiroshima, dropping the first atomic bomb, leaving perhaps 100,000 Japanese dead, and tens of thousands more slowly dying from radiation poisoning. Twelve U.S. navy fliers in the Hiroshima city jail were killed in the bombing, a fact that the U.S. government has never officially acknowledged, according to historian Martin Sherwin (*A World Destroyed*). Three days later, a second atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Nagasaki, with perhaps 50,000 killed.

The justification for these atrocities was that this would end the war quickly, making unnecessary an invasion of Japan. Such an invasion would cost a huge number of lives, the government said-a million, according to Secretary of State Byrnes; half a million, Truman claimed was the figure given him by General George Marshall. (When the papers of the
Manhattan Project—the project to build the atom bomb—were released years later, they showed that Marshall urged a warning to the Japanese about the bomb, so people could be removed and only military targets hit.) These estimates of invasion losses were not realistic, and seem to have been pulled out of the air to justify bombings which, as their effects became known, horrified more and more people. Japan, by August 1945, was in desperate shape and ready to surrender. New York Times military analyst Hanson Baldwin wrote, shortly after the war:

The enemy, in a military sense, was in a hopeless strategic position by the time the Potsdam demand for unconditional surrender was made on July 26.

Such then, was the situation when we wiped out Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Need we have done it? No one can, of course, be positive, but the answer is almost certainly negative.

The United States Strategic Bombing Survey, set up by the War Department in 1944 to study the results of aerial attacks in the war, interviewed hundreds of Japanese civilian and military leaders after Japan surrendered, and reported just after the war:

Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey's opinion that certainly prior to 31 December 1945, and in all probability prior to 1 November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.

But could American leaders have known this in August 1945? The answer is, clearly, yes. The Japanese code had been broken, and Japan's messages were being intercepted. It was known the Japanese had instructed their ambassador in Moscow to work on peace negotiations with the Allies. Japanese leaders had begun talking of surrender a year before this, and the Emperor himself had begun to suggest, in June 1945, that alternatives to fighting to the end be considered. On July 13, Foreign Minister Shigenori Togo wired his ambassador in Moscow: "Unconditional surrender is the only obstacle to peace..." Martin Sherwin, after an exhaustive study of the relevant historical documents, concludes: "Having broken the Japanese code before the war, American Intelligence was able to-and did-relay this message to the President, but it had no effect whatever on efforts to bring the war to a conclusion."

If only the Americans had not insisted on unconditional surrender— that is, if they were willing to accept one condition to the surrender, that the Emperor, a holy figure to the Japanese, remain in place—the Japanese would have agreed to stop the war.

Why did the United States not take that small step to save both American and Japanese lives? Was it because too much money and effort had been invested in the atomic bomb not to drop it? General Leslie Groves, head of the Manhattan Project, described Truman as a man on a toboggan, the momentum too great to stop it. Or was it, as British scientist P. M. S. Blackett suggested (Fear, War, and the Bomb), that the United States was anxious to drop the bomb before the Russians entered the war against Japan?
The Russians had secretly agreed (they were officially not at war with Japan) they would come into the war ninety days after the end of the European war. That turned out to be May 8, and so, on August 8, the Russians were due to declare war on Japan. But by then the big bomb had been dropped, and the next day a second one would be dropped on Nagasaki; the Japanese would surrender to the United States, not the Russians, and the United States would be the occupier of postwar Japan. In other words, Blackett says, the dropping of the bomb was "the first major operation of the cold diplomatic war with Russia..." Blackett is supported by American historian Gar Alperovitz (Atomic Diplomacy), who notes a diary entry for July 28, 1945, by Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, describing Secretary of State James F. Byrnes as "most anxious to get the Japanese affair over with before the Russians got in."

Truman had said, "The world will note that the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, a military base. That was because we wished in this first attack to avoid, insofar as possible, the killing of civilians." It was a preposterous statement. Those 100,000 killed in Hiroshima were almost all civilians. The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey said in its official report: "Hiroshima and Nagasaki were chosen as targets because of their concentration of activities and population."

The dropping of the second bomb on Nagasaki seems to have been scheduled in advance, and no one has ever been able to explain why it was dropped. Was it because this was a plutonium bomb whereas the Hiroshima bomb was a uranium bomb? Were the dead and irradiated of Nagasaki victims of a scientific experiment? Martin Shenvin says that among the Nagasaki dead were probably American prisoners of war. He notes a message of July 31 from Headquarters, U.S. Army Strategic Air Forces, Guam, to the War Department:

Reports prisoner of war sources, not verified by photos, give location of Allied prisoner of war camp one mile north of center of city of Nagasaki. Does this influence the choice of this target for initial Centerboard operation? Request immediate reply.

The reply: "Targets previously assigned for Centerboard remain unchanged."

True, the war then ended quickly. Italy had been defeated a year earlier. Germany had recently surrendered, crushed primarily by the armies of the Soviet Union on the Eastern Front, aided by the Allied armies on the West. Now Japan surrendered. The Fascist powers were destroyed.

But what about fascism-as idea, as reality? Were its essential elements-militarism, racism, imperialism-now gone? Or were they absorbed into the already poisoned bones of the victors? A. J. Muste, the revolutionary pacifist, had predicted in 1941: "The problem after a war is with the victor. He thinks he has just proved that war and violence pay. Who will now teach him a lesson?"

