THAT KNOCK AT THE DOOR:
American Images of Life in Soviet Russia, 1947-1953

by

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ABSTRACT

Except for a brief period during the Second World War, the majority of America's political leadership, press, and public always viewed the Soviet Union with a jaundiced eye. At no time in American history, however, did its people hold more hostile attitudes toward any "enemy" than those held toward the Soviets during the first six years of the Cold War. Between 1947 and 1953, the Soviet Union was pictured as an anti-utopian world where terror, regimentation and slavery were thought to be as much a part of everyday Russian life as baseball or going to the movies in America. The timing of this pervasive "better dead than red" mentality is most peculiar. Americans had emerged from World War II victorious, tremendously powerful and on the verge of unprecedented material abundance; yet within two years much of the nation was clearly obsessed with sensational and nightmarish stories of life in the land of its former ally.

Previous studies of American anti-Soviet sentiment have focused primarily on American perceptions and fears concerning the Soviet external threat or on hostility toward domestic Communism. This thesis takes a somewhat different approach by recalling and explaining Americans' most commonly held perceptions of day-to-day life in the USSR—including education, family values, entertainment, living and working conditions, science and religion. To present these dominant images of life in Stalin's Russia and to demonstrate their pervasiveness in most forms of media and opinion, it draws on a wide range of popular American sources, including mass-circulation periodicals and newspapers, government publications, examples of popular culture, widely read writings of professionals in various fields, the statements of those who influenced and formulated domestic opinion and foreign policies, and public opinion polls.

This thesis contends that American images of life in the USSR contained in exaggerated form many of the same features that Americans of the late 1940's were most intent on denying in themselves. Stalin's Russia was commonly

depicted as the embodiment of all the most negative effects of twentieth century technology and social change, including conformity, regimentation, secularization, urbanization, and mechanization. In direct contrast, anxious postwar Americans wanted to identify themselves with their visions of "the good old days"—a simpler natural order of life representing freedom, individualism, self-reliance, and "traditional" family values. Thus, American images of the Soviets were, in large part, a reflection of their own distaste for modern society. This deep-seated uneasiness and insecurity with the shape of mid-twentieth century American life led to a process of denial as Americans transferred their worst fears onto an enemy which, from the very start, had violated their deeply entrenched conceptions of morality, justice, and self-determination.

Part One of this thesis describes earlier American visions of the USSR spanning the 1917-1947 period. The main body of the paper is then divided into two sections: Part Two presents the hostile postwar images of Soviet life which so dominated American thought in the late 1940's and early 1950's; and Part Three explains how these mental pictures of Stalin's Russia reflected the fears, obsessions, and traditions, of American, and, in many respects, Western society and culture during this turbulent era.

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I also wish to express my gratitude to several members of my family. My brother, Paul A. Smith, for sparking my interest in history at a young age. My wife's parents in Japan, Kazuo and Kazuko Nakai, for their kindness and patience. And special thanks to my parents, Jack R. and Doreen M. Smith, for their constant support, trust, and understanding.

DEDICATION

For my wife, Yumiko Nakai Smith—whose encouragement and powers of endurance helped make this thesis possible.

Preface

During the earliest and most frigid years of the Cold War, 1947-1953, the overwhelming majority of America's political leadership, media, and public opinion promoted the idea that Soviet society was something close to a complete "dystopia." Life in the land of Stalin was said to be fraught with terror, suppression, mental and physical regimentation, and, for many, slavery and extermination. For Americans, no charges concerning the conditions of Soviet life seemed too outlandish or horrifying to be believed. In fact, by 1947, the thought of being made subject to the "ghoulish" rule of the Kremlin had become *the* American nightmare.

The obsessive "better dead than red" mentality which pervaded this era is a curious phenomenon. The United States emerged victorious from the Second World War with half the gross national product of the planet, an enormous newly-built military establishment, and a public prepared for a period of sustained economic expansion. What cause could there be for concern in such happy circumstance? Where was the setting for an "age of anxiety," an intense fear and loathing for its recent wartime ally? To be sure, many of the ghastly tales concerning life in the USSR had considerable foundation in fact, but why were these stories so pervasive, so wildly sensationalised and (except on the political left) so completely one-sided?