The victors were the Soviet Union and the United States (also England, France and Nationalist China, but they were weak). Both these countries now went to work—without swastikas, goose-stepping, or officially declared racism, but under the cover of "socialism" on one side, and "democracy" on the other, to carve out their own empires of influence. They proceeded to share and contest with one another the domination of the world, to build military machines far greater than the Fascist countries had built, to control the destinies of more countries than Hitler,
Mussolini, and Japan had been able to do. They also acted to control their own populations, each country with its own techniques—crude in the Soviet Union, sophisticated in the United States—to make their rule secure.

The war not only put the United States in a position to dominate much of the world; it created conditions for effective control at home. The unemployment, the economic distress, and the consequent turmoil that had marked the thirties, only partly relieved by New Deal measures, had been pacified, overcome by the greater turmoil of the war. The war brought higher prices for farmers, higher wages, enough prosperity for enough of the population to assure against the rebellions that so threatened the thirties. As Lawrence Wittner writes, "The war rejuvenated American capitalism." The biggest gains were in corporate profits, which rose from $6.4 billion in 1940 to $10.8 billion in 1944. But enough went to workers and farmers to make them feel the system was doing well for them.

It was an old lesson learned by governments: that war solves problems of control. Charles E. Wilson, the president of General Electric Corporation, was so happy about the wartime situation that he suggested a continuing alliance between business and the military for "a permanent war economy."

That is what happened. When, right after the war, the American public, war-weary, seemed to favor demobilization and disarmament, the Truman administration (Roosevelt had died in April 1945) worked to create an atmosphere of crisis and cold war. True, the rivalry with the Soviet Union was real—that country had come out of the war with its economy wrecked and 20 million people dead, but was making an astounding comeback, rebuilding its industry, regaining military strength. The Truman administration, however, presented the Soviet Union as not just a rival but an immediate threat.

In a series of moves abroad and at home, it established a climate of fear—a hysteria about Communism—which would steeply escalate the military budget and stimulate the economy with war-related orders. This combination of policies would permit more aggressive actions abroad, more repressive actions at home.

Revolutionary movements in Europe and Asia were described to the American public as examples of Soviet expansionism—thus recalling the indignation against Hitler's aggressions.

In Greece, which had been a right-wing monarchy and dictatorship before the war, a popular left-wing National Liberation Front (the EAM) was put down by a British army of intervention immediately after the war. A right-wing dictatorship was restored. When opponents of the regime were jailed, and trade union leaders removed, a left-wing guerrilla movement began to grow against the regime, soon consisting of 17,000 fighters, 50,000 active supporters, and perhaps 250,000 sympathizers, in a country of 7 million. Great Britain said it could not handle the rebellion, and asked the United States to come in. As a State Department officer said later: "Great Britain had within the hour handed the job of world leadership . . . to the United States."

The United States responded with the Truman Doctrine, the name given to a speech Truman gave to Congress in the spring of 1947, in which he asked for $400 million in military and
economic aid to Greece and Turkey. Truman said the U.S. must help "free peoples who are
resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures."

In fact, the biggest outside pressure was the United States. The Greek rebels were getting some
aid from Yugoslavia, but no aid from the Soviet Union, which during the war had promised
Churchill a free hand in Greece if he would give the Soviet Union its way in Rumania, Poland,
Bulgaria. The Soviet Union, like the United States, did not seem to be willing to help revolutions
it could not control.

Truman said the world "must choose between alternative ways of life." One was based on "the
will of the majority . . . distinguished by free institutions"; the other was based on "the will of a
minority . . . terror and oppression . . . the suppression of personal freedoms." Truman's adviser
Clark Clifford had suggested that in his message Truman connect the intervention in Greece to
something less rhetorical, more practical—"the great natural resources of the Middle East"
(Clifford meant oil), but Truman didn't mention that.

The United States moved into the Greek civil war, not with soldiers, but with weapons and
military advisers. In the last five months of 1947, 74,000 tons of military equipment were sent by
the United States to the right-wing government in Athens, including artillery, dive bombers, and
stocks of napalm. Two hundred and fifty army officers, headed by General James Van Fleet,
advised the Greek army in the field. Van Fleet started a policy—standard in dealing with popular
insurrections of forcibly removing thousands of Greeks from their homes in the countryside, to
try to isolate the guerrillas, to remove the source of their support.

With that aid, the rebellion was defeated by 1949. United States economic and military aid
continued to the Greek government. Investment capital from Esso, Dow Chemical, Chrysler, and
other U.S. corporations flowed into Greece. But illiteracy, poverty, and starvation remained
widespread there, with the country in the hands of what Richard Barnet (Intervention and
Revolution) called "a particularly brutal and backward military dictatorship."

In China, a revolution was already under way when World War II ended, led by a Communist
movement with enormous mass support. A Red Army, which had fought against the Japanese,
now fought to oust the corrupt dictatorship of Chiang Kai-shek, which was supported by the
United States. The United States, by 1949, had given $2 billion in aid to Chiang Kai-shek's
forces, but, according to the State Department's own White Paper on China, Chiang Kai-shek's
government had lost the confidence of its own troops and its own people. In January 1949,
Chinese Communist forces moved into Peking, the civil war was over, and China was in the
hands of a revolutionary movement, the closest thing, in the long history of that ancient country,
to a people's government, independent of outside control.

The United States was trying, in the postwar decade, to create a national consensus excluding the
radicals, who could not support a foreign policy aimed at suppressing revolution—of
conservatives and liberals, Republicans and Democrats, around the policies of cold war and anti-
Communism. Such a coalition could best be created by a liberal Democratic President, whose
aggressive policy abroad would be supported by conservatives, and whose welfare programs at
home (Truman's "Fair Deal") would be attractive to liberals. If, in addition, liberals and
traditional Democrats could-the memory of the war was still fresh- support a foreign policy against "aggression," the radical-liberal bloc created by World War II would be broken up. And perhaps, if the anti-Communist mood became strong enough, liberals could support repressive moves at home which in ordinary times would be seen as violating the liberal tradition of tolerance. In 1950, there came an event that speeded the formation of the liberal-conservative consensus—Truman's undeclared war in Korea.

Korea, occupied by Japan for thirty-five years, was liberated from Japan after World War II and divided into North Korea, a socialist dictatorship, part of the Soviet sphere of influence, and South Korea, a right-wing dictatorship, in the American sphere. There had been threats back and forth between the two Koreas, and when on June 25, 1950, North Korean armies moved southward across the 38th parallel in an invasion of South Korea, the United Nations, dominated by the United States, asked its members to help "repel the armed attack." Truman ordered the American armed forces to help South Korea, and the American army became the U.N. army. Truman said: "A return to the rule of force in international affairs would have far-reaching effects. The United States will continue to uphold the rule of law."

The United States' response to "the rule of force" was to reduce Korea, North and South, to a shambles, in three years of bombing and shelling. Napalm was dropped, and a BBC journalist described the result:

In front of us a curious figure was standing, a little crouched, legs straddled, arms held out from his sides. He had no eyes, and the whole of his body, nearly all of which was visible through tatters of burnt rags, was covered with a hard black crust speckled with yellow pus. . . . He had to stand because he was no longer covered with a skin, but with a crust-like crackling which broke easily. . . . I thought of the hundreds of villages reduced to ash which I personally had seen and realized the sort of casualty list which must be mounting up along the Korean front.

Perhaps 2 million Koreans, North and South, were killed in the Korean war, all in the name of opposing "the rule of force."

As for the rule of law Truman spoke about, the American military moves seemed to go beyond that. The U.N. resolution had called for action "to repel the armed attack and to restore peace and security in the area." But the American armies, after pushing the North Koreans back across the 38th parallel, advanced all the way up through North Korea to the Yalu River, on the border of China-which provoked the Chinese into entering the war. The Chinese then swept southward and the war was stalemated at the 38th parallel until peace negotiations restored, in 1953, the old boundary between North and South.

The Korean war mobilized liberal opinion behind the war and the President. It created the kind of coalition that was needed to sustain a policy of intervention abroad, militarization of the economy at home. This meant trouble for those who stayed outside the coalition as radical critics. Alonzo Hamby noted (Beyond the New Deal) that the Korean war was supported by The New Republic, by The Nation, and by Henry Wallace (who in 1948 had run against Truman on a left coalition Progressive party ticket). The liberals didn't like Senator Joseph McCarthy (who
hunted for Communists everywhere, even among liberals), but the Korean war, as Hamby says, "had given McCarthyism a new lease on life."

The left had become very influential in the hard times of the thirties, and during the war against Fascism. The actual membership of the Communist party was not large-fewer than 100,000 probably-but it was a potent force in trade unions numbering millions of members, in the arts, and among countless Americans who may have been led by the failure of the capitalist system in the thirties to look favorably on Communism and Socialism. Thus, if the Establishment, after World War II, was to make capitalism more secure in the country, and to build a consensus of support for the American Empire, it had to weaken and isolate the left.

Two weeks after presenting to the country the Truman Doctrine for Greece and Turkey, Truman issued, on March 22, 1947, Executive Order 9835, initiating a program to search out any "infiltration of disloyal persons" in the U.S. government. In their book The Fifties, Douglas Miller and Marion Nowack comment:

Though Truman would later complain of the "great wave of hysteria" sweeping the nation, his commitment to victory over communism, to completely safeguarding the United States from external and internal threats, was in large measure responsible for creating that very hysteria. Between the launching of his security program in March 1947 and December 1952, some 6.6 million persons were investigated. Not a single case of espionage was uncovered, though about 500 persons were dismissed in dubious cases of "questionable loyalty." All of this was conducted with secret evidence, secret and often paid informers, and neither judge nor jury. Despite the failure to find subversion, the broad scope of the official Red hunt gave popular credence to the notion that the government was riddled with spies. A conservative and fearful reaction coursed the country. Americans became convinced of the need for absolute security and the preservation of the established order.

World events right after the war made it easier to build up public support for the anti-Communist crusade at home. In 1948, the Communist party in Czechoslovakia ousted non-Communists from the government and established their own rule. The Soviet Union that year blockaded Berlin, which was a jointly occupied city isolated inside the Soviet sphere of East Germany, forcing the United States to airlift supplies into Berlin. In 1949, there was the Communist victory in China, and in that year also, the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb. In 1950 the Korean war began. These were all portrayed to the public as signs of a world Communist conspiracy.

Not as publicized as the Communist victories, but just as disturbing to the American government, was the upsurge all over the world of colonial peoples demanding independence. Revolutionary movements were growing—in Indochina against the French; in Indonesia against the Dutch; in the Philippines, armed rebellion against the United States.