Previous studies of American anti-Soviet sentiment have focused primarily on American perceptions and fears concerning the Soviet external threat or on hostility toward domestic Communism (the amount of material on McCarthyism alone could fill a small library). This thesis will take a somewhat different approach by recalling and explaining Americans' most commonly held perceptions of day-to-day life in the USSR—including education, family values, entertainment, living and working conditions, science, and religion. To present the dominant images of life in Stalin's Russia and to demonstrate their pervasiveness in most forms of media and opinion, I will draw on a wide range of popular American sources, including mass-circulation periodicals and newspapers, government publications, examples of popular culture, widely-read writings of professionals in various

fields, the statements of those who influenced and formulated domestic opinion and foreign policies, and public opinion polls. These sources reveal certain identifiable "nightmare" themes which, beyond the valuable offerings of previous studies, provide more sophisticated explanations of America's pervasive anti-Communism during the early postwar period. Most notably, evidence suggests that Americans were generally much less optimistic about the future of their own society than many scholars have assumed.[1]

To put America's early Cold War images of the Soviet Union in perspective, Part One of this thesis will describe earlier visions of the USSR spanning the 1917-1947 period. The main body of the paper will then be divided into two sections: Part Two presenting the hostile postwar images of Soviet life which so dominated American thought in the late 1940's and early 1950's; and, Part Three, explaining how these mental pictures of "the enemy" reflected the fears, obsessions, and traditions of American, and, in many respects, Western society and culture during this turbulent era. In conclusion, I will argue that America's obsessive, paranoiac anti-Communism was in large part a product of the *domestic* problems and anxieties that pre-occupied the American people in the late 1940's.

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[1]Studies which present a case counter to my own include William L. O'Neill's *American High: The Years of Confidence, 1945-1960* (New York: Free Press, 1986); John Brooks, *The Great Leap: The Past Twenty-Five Years in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

PART ONE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

I.

The American Anti-Soviet Tradition, 1917-1947

American attitudes toward Soviet Russia were unfriendly from the beginning, as the Bolsheviks' seizure of power in Russia in November 1917 produced the very result that Americans most feared, the collapse of the eastern front against the Germans during World War I. Some Americans optimistically predicted that Bolshevism—described by the *Saturday Evening Post* as "despotism by the dregs"—would soon collapse and be replaced by a "free" constitutionalist government which would return the country to the side of her former allies. Others, less hopeful, called for intervention. In the opinion of the *New York Times,* the Reds were "our malignant and unscrupulous enemies." By February 1918 the *Times* editors demanded action: "It is not alone the rescue of Russia that is involved, it is the safety of civilization." In an effort to appease his allied partners and to thwart the Germans, President Woodrow Wilson reluctantly agreed to intervention in Russia that summer.[2]

After the November 11 armistice with Germany robbed the mission of its original purpose, a new menace emerged, the Red Peril. Administration officials and many American journalists were horrified by what they perceived to be a regime of lunatics in Russia that deprived its people of political, religious, and property rights, and promoted atheism, immorality, and world revolution. Secretary of State Robert Lansing, an ardent anti-Bolshevik, described conditions under the new government as being similar to "the Asiatic despotism of the early Tsars" and to the Great Terror of the French Revolution. Bolshevism, said Lansing, " 'the most hideous and monstrous thing the human mind has ever conceived', had imposed on Russia the curses of 'demoralization, civil war, and economic collapse.'" The

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[2]The *Saturday Evening Post* and *New York Times* are quoted in Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1987), p. 113. Sections of this paragraph have been paraphrased from this study.

findings of a Senate subcommittee were even more scathing: "The activities of the Bolsheviki constitute a complete repudiation of modern civilization."[3]

Such accusations no doubt appeared entirely justified when placed alongside some accounts in the American press. One of the most persistent stories to appear in magazines and newspapers described the "nationalization of women"; allegedly, in certain regions of the USSR, every eighteen-year-old girl was ordered to register at a government "bureau of free love" to be given a husband without her consent. Another story, which appeared during the Red Terror (unleashed in Soviet Russia following the wounding of Lenin in August 1919), told of "streets running with blood and of a new electrically driven guillotine capable of decapitating 500 persons an hour." In these early years, the press showed little interest in Communism as a political philosophy or economic system. Rather, articles and cartoons helped to reinforce the stereotype of the bloodthirsty, bewhiskered, bomb-throwing Bolshevik. Overall, wrote historian Frederick L. Schuman, the public's earliest impression of Red Russia was that of "a kind of vast lunatic asylum, constantly on the eve of dissolution, where the keepers had been murdered and insane fanatics vied with criminal maniacs in creating a bedlam of anarchy, bloodshed and horror."[4]

Both traditional American culture and contemporary social tensions were crucial in fanning the flames of this anti-Bolshevik sentiment. Individualism, regarded as the most basic of American values—along with the accompanying concern for civil liberties and property rights—were disdained by the Reds in Moscow who emphasized collective rather than individual action. As a rival internationalist movement, Communism also denied the validity of the United States' global mission on behalf of Americanism. Foreign in origin, conspiratorial in nature, and ardently atheistic, Communism appeared to most as the antithesis of American civilization. At home, meanwhile, high postwar unemployment and

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[3]Robert Lansing quoted in Hunt, p. 115; Hunt, p. 115; Peter G. Filene, *Americans and the Soviet Experiment, 1917-1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 46.