In Africa there were rumblings of discontent in the form of strikes. Basil Davidson (Let Freedom Come) tells of the longest recorded strike (160 days) in African history, of 19,000 railwaymen in French West Africa in 1947, whose message to the governor general showed the new mood of militancy: "Open your prisons, make ready your machine guns and cannon. Nevertheless, at midnight on 10 October, if our demands are not met, we declare the general strike." The year
before in South Africa, 100,000 gold mine workers stopped work, demanding ten shillings (about $2.50) a day in wages, the greatest strike in the history of South Africa, and it took a military attack to get them back to work. In 1950, in Kenya, there was a general strike against starvation wages.

So it was not just Soviet expansion that was threatening to the United States government and to American business interests. In fact, China, Korea, Indochina, the Philippines, represented local Communist movements, not Russian fomentation. It was a general wave of anti-imperialist insurrection in the world, which would require gigantic American effort to defeat: national unity for militarization of the budget, for the suppression of domestic opposition to such a foreign policy. Truman and the liberals in Congress proceeded to try to create a new national unity for the postwar years—with the executive order on loyalty oaths, Justice Department prosecutions, and anti-Communist legislation.

In this atmosphere, Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin could go even further than Truman. Speaking to a Women's Republican Club in Wheeling, West Virginia, in early 1950, he held up some papers and shouted: "I have here in my hand a list of 205—a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department." The next day, speaking in Salt Lake City, McCarthy claimed he had a list of fifty-seven (the number kept changing) such Communists in the State Department. Shortly afterward, he appeared on the floor of the Senate with photostatic copies of about a hundred dossiers from State Department loyalty files. The dossiers were three years old, and most of the people were no longer with the State Department, but McCarthy read from them anyway, inventing, adding, and changing as he read. In one case, he changed the dossier's description of "liberal" to "communistically inclined," in another form "active fellow traveler" to "active Communist," and so on.

McCarthy kept on like this for the next few years. As chairman of the Permanent Investigations Subcommittee of a Senate Committee on Government Operations, he investigated the State Department's information program, its Voice of America, and its overseas libraries, which included books by people McCarthy considered Communists. The State Department reacted in panic, issuing a stream of directives to its library centers across the world. Forty books were removed, including The Selected Works of Thomas Jefferson, edited by Philip Foner, and The Children's Hour by Lillian Hellman. Some books were burned.

McCarthy became bolder. In the spring of 1954 he began hearings to investigate supposed subversives in the military. When he began attacking generals for not being hard enough on suspected Communists, he antagonized Republicans as well as Democrats, and in December 1954, the Senate voted overwhelmingly to censure him for "conduct . . . unbecoming a Member of the United States Senate." The censure resolution avoided criticizing McCarthy's anti-Communist lies and exaggerations; it concentrated on minor matters on his refusal to appear before a Senate Subcommittee on Privileges and Elections, and his abuse of an army general at his hearings.

At the very time the Senate was censuring McCarthy, Congress was putting through a whole series of anti-Communist bills. Liberal Hubert Humphrey introduced an amendment to one of
them to make the Communist party illegal, saying: "I do not intend to be a half patriot. . . . Either
Senators are for recognizing the Communist Party for what it is, or they will continue to trip over
the niceties of legal technicalities and details."

The liberals in the government were themselves acting to exclude, persecute, fire, and even
imprison Communists. It was just that McCarthy had gone too far, attacking not only
Communists but liberals, endangering that broad liberal-conservative coalition which was
considered essential. For instance, Lyndon Johnson, as Senate minority leader, worked not only
to pass the censure resolution on McCarthy but also to keep it within the narrow bounds of
"conduct . . . unbecoming a Member of the United States Senate" rather than questioning
McCarthy's anti-Communism.

John F. Kennedy was cautious on the issue, didn't speak out against McCarthy (he was absent
when the censure vote was taken and never said how he would have voted). McCarthy's
insistence that Communism had won in China because of softness on Communism in the
American government was close to Kennedy's own view, expressed in the House of
Representatives, January 1949, when the Chinese Communists took over Peking. Kennedy said:

Mr. Speaker, over this weekend we have learned the extent of the disaster that has befallen China
and the United States. The responsibility for the failure of our foreign policy in the Far East rests
squarely with the White House and the Department of State.

The continued insistence that aid would not be forthcoming unless a coalition government with
the Communists was formed, was a crippling blow to the National Government.

So concerned were our diplomats and their advisers, the Lattimores and the Fairbanks [both
scholars in the field of Chinese history, Owen Lattimore a favorite target of McCarthy, John
Fairbank, a Harvard professor], with the imperfection of the democratic system in China after 20
years of war and the tales of corruption in high places that they lost sight of our tremendous stake
in a non-Communist China. . . .

This House must now assume the responsibility of preventing the onrushing tide of Communism
from engulfing all of Asia.

When, in 1950, Republicans sponsored an Internal Security Act for the registration of
organizations found to be "Communist-action" or "Communist-front," liberal Senators did not
fight that head-on. Instead, some of them, including Hubert Humphrey and Herbert Lehman,
proposed a substitute measure, the setting up of detention centers (really, concentration camps)
for suspected subversives, who, when the President declared an "internal security emergency,"
would be held without trial. The detention-camp bill became not a substitute for, but an addition
to, the Internal Security Act, and the proposed camps were set up, ready for use. (In 1968, a time
of general disillusionment with anti-Communism, this law was repealed.)

Truman's executive order on loyalty in 1947 required the Department of Justice to draw up a list
of organizations it decided were "totalitarian, fascist, communist or subversive . . . or as seeking
to alter the form of government of the United States by unconstitutional means." Not only
membership in, but also "sympathetic association" with, any organization on the Attorney General's list would be considered in determining disloyalty. By 1954, there were hundreds of groups on this list, including, besides the Communist party and the Ku Klux Klan, the Chopin Cultural Center, the Cervantes Fraternal Society, the Committee for the Negro in the Arts, the Committee for the Protection of the Bill of Rights, the League of American Writers, the Nature Friends of America, People's Drama, the Washington Bookshop Association, and the Yugoslav Seaman's Club.

It was not McCarthy and the Republicans, but the liberal Democratic Truman administration, whose Justice Department initiated a series of prosecutions that intensified the nation's anti-Communist mood. The most important was the prosecution of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg in the summer of 1950.

The Rosenbergs were charged with espionage. The major evidence was supplied by a few people who had already confessed to being spies, and were either in prison or under indictment. David Greenglass, the brother of Ethel Rosenberg, was the key witness. He had been a machinist at the Manhattan Project laboratory at Los Alamos, New Mexico, in 1944-1945 when the atomic bomb was being made there and testified that Julius Rosenberg had asked him to get information for the Russians. Greenglass said he had made sketches from memory for his brother-in-law of experiments with lenses to be used to detonate atomic bombs. He said Rosenberg had given him half of the cardboard top to a box of Jell-O, and told him a man would show up in New Mexico with the other half, and that, in June 1945, Harry Gold appeared with the other half of the box top, and Greenglass gave him information he had memorized.

Gold, already serving a thirty-year sentence in another espionage case, came out of jail to corroborate Greenglass's testimony. He had never met the Rosenbergs, but said a Soviet embassy official gave him half of a top to a box of Jell-o, and told him to contact Greenglass, saying, "I come from Julius." Gold said he took the sketches Greenglass had drawn from memory and gave them to the Russian official.

There were troubling aspects to all this. Did Gold cooperate in return for early release from prison? After serving fifteen years of his thirty-year sentence, he was paroled. Did Greenglass-under indictment at the time he testified—also know that his life depended on his cooperation? He was given fifteen years, served half of it, and was released. How reliable a memorizer of atomic information was David Greenglass, an ordinary-level machinist, not a scientist, who had taken six courses at Brooklyn Polytechnical Institute and flunked five of them? Gold's and Greenglass's stories had first not been in accord. But they were both placed on the same floor of the Tombs prison in New York before the trial, giving them a chance to coordinate their testimony.

How reliable was Gold's testimony? It turned out that he had been prepared for the Rosenberg case by four hundred hours of interviews with the FBI. It also turned out that Gold was a frequent and highly imaginative liar. He was a witness in a later trial where defense counsel asked Gold about his invention of a fictional wife and fictional children. The attorney asked: "...you lied for a period of six years?" Gold responded: "I lied for a period of sixteen years, not alone six years." Gold was the only witness at the trial to connect Julius Rosenberg and David Greenglass to the Russians. The FBI agent who had questioned Gold was interviewed twenty
years after the case by a journalist. He was asked about the password Gold was supposed to have used—"Julius sent me." The FBI man said:

Gold couldn't remember the name he had given. He thought he had said: I come from - or something like that. I suggested, "Might it have been Julius?"

That refreshed his memory.

When the Rosenbergs were found guilty, and Judge Irving Kaufman pronounced sentence, he said:

I believe your conduct in putting into the hands of the Russians the A-bomb years before our best scientists predicted Russia would perfect the bomb as already caused the Communist aggression in Korea with the resultant casualties exceeding 50,000 Americans and who knows but that millions more of innocent people may pay the price of your treason. . . .

He sentenced them both to die in the electric chair.

Morton Sobell was also on trial as a co-conspirator with the Rosenbergs. The chief witness against him was an old friend, the best man at his wedding, a man who was facing possible perjury charges by the federal government for lying about his political past. This was Max Elitcher, who testified that he had once driven Sobell to a Manhattan housing project where the Rosenbergs lived, and that Sobell got out of the car, took from the glove compartment what appeared to be a film can, went off, and then returned without the can. There was no evidence about what was in the film can. The case against Sobell seemed so weak that Sobell's lawyer decided there was no need to present a defense. But the jury found Sobell guilty, and Kaufman sentenced him to thirty years in prison. He was sent to Alcatraz, parole was repeatedly denied, and he spent nineteen years in various prisons before he was released.

FBI documents subpoenaed in the 1970s showed that Judge Kaufman had conferred with the prosecutors secretly about the sentences he would give in the case. Another document shows that after three years of appeal a meeting took place between Attorney General Herbert Brownell and Chief Justice Fred Vinson of the Supreme Court, and the chief justice assured the Attorney General that if any Supreme Court justice gave a stay of execution, he would immediately call a full court session and override it.

There had been a worldwide campaign of protest. Albert Einstein, whose letter to Roosevelt early in the war had initiated work on the atomic bomb, appealed for the Rosenbergs, as did Jean-Paul Sartre, Pablo Picasso, and the sister of Bartolomeo Vanzetti. There was an appeal to President Truman, just before he left office in the spring of 1953. It was turned down. Then, another appeal to the new President, Dwight Eisenhower, was also turned down.