[4]Thomas A. Bailey, *America Faces Russia: Russian-American Relations from Early Times to Our Own Day* (Ithaca, NY: 1950), p. 246; Frederick Lewis Schuman, *American Policy Toward Russia Since 1917* (New York: International Publishers, 1928), p. 157.

inflation, a series of labour strikes, violent May Day parades, and isolated terrorist bombings all had a cumulative effect on an increasingly intolerant American public. In 1919, as the *Wall Street Journal* announced that "Lenin and Trotsky are on the way," Americans dug in their heels against those perceived as dissidents and radicals in a nationwide crusade known as the Red Scare of 1919-1920.[5]

"Is your washroom breeding Bolsheviks?" asked the Scott Paper Company in a 1922 ad campaign for disposable towels. A like-minded promotion for the Columbia Six reassured potential buyers that this automobile "has no Bolshevistic tendencies." The public's antagonism toward Communism persisted throughout the early twenties, in tandem with Washington's policy of non-recognition toward the Soviet government. But as the tongue in cheek tone of the above advertisements indicate—while Americans continued to condemn the Soviets and their "dupes" as thoroughly "un-American"—the public's initial nervousness regarding the USSR eased somewhat when an international proletarian revolution failed to materialize. In an era of increasing prosperity, the general mood of the nation changed dramatically, and the communist issue faded to become one of the country's less urgent problems. In 1926, the fall of Trotsky was looked upon by some Americans as an indicator of "a gradual but convincing movement back to sanity" in Russia; they were reassured further by the rise of Joseph Stalin with his emphasis on "socialism in one country." Increased interest in Soviet affairs during the late twenties and early thirties led thousands of Americans to visit the Soviet Union and to produce several hundred books and articles exploring many aspects of Russian life. In popular magazines, commentary included both lofty praise and severe criticism. The baffling assortment of articles ranged from "See Russia and Die, Laughing" to "Toward the Millennium"; "Why Things Are Better" to "The Terror that Rules Russian Life"; "Red Poison" to "These Charming Russians"; and "Russia Returns to Capitalism" to "The Economic Seesaw." In general, hostile feelings toward the USSR moderated during the late twenties, but not enough

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[5]Peter H. Buckingham, *America Sees Red: Anti-Communism in America, 1870s to 1980s* (Claremont, CA: Regina Books, 1988), p. 22.

to encourage official recognition. This would depend on a sharp, although temporary, change of American sentiment during the Great Depression.[6]

In the early 1930s several factors including interest in economic planning (the New Deal), an increasing desire for trade, the rise of Japanese imperialism in East Asia, the easing of Soviet revolutionary propaganda, a growing sympathy for the USSR among intellectuals, and the undeniable economic stability of Stalin's regime, all helped contribute to the decision that U.S. policy toward Moscow was both futile and counter-productive. After sixteen years of abnormality, diplomatic and commercial relations with Russia resumed in 1933, a decision quietly accepted by most Americans as an act of common sense. But recognition failed to achieve more than a brief rapprochement. Americans never lost what had become a deep-seated distrust of the Soviets, and a series of profoundly disturbing events spanning the years 1937 to 1940 pushed hostilities toward the Moscow regime to a pitch reminiscent of some of the hysteria of the 1918-20 period. The spectacular purges of 1937 and 1938 with their mass trials, confessions, and executions horrified even loyal defenders of the Soviet experiment. For millions of Americans such evidence of official terror served to confirm the inhumanity of the Red dictators and to reinforce already dark suspicions about life in the USSR. The *Cincinnati Enquirer* echoed the sentiments of most of the nation's other newspapers with its conclusion that the trials "are a systematic terror calculated to keep leaders, as well as mere citizens, cowed before an all powerful dictatorship." Above all, however, it was the announcement of the Russo-German nonaggression pact in August 1939, the subsequent division of Poland, and the Red Army invasion of Finland that turned popular opinion against Russia. American outrage toward the land of Stalin and that other scourge of Europe, Hitler's Germany, found expression in merged images of the two regimes. As Hollywood stars performed relief benefits for the fighting Finns and as the Cambridge, Massachusetts, city council was insisting that the words "Lenin" and "Leningrad" be rubbed out of high school texts and atlases,

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[6] Buckingham, *America Sees Red*, p. 31; "Russia's New Chief Abandons World Revolution," *Literary Digest*, Vol. 91 (October 30, 1926), p. 9 quoted in Anne T Golden, "Attitudes to the Soviet Union as Reflected in the American Press, 1944-1948" (Ph. D. dissertation: University of Toronto, 1970), p. 42; Golden, "Attitudes to the Soviet Union," p. 42.