At the last moment, Justice William O. Douglas granted a stay of execution. Chief Justice Vinson sent out special jets to bring the vacationing justices back to Washington from various parts of the country. They canceled Douglas's stay in time for the Rosenbergs to be executed June 19, 1953. It was a demonstration to the people of the country, though very few could
identify with the Rosenbergs, of what lay at the end of the line for those the government decided were traitors.

In that same period of the early fifties, the House Un-American Activities Committee was at its heyday, interrogating Americans about their Communist connections, holding them in contempt if they refused to answer, distributing millions of pamphlets to the American public: "One Hundred Things You Should Know About Communism" ("Where can Communists be found? Everywhere"). Liberals often criticized the Committee, but in Congress, liberals and conservatives alike voted to fund it year after year. By 1958, only one member of the House of Representatives (James Roosevelt) voted against giving it money. Although Truman criticized the Committee, his own Attorney General had expressed, in 1950, the same idea that motivated its investigations: "There are today many Communists in America. They are everywhere—in factories, offices, butcher shops, on street corners, in private business—and each carries in himself the germs of death for society."

Liberal intellectuals rode the anti-Communist bandwagon. Commentary magazine denounced the Rosenbergs and their supporters. One of Commentary's writers, Irving Kristol, asked in March 1952: "Do we defend our rights by protecting Communists?" His answer: "No."

It was Truman's Justice Department that prosecuted the leaders of the Communist party under the Smith Act, charging them with conspiring to teach and advocate the overthrow of the government by force and violence. The evidence consisted mostly of the fact that the Communists were distributing Marxist-Leninist literature, which the prosecution contended called for violent revolution. There was certainly not evidence of any immediate danger of violent revolution by the Communist party. The Supreme Court decision was given by Truman's appointee, Chief Justice Vinson. He stretched the old doctrine of the "clear and present danger" by saying there was a clear and present conspiracy to make a revolution at some convenient time. And so, the top leadership of the Communist party was put in prison, and soon after, most of its organizers went underground.

Undoubtedly, there was success in the attempt to make the general public fearful of Communists and ready to take drastic actions against them—imprisonment at home, military action abroad. The whole culture was permeated with anti-Communism. The large-circulation magazines had articles like "How Communists Get That Way" and "Communists Are After Your Child." The New York Times in 1956 ran an editorial: "We would not knowingly employ a Communist party member in the news or editorial departments . . . because we would not trust his ability to report the news objectively or to comment on it honestly. . . . An FBI informer's story about his exploits as a Communist who became an FBI agent—"I Led Three Lives"—was serialized in five hundred newspapers and put on television. Hollywood movies had titles like I Married a Communist and I Was a Communist for the FBI. Between 1948 and 1954, more than forty anti-Communist films came out of Hollywood.

Even the American Civil Liberties Union, set up specifically to defend the liberties of Communists and all other political groups, began to wilt in the cold war atmosphere. It had already started in this direction back in 1940 when it expelled one of its charter members, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, because she was a member of the Communist party. In the fifties, the
ACLU was hesitant to defend Corliss Lamont, its own board member, and Owen Lattimore, when both were under attack. It was reluctant to defend publicly the Communist leaders during the first Smith Act trial, and kept completely out of the Rosenberg case, saying no civil liberties issues were involved.

Young and old were taught that anti-Communism was heroic. Three million copies were sold of the book by Mickey Spillane published in 1951, One Lonely Night, in which the hero, Mike Hammer says: "I killed more people tonight than I have fingers on my hands. I shot them in cold blood and enjoyed every minute of it. . . . They were Commies . . . red sons-of-bitches who should have died long ago. . . ." A comic strip hero, Captain America, said: "Beware, commies, spies, traitors, and foreign agents! Captain America, with all loyal, free men behind him, is looking for you. . . ." And in the fifties, schoolchildren all over the country participated in air raid drills in which a Soviet attack on America was signaled by sirens: the children had to crouch under their desks until it was "all clear."

It was an atmosphere in which the government could get mass support for a policy of rearmament. The system, so shaken in the thirties, had learned that war production could bring stability and high profits. Truman's anti-Communism was attractive. The business publication Steel had said in November 1946-even before the Truman Doctrine that Truman's policies gave "the firm assurance that maintaining and building our preparations for war will be big business in the United States for at least a considerable period ahead."

That prediction turned out to be accurate. At the start of 1950, the total U.S. budget was about $40 billion, and the military part of it was about $12 billion. But by 1955, the military part alone was $40 billion out of a total of $62 billion.

In 1960, the military budget was $45.8 billion—9.7 percent of the budget. That year John F. Kennedy was elected President, and he immediately moved to increase military spending. In fourteen months, the Kennedy administration added $9 billion to defense funds, according to Edgar Bottome (The Balance of Terror).

By 1962, based on a series of invented scares about Soviet military build-ups, a false "bomber gap" and a false "missile gap," the United States had overwhelming nuclear superiority. It had the equivalent, in nuclear weapons, of 1,500 Hiroshima-size atomic bombs, far more than enough to destroy every major city in the world-the equivalent, in fact, of 10 tons of TNT for every man, woman, and child on earth. To deliver these bombs, the United States had more than 50 intercontinental ballistic missiles, 80 missiles on nuclear submarines, 90 missiles on stations overseas, 1,700 bombers capable of reaching the Soviet Union, 300 fighter-bombers on aircraft carriers, able to carry atomic weapons, and 1,000 land-based supersonic fighters able to carry atomic bombs.