many journals began employing the term "Communazism" as an appropriate phrase for what the *Christian Science Monitor* called that "unholy alliance between the brown bolshevism of Adolf Hitler and the red fascism of Joseph Stalin." The Reverend John Haynes Holmes, a long-time advocate of American friendship toward the USSR, reversed his previous position and argued that "totalitarianism is the same everywhere....the leopard has the same spots in every jungle!" For the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette,* Hitler and Stalin's actions had revealed to all that the two dictators were brothers, if not twins. "Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin have unmasked," the *Gazette* concluded, for "openly and shamelessly....they embrace as blood brothers." Linking their two ideologies, the chief editor of *American Mercury,* Eugene Lyons, claimed that the differences between Nazism and Stalinism were hardly worth noticing—like the differences between "arsenic and strychnine"—when their comparative similarities, "the political Tweedledum-Tweedledee which is Fascism and Communism," were placed alongside. Speaking before the American Youth Congress in February 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt echoed similar sentiments, condemning the Soviet Union as a "dictatorship as absolute as any dictatorship in the world."[7]

When, on June 22, 1941, Hitler suddenly turned on his Russian ally and launched an invasion along an eighteen-hundred-mile front, many Americans adopted "a plague-on-both-your-houses attitude." Former ambassador to the USSR, William C. Bullitt, viewed the struggle as one between "Satan and Lucifer." Harry Truman (then still a little-known Missouri Senator) apparently agreed, saying on the day after the invasion: "If we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany and that way kill as many as possible...." And similarly, the *Wall Street Journal* concluded that "the principal

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[7] *Christian Science Monitor*, (September 18, 1939), p. 19 quoted in Thomas R. Maddux, "Red Fascism, Brown Bolshevism: The American Image of Totalitarianism in the 1930's," *Historian*, Vol. 36, No. 3 (May 1974), pp. 99-100; Holmes quoted in Leslie K. Adler and T. G. Paterson, "Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930's-1950's," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 75, No. 4 (April 1970), p. 1050; *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, August 25, 1939 quoted in Maddux, "Red Fascism, Brown Bolshevism," p. 98; Eugene Lyons quoted in Maddux, p. 93; Roosevelt quoted in Golden, "Attitudes to the Soviet Union," p. 55.

difference between Mr. Stalin and Mr. Hitler is the size of their respective mustaches."[8]

But within a few months, a dramatic new course of events would trigger a nearly complete reversal of the evil Soviet image. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941 forced the United States from the periphery to the vortex of the Second World War and (along with Britain) into a "strange alliance" with the Soviet Union against the common foe of Nazidom. This new role for the USA demanded the complete spiritual commitment of its people. But here fear of a problem arose, for an ally with an evil image such as Russia's might prove to be a serious psychological barrier to inspiring an all-out effort for victory. Thus, with the war seeming to demand that their Soviet comrades be portrayed in the best possible light, most of America's leaders and the popular media created nothing less than a whole new Russia—remade to fit American ideals.

By the opening months of 1942, the "treacherous reds" were becoming the "brave Russians," a valiant peasant people fighting for a government that was rapidly abandoning its totalitarian ways. While pinned down on Corregidor by the Japanese, General Douglas MacArthur announced to the American public that "the hopes of civilization rest on the worthy banners of the courageous Russian Army." *Time* magazine offered similar praise for the Red Army and the "willpower" of its Generalissimo when it named Joseph Stalin "Man of the Year" for 1942 (Stalin had been similarly "honoured" three years earlier, but then he was portrayed as a villain). Sweeping, favourable comparisons between the Russian and American people likewise appeared throughout the print media. Nila Magidoff's *American Magazine* article, "Americans and Russians Are *So* Alike," was typical of these, describing both nations as amazingly similar in their ethnic diversity, innate friendliness, and mechanical ingenuity. A broader look at Soviet society appeared in *Life's* "USSR" issue of March 29, 1943, where Americans were taken on a tour of a

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[8] Adler and Paterson, "Red Fascism," p. 1051; *New York Times*, July 15, 1941 quoted in Ibid; Vojtech Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), p. 39; *Wall Street Journal* (June 25, 1941), quoted in Adler and Paterson, "Red Fascism," p. 1051; Elliot West, "The Roots of Conflict: Soviet Images in the American Press, 1941-1947." In *Essays on American Foreign Policy*, ed. by M. F. Morris and S. L. Myres (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974), p. 88.

land teeming with lively cities, humming industries, manicured collective farms, and enthusiastic school children. *Life's* editors wrote that the Russians were "one hell of a people" who looked, dressed, and thought just like Americans. Readers were told that Lenin was "perhaps the greatest man of modern times," that the Soviet secret police, the NKVD, was really a national police force like the FBI, and that children's paramilitary groups were nothing more than a Russian version of the Boy Scouts. The optimistic *New York Times* happily declared that "Marxian thinking in Soviet Russia is out" and "the capitalist system, better described as the competitive system, is back." According to a flood of other stories, religious tolerance, traditional morality, and democracy were also allegedly on their way "back" in the Russia of Joseph Stalin. Indeed, now even the climate and geography of the USSR were presented in a more favourable light—one *National Geographic Magazine* article entitled "Sunny Siberia," described the Soviet East as a rugged frontier land with great wealth and unlimited opportunities for enterprising men; another described the Volga as Russia's "Ol' Man River" whose famous boatmen could really "tote dat barge." The most reassuring words of all came, regularly, from President Roosevelt: "I got along fine with Marshal Stalin," he told his nationwide radio listeners after the Teheran Conference in 1943. "I believe that we are going to get along very well with him and the Russian people—very well indeed."[9]

Epitomizing the efforts to eradicate the nasty old images of the Soviet Union were two popular Hollywood films—*Mission to Moscow* and *Song of Russia*—both released in 1943.[10] *Mission to Moscow* was loosely based on the

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[9] Peter G. Filene, ed., *American Views of Soviet Russia, 1917-1965* (Homewood, IL: Dorsey Press, 1968), p. 142; Elliot West, "Roots of Conflict," p. 88; "Joseph Stalin: Man of the Year," *Time*, Vol. 41 (January 4, 1943), pp. 21-24; *Dallas Morning News*, January 26, 1942, in West "Roots of Conflict," p. 87; Nila Magidoff, "Americans and Russians Are *So* Alike, " *American Magazine*, Vol. 138 (December 1944), pp. 17, 188-120; *New York Times*, April 1944, quoted in Robert Dallek, *The American Style of Foreign Policy: Cultural Politics and Foreign Affairs* (New York: Knopf, 1983), p. 139; See *Time*'s cover story devoted to religious tolerance (December 27, 1943), pp. 43-58, "A Russian Family," *Collier's* (August 7, 1943), and Arthur Upham Pope's "Can Stalin's Russia Go Democratic—Yes," *American Mercury*, Vol. 58 (February 1944), pp. 135-142; West, "Roots of Conflict," p. 88; West, p. 89; John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), p. 7.

[10] Other pro-Soviet films released in 1943 and 1944 include *Tender Comrade, Miss V. from Moscow, The North Star*, and *Three Russian Girls.*

best-seller by Joseph E. Davies, American Ambassador to the USSR from 1936-1938, who appears briefly in the film's prologue praising "those fine and patriotic citizens, the Warner Brothers." While the Germans in this picture are given to making unsavory comments such as, "The Americans have become very naive—heh, heh, heh," all the Russian leaders are extremely polite and usually wear white ties and tails. The American Ambassador tells Stalin, " I believe, Sir, that history will record you as a great benefactor of mankind," and the narrator tells us that Stalin's "brown eye is exceedingly gentle and kind. A child would sit in his lap and a dog would sidle up to him."[11]

The effervescent spirit of the Russian people in *Mission to Moscow* is exceeded only by their unrestrained gaiety in *Song of Russia.* Like movie African-Americans of an earlier Hollywood, *Song of Russia*'s peasants are incredibly jubilant, appear addicted to music and laughter, and have "rhythm." This picture goes to great lengths to normalize the Russians by pointing out the "extraordinary" similarities that exist between Americans and their Russian allies. When the Russians knock wood, we are told that it is an "old Slavic custom." Later we witness a dance number, described as "a traditional Russian wedding dance," that looks suspiciously like the Charleston. The main character in the film—a visiting American—is enthralled by the entire country, especially after Tchaikovsky "did something to me way down deep inside." At one point he exclaims, "I can't get over it! Everyone seems to be having such a good time!" instead of "brooding about their souls." And after dating a young Russian woman (who contributes to the war effort by making Molotov cocktails from vodka bottles) he discovers that she is "just like an American girl." Words such as Communism and revolution were removed from the original script, and when the hero visits his girl's parents' farm (where "it is a pleasure to drive a tractor") the smiling old couple never mention that they work on a collective farm, but, instead, make several references to "our soil" and "our earth." In the last reel, the star

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[11] Quotations in Nora Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War* (New York: Dial, 1982), p. 61.

is sent home to preach the peasants' message to America: "We are soldiers side by side—in this fight for all humanity."[12]

Song of Russia's message suggested to the average American citizen that the goals of the Second World War were extremely simple. Beyond seeking the unconditional surrender of Germany and Japan, the United States was sacrificing lives and spending resources to guarantee individual liberty, political self-determination, and a new international organization to keep the peace. Stalin's acceptance of the principles of the Atlantic Charter and the outward appearance of absolute unity at the wartime conferences perpetuated the belief that such a vision was entirely possible. Indeed, as late as January 1945, a *Fortune Magazine* survey revealed that almost fifty percent of the American people thought that relations with Russia would be better in the future than in the past, twenty that they would remain "about the same" as during the war, and twenty-two that they would get worse.[13]

However, as the war's end drew nearer, tensions increasingly replaced the cordiality of this alliance of expediency, and the image of the "brave Russians" again began to sour. In April 1945, President Roosevelt's successor, Harry Truman, quickly demonstrated a tougher policy in dealing with the Soviets. At the Potsdam Conference in July, Truman and Stalin exchanged verbal blows over Soviet actions in Eastern Europe, where the Russians soon imposed undemocratic pro-Soviet governments in Poland, Rumania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Albania, and (with Tito's assistance) Yugoslavia. The temporary division of Germany following Hitler's defeat looked more and more permanent as the victors failed to agree on how to handle the question of reparations. In the Far East, the Soviet Union extended its influence into Manchuria, Mongolia and Korea, while a Communist revolution gathered momentum in China. Early in 1946, Russian demands in Iran and Turkey and suspected Soviet encouragement of communist insurgents in Greece appeared to many Americans to signal a Russian assault on the Eastern Mediterranean in an effort to outflank and overrun Western Europe. In

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[12] Sayre, *Running Time*, pp. 65, 68.