The Soviet Union was obviously behind—it had between fifty and a hundred intercontinental ballistic missiles and fewer than two hundred long-range bombers. But the U.S. budget kept mounting, the hysteria kept growing, the profits of corporations getting defense contracts multiplied, and employment and wages moved ahead just enough to keep a substantial number of Americans dependent on war industries for their living.
By 1970, the U.S. military budget was $80 billion and the corporations involved in military production were making fortunes. Two-thirds of the 40 billion spent on weapons systems was going to twelve or fifteen giant industrial corporations, whose main reason for existence was to fulfill government military contracts. Senator Paul Douglass, an economist and chairman of the Joint Economic Committee of the Senate, noted that "six-sevenths of these contracts are not competitive. . . . In the alleged interest of secrecy, the government picks a company and draws up a contract in more or less secret negotiations."

C. Wright Mills, in his book of the fifties, The Power Elite, counted the military as part of the top elite, along with politicians and corporations. These elements were more and more intertwined. A Senate report showed that the one hundred largest defense contractors, who held 67.4 percent of the military contracts, employed more than two thousand former high-ranking officers of the military.

Meanwhile, the United States, giving economic aid to certain countries, was creating a network of American corporate control over the globe, and building its political influence over the countries it aided. The Marshall Plan of 1948, which gave $16 billion in economic aid to Western European countries in four years, had an economic aim: to build up markets for American exports. George Marshall (a general, then Secretary of State) was quoted in an early 1948 State Department bulletin: "It is idle to think that a Europe left to its own efforts . . . would remain open to American business in the same way that we have known it in the past."

The Marshall Plan also had a political motive. The Communist parties of Italy and France were strong, and the United States decided to use pressure and money to keep Communists out of the cabinets of those countries. When the Plan was beginning, Truman's Secretary of State Dean Acheson said: "These measures of relief and reconstruction have been only in part suggested by humanitarianism. Your Congress has authorized and your Government is carrying out, a policy of relief and reconstruction today chiefly as a matter of national self-interest."

From 1952 on, foreign aid was more and more obviously designed to build up military power in non-Communist countries. In the next ten years, of the $50 billion in aid granted by the United States to ninety countries, only $5 billion was for nonmilitary economic development.

When John F. Kennedy took office, he launched the Alliance for Progress, a program of help for Latin America, emphasizing social reform to better the lives of people. But it turned out to be mostly military aid to keep in power right-wing dictatorships and enable them to stave off revolutions.

From military aid, it was a short step to military intervention. What Truman had said at the start of the Korean war about "the rule of force" and the "rule of law" was again and again, under Truman and his successors, contradicted by American action. In Iran, in 1953, the Central Intelligence Agency succeeded in overthrowing a government which nationalized the oil industry. In Guatemala, in 1954, a legally elected government was overthrown by an invasion force of mercenaries trained by the CIA at military bases in Honduras and Nicaragua and supported by four American fighter planes flown by American pilots. The invasion put into
power Colonel Carlos Castillo Armas, who had at one time received military training at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The government that the United States overthrew was the most democratic Guatemala had ever had. The President, Jacobo Arbenz, was a left-of-center Socialist; four of the fifty-six seats in the Congress were held by Communists. What was most unsettling to American business interests was that Arbenz had expropriated 234,000 acres of land owned by United Fruit, offering compensation that United Fruit called "unacceptable." Armas, in power, gave the land back to United Fruit, abolished the tax on interest and dividends to foreign investors, eliminated the secret ballot, and jailed thousands of political critics.

In 1958, the Eisenhower government sent thousands of marines to Lebanon to make sure the pro-American government there was not toppled by a revolution, and to keep an armed presence in that oil-rich area.

The Democrat-Republican, liberal-conservative agreement to prevent or overthrow revolutionary governments whenever possible whether Communist, Socialist, or anti-United Fruit-became most evident in 1961 in Cuba. That little island 90 miles from Florida had gone through a revolution in 1959 by a rebel force led by Fidel Castro, in which the American-backed dictator, Fulgencio Batista, was overthrown. The revolution was a direct threat to American business interests. Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy had repealed the Platt Amendment (which permitted American intervention in Cuba), but the United States still kept a naval base in Cuba at Guantanamo, and U.S. business interests still dominated the Cuban economy. American companies controlled 80 to 100 percent of Cuba's utilities, mines, cattle ranches, and oil refineries, 40 percent of the sugar industry, and 50 percent of the public railways.

Fidel Castro had spent time in prison after he led an unsuccessful attack in 1953 on an army barracks in Santiago. Out of prison, he went to Mexico, met Argentine revolutionary Che Guevara, and returned in 1956 to Cuba. His tiny force fought guerrilla warfare from the jungles and mountains against Batista's army, drawing more and more popular support, then came out of the mountains and marched across the country to Havana. The Batista government fell apart on New Year's Day 1959.

In power, Castro moved to set up a nationwide system of education, of housing, of land distribution to landless peasants. The government confiscated over a million acres of land from three American companies, including United Fruit.