[13] "Survey of American Attitudes toward the USSR, 1945-1947," *Fortune Magazine*, Vol. 36 (October 1947), pp. 5-6.

February 1946, Stalin spoke of an irreconcilable conflict between the world's Communist and Capitalist nations, and three months later, in Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill spoke of an "iron curtain" across Central Europe. The opening guns of the Cold War had been discharged.

Within a year and a half after the end of World War II, the harsh realities of the postwar world had shattered Americans' naive and optimistic wartime image of the Russians; in this milieu, the United States opted for a "get tough" policy of active resistance to the ambitions of its rival superpower. On March 12, 1947, President Truman went before a joint session of Congress to promulgate the Truman Doctrine which officially acknowledged Washington's new containment policy and formalized the Cold War.

Not surprisingly, most of the negative attitudes from previous decades burst forth once again. Most prominent among these were the images of Communism as a false and empty creed which denied the existence of God, higher laws, and morality and related views of Soviet life as similar to a vast concentration camp in which the will of the individual had been totally crushed as the Russian people were reduced to mere slaves of a few fanatical masters. During the early postwar period, however, these visions became much more virulent and widespread and were joined by a host of new characterizations of life under Stalin—significantly different in content from those of the past.

For many Americans the world of the middle and late 1940's was very disturbing. The recent horrors of World War II, frightening new technologies such as the atomic bomb, and the worsening Cold War all produced insecurities rarely experienced in previous American peacetime history. But intense American anti-Communism was a product of deep contemporary anxieties not only about the state of the world far across the Atlantic, but also about the state of the nation very close to home. In part, Americans were worried about the Soviet Union because they were also deeply worried about themselves.

PART TWO

IMAGES OF SOVIET LIFE

II.

"The Country of the Blind": Brainwashing and Thought Control, Soviet Style

> The bolsheviks want physical control of the individual, and they also want to control his thoughts and his soul.
> —Harry S. Truman, 1952

> This modern Frankenstein....this attempt to convert masses of Soviet citizenry into dynamic, intelligent, submissive, superrobots, called the New Soviet man, threatens the very existence of civilization.
> —Robert Magidoff, *The Kremlin Vs. The People,* 1953

> Like the white dog before the phonograph, they hear only the "master's voice."
> —George Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," 1947[14]

During the early postwar period, Americans became increasingly convinced that in the USSR, as nowhere else in history, the state had taken *everything* under its control. This was believed to be the result of a system which placed society ahead of the individual. Using twentieth-century technology to full advantage, Stalin and the Politburo were charged with replacing the Government in Russia with a "machine" which "instinctively [thought] in terms of force," to smash opposition, build its own power base and generally "push people around." This brutal state apparatus was widely

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[14] Harry Truman, Address to West Point (May 20, 1952) quoted in Stanley J. Jados, *Documents on Russian-American Relations: Washington to Eisenhower* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University Press, 1965), p. 190; Robert Magidoff, *The Kremlin Vs. The People: The Story of the Cold Civil War in Stalin's Russia* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1953), p. 227; George Kennan "Mr. X," "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* (July 1947), p. 574.

viewed as having gone so far that it had gained almost complete control not only of human actions, but of human *thoughts* as well.[15]

After World War II, publications on Russian life devoted unprecedented attention to the alleged measures taken by Soviet leaders to establish mind control over their subjects. Among the books and articles which focused specifically on Red brainwashing were George S. Counts and Nucia P. Lodge's, *The Soviet System of Mind Control* (1949); R.G. Cowherd's, "Waging the Cold War" (1948); Alex Inkeles' *Public Opinion in Russia* (1950); and Howard Metz and A.H. Thomson's *Authoritarianism and the Individual* (1950). These works described how Stalin and his cronies had skilfully utilized modern science and technology, together with weapons of war and modern transportation, to shape public opinion and subjugate the masses. In history, the writers suggested, efforts to shape the minds of a people had been launched many times, but never with such "efficiency and ruthlessness." With the appearance of mass newspaper and book publishing and the development of films, radio and television, Stalin had weapons of influence at his disposal "almost beyond conception, fifty years ago."[16]

The Soviets' use of radio was described by American observers as a typical example of attempts to manipulate the masses. In the USSR, Americans learned, radio reception was not predominantly dependent on ordinary radio; instead it relied on a network of wired speakers linked in receiving networks joining all the listeners in a given area. By 1951, Alex Inkeles estimated, there would be 10,000,000 of the speakers strategically placed all over the Soviet Union. Each one gave the government total control over all the programming available to the listening audience while, at the same time, "completely" eliminating the possibility of intrusion by radio propaganda from the West. For the relatively few Russians with open air

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[15] Brooks Atkinson, "Russia 1946," *Life*, Vol. 21 (July 22, 1946), p. 85; George S. Counts and Nucia P. Lodge, *The Country of the Blind; The Soviet System of Mind Control* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1949), p.158.

[16] Quotations in Counts and Lodge, *The Country of the Blind*, pp. xv, 349; Alex Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), p. 5. Also see Howard H. Metz and A. H. Thomson, *Authoritarianism and the Individual* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1950), pp. 363-364; R. G. Cowherd, "Waging the Cold War," *Current History*, Vol. 15 (December 1948), pp. 334-337.

receivers, Radio Moscow had reportedly constructed the most powerful transmitters in Europe. These massive structures not only blared the Kremlin's latest pronouncements into every corner of the USSR and beyond, but, as all American school children knew, jammed "Radio Liberty," the VOA, and the BBC. (The chairman of the board at RCA, David Sarnoff, was one of many Americans so concerned about what he described as this "smothering of the truth" that he called for a massive counterthrust. Sarnoff wanted free phonographs to be smuggled to people living behind the Iron Curtain, and then pro-American propaganda would be stamped onto unbreakable cardboard records and periodically dropped from the skies like leaflets!)[17]

As more and more Americans were discovering in magazines such as *Time* and *Collier's,* all forms of mass communication in the USSR fell under the "absolute control" of the Kremlin and the Communist Party. The Ministry of Propaganda and Agitation, Howard Metz explained, ran everything, including radio and television, newspaper, journal and book publishing, the film industry, and the fine arts. Each sector or level of this Ministry, throughout the USSR, was closely scrutinized by the next higher party unit until the top of the "pyramid" was reached at the Central Administration. Allegedly, the informer, the government official, the MVD agent, and the party member all worked together with great effectiveness to ensure purity in any areas of communication which had not been "sanitized" ahead of time by the Ministry. At every stage, Americans reported, those responsible had to keep their eyes focused on Joseph Stalin and such "Politburo pundits" as Molotov and Zhadnov as "the final authority on everything." Punishments of job loss, public disgrace, forced labour, exile, or death were said to have been dished out to deviants.[18]

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[17] Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia,* pp. 8, 235, 244, 248; J. Fred MacDonald, *Television and the Red Menace: The Video Road to Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1985), pp. 116-117. Also see "Thought Control in the Soviet Union," *US State Department Bulletin,* Vol. 25 (December 3, 1951), pp. 895-903.

[18] Metz and Thomson, *Authoritarianism and the Individual,* pp. 199, 203, 209; Inkeles, *Public Opinion in Soviet Russia,* pp. 36-37.

The American public was made well aware that doctoring facts to fit the party line was business as usual in the USSR. Russia-watchers frequently emphasized that, as far as the Kremlin was concerned, *everything* was for the sake of politics. The Soviet Central Committee was hostile toward any notions of history for history's sake, art for art's sake or even laughter for laughter's sake. In *This Is Russia, Un-censored!* (1951), Pulitzer-Prize winning journalist Edmund Stevens summed up the overall nature of Soviet propaganda: "Truth, falsehood, good and evil, right and wrong, theories, beliefs and personalities—in all spheres, climes, or ages—are judged solely by whether or not they serve or hinder the Communist purpose." George Counts summed up his vision of the situation succinctly when he stated that, to the Russian people, "the voice of the Party is the voice of God."[19]

By mid-century, Americans had come to view the Soviet "octopus" of mind control as so vast and all-embracing that it had achieved (or nearly achieved) all of its four alleged goals: (1) to close the eyes of the Soviet people to the miserable and cruel realities that Communism had inflicted upon them by whipping up hatreds (perhaps even warfare) against the "free world," especially the United States, (2) to provide an artificial glorification of the Soviet nation and system as a substitute for any actual realization of the revolution's promises, (3) to enlarge the power of Stalin and the cult of his infallibility by portraying him as a "living god," and (4) to turn the Soviet people into absolute conformists—hordes of slavish robots willing to bend to the Leader's *every* order.