Cuba needed money to finance its programs, and the United States was not eager to lend it. The International Monetary Fund, dominated by the United States, would not loan money to Cuba because Cuba would not accept its "stabilization" conditions, which seemed to undermine the revolutionary program that had begun. When Cuba now signed a trade agreement with the Soviet Union, American-owned oil companies in Cuba refused to refine crude oil that came from the Soviet Union. Castro seized these companies. The United States cut down on its sugar buying from Cuba, on which Cuba's economy depended, and the Soviet Union immediately agreed to buy all the 700,000 tons of sugar that the United States would not buy.
Cuba had changed. The Good Neighbor Policy did not apply. In the spring of 1960, President Eisenhower secretly authorized the Central Intelligence Agency to arm and train anti-Castro Cuban exiles in Guatemala for a future invasion of Cuba. When Kennedy took office in the spring of 1961 the CIA had 1,400 exiles, armed and trained. He moved ahead with the plans, and on April 17, 1961, the CIA-trained force, with some Americans participating, landed at the Bay of Pigs on the south shore of Cuba, 90 miles from Havana. They expected to stimulate a general rising against Castro. But it was a popular regime. There was no rising. In three days, the CIA forces were crushed by Castro's army.

The whole Bay of Pigs affair was accompanied by hypocrisy and lying. The invasion was a violation—recalling Truman's "rule of law"—of a treaty the U.S. had signed, the Charter of the Organization of American States, which reads: "No state or group of states has the right to intervene, directly or indirectly, for any reason whatever, in the internal or external affairs of any other state."

Four days before the invasion—because there had been press reports of secret bases and CIA training for invaders—President Kennedy told a press conference: "...there will not be, under any conditions, any intervention in Cuba by United States armed forces." True, the landing force was Cuban, but it was all organized by the United States, and American war planes, including American pilots, were involved; Kennedy had approved the use of unmarked navy jets in the invasion. Four American pilots of those planes were killed, and their families were not told the truth about how those men died.

The success of the liberal-conservative coalition in creating a national anti-Communist consensus was shown by how certain important news publications cooperated with the Kennedy administration in deceiving the American public on the Cuban invasion. The New Republic was about to print an article on the CIA training of Cuban exiles, a few weeks before the invasion. Historian Arthur Schlesinger was given copies of the article in advance. He showed them to Kennedy, who asked that the article not be printed, and The New Republic went along.

James Reston and Turner Catledge of the New York Times, on the government's request, did not run a story about the imminent invasion. Arthur Schlesinger said of the New York Times action: "This was another patriotic act, but in retrospect I have wondered whether, if the press had behaved irresponsibly, it would not have spared the country a disaster." What seemed to bother him, and other liberals in the cold war consensus, was not that the United States was interfering in revolutionary movements in other countries, but that it was doing so unsuccessfully.

Around 1960, the fifteen-year effort since the end of World War II to break up the Communist-radical upsurge of the New Deal and wartime years seemed successful. The Communist party was in disarray—its leaders in jail, its membership shrunken, its influence in the trade union movement very small. The trade union movement itself had become more controlled, more conservative. The military budget was taking half of the national budget, but the public was accepting this.

The radiation from the testing of nuclear weapons had dangerous possibilities for human health, but the public was not aware of that. The Atomic Energy Commission insisted that the deadly
effects of atomic tests were exaggerated, and an article in 1955 in the Reader's Digest (the largest-circulation magazine in the United States) said: "The scare stories about this country's atomic tests are simply not justified."

In the mid-fifties, there was a flurry of enthusiasm for air-raid shelters; the public was being told these would keep them safe from atomic blasts. A government consultant and scientist, Herman Kahn, wrote a book, On Thermonuclear War, in which he explained that it was possible to have a nuclear war without total destruction of the world, that people should not be so frightened of it. A political scientist named Henry Kissinger wrote a book published in 1957 in which he said: "With proper tactics, nuclear war need not be as destructive as it appears...."

The country was on a permanent war economy which had big pockets of poverty, but there were enough people at work, making enough money, to keep things quiet. The distribution of wealth was still unequal. From 1944 to 1961, it had not changed much: the lowest fifth of the families received 5 percent of all the income; the highest fifth received 45 percent of all the income. In 1953, 1.6 percent of the adult population owned more than 80 percent of the corporate stock and nearly 90 percent of the corporate bonds. About 200 giant corporations out of 200,000 corporations—one-tenth of 1 percent of all corporations—controlled about 60 percent of the manufacturing wealth of the nation.

When John F. Kennedy presented his budget to the nation after his first year in office, it was clear that, liberal Democrat or not, there would be no major change in the distribution of income or wealth or tax advantages. New York Times columnist James Reston summed up Kennedy's budget messages as avoiding any "sudden transformation of the home front" as well as "a more ambitious frontal attack on the unemployment problem." Reston said:

He agreed to a tax break for business investment in plant expansion and modernization. He is not spoiling for a fight with the Southern conservatives over civil rights. He has been urging the unions to keep wage demands down so that prices can be competitive in the world markets and jobs increased. And he has been trying to reassure the business community that he does not want any cold war with them on the home front.

...this week in his news conference he refused to carry out his promise to bar discrimination in Government-insured housing, but talked instead of postponing this until there was a "national consensus" in its favor. . . .

During these twelve months the President has moved over into the decisive middle ground of American politics. . . .

On this middle ground, all seemed secure. Nothing had to be done for blacks. Nothing had to be done to change the economic structure. An aggressive foreign policy could continue. The country seemed under control. And then, in the 1960s, came a series of explosive rebellions in every area of American life, which showed that all the system's estimates of security and success were wrong.