As early as November 1945, the *Saturday Evening Post*'s editors had commented on the Soviets' renewed propaganda blitz against the West. Through an endless communist verbal "assault of anti-foreign stories and slogans," the *Post* explained, radio broadcasts and newspaper articles taught those in Russian-occupied lands to hate all nations that did not lie under the Kremlin's sphere of domination. If a dissident voice is raised in protest, "it is silenced." In 1950 Paul G. Hoffman, the director of the Economic Cooperative Administration, concurred, commenting that the Communists tried "to

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[19] Edmund Stevens, *This Is Russia, Un-Censored!* (New York: Eton Books, 1951), p. 118; Counts and Lodge, *The Country of the Blind*, p. 158.

capture the minds of the people by the well-known Goebbels method. They use the big lie—they make glittering promises—but above all they seek to instill fear and hatred." In an *Atlantic Monthly* article by William Donovan in 1948 ("Stop Russia's Subversive War"), the Soviet propaganda machine was charged with attempting to blacken the international image of the United States "with the very crimes of which she [the USSR] herself stands accused" (warmongering, the police state, enslavement, etc.). "In broadcasts to their own people," wrote the general, "the Soviets go to further extremes. America is pictured as an enemy which the Russians are urged to hate."[20]

An evil combination of anti-Westernism and conditioned faith was described as being the basis of the Soviet school system. In her *Reader's Digest* article, "Education in Soviet Russia," Soviet defector O. Anisimov warned the public that in Russia teachers operating under the strictest censorship were expected to teach a new religion (Communism) based on hatred. Educators were told to "instill into [their] pupils the belief that it is scientifically established that the only road to universal happiness lies through hatred, fear and the annihilation of millions who, from self interest, bar the entrance to Paradise." This "truly diabolical system of education," Anisimov wrote, was "designed to turn out robots equipped with technological skill, a synthetic philosophy of life and a sense of mission as urgent as the faith of the early Christian missionaries." In short, like the Hitler Youth leaders of the previous decade, Soviet school instructors "were to shape a generation of fanatics prepared to justify mass murder." The House Committee on Un-American Activities concurred with Anisimov as it sought to alert Americans to the "sinister motives" behind the USSR's school programs that taught children to love Communism and to hate all opponents of the socialist system: "They mean to take him [the Russian child] from the nursery, put him in uniform with the hammer and sickle flag in one hand and a gun in the other, and send him out to conquer the world." In this milieu even the presumably positive aspects of the Soviet education

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[20] *Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 218 (November 10, 1945), p. 132; MacDonald, *Television and the Red Menace*, p. 18; William J. Donovan, "Stop Russia's Subversive War," *The Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 181 (May 1948), p. 28.

system—such as the Soviets' energetic campaign against illiteracy—were looked upon with a jaundiced eye.[21]

America-bashing was also said to be a dominant feature of the Soviet arts. As the Politburo cleverly whipped up hatreds (thereby distracting its own citizens' attention from the dismal state of affairs at home), it allegedly "harangued" and "bullied" writers into writing stories, playwrights into creating plays, and film producers into shooting movies that trashed the Stars and Stripes. "Denouncing America has become the surest key to literary, stage and political success," Edward Stevens told his readers, "the quickest way for a writer to fill his pockets and prove his party loyalty." The *New York Times* and *Life* were among the publications which insisted that this hatred mentality "permeated all fields of life" in the USSR. Evidence to support this claim included: a Soviet play comparing Truman to Hitler; a poem about a Nuremberg-style trial for American war criminals (after World War III); and a children's story about Christmas in America—where families decorated trees with miniature tanks and bombs. Tristram Coffin wrote one of the more colourful accounts on this subject in the *Reader's Digest,* "As the Russians See Us" (1951). Ivan Amerikanets, average citizen, Coffin wrote, "is a loud and boisterous fellow who affects flashy clothing, lives in dire poverty while surrounded by luxury, and goes to Ku Klux Klan lynching parties for entertainment. To the Russian people, America was depicted as a fascist land of greed, murder, injustice, racism, Wall Street bandits, and FBI "terror police." "These myths are dinned into Russian ears in a constant flow," Coffin concluded. "It is actually a mirror of Soviet life. None of it sounds at all improbable to the Russians."[22]

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[21] O. Anisimov, "Education in Soviet Russia," *Reader's Digest* (October 1950), p. 59; O. Anisimov, p.58; Committee on Un-American Activities, *100 Things You Should Know About COMMUNISM* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1951), p. 47.

[22] William J. Donovan, "Stop Russia's Subversive War," *The Atlantic Monthly,* Vol. 181 (May 1948), p. 28; Magidoff, *In Anger and Pity,* pp. 74-75; Stevens, *This Is Russia, Un-Censored!,* p.117; *Ibid*; Playwright Anatoly Surov's *The Mad Haberdasher* (1948) is described at length in *Ibid* pp. 110-118; Poet Evgeny Dolmatovsky's "The Word About Tomorrow" is in Gleb Struve, *Soviet Russian Literature, 1917-1950* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1951), p. 349; Tristram Coffin, "As the Russians See Us," *Reader's Digest* (December 1951), p. 37; Coffin, p. 40. "Mister Twister," American capitalist, his whining wife, and spoiled daughter Suzie are the wealthy counterparts to "Ivan Amerikanets" described in Arthur Goodfriend, *If You Were Born In Russia* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1950), pp. 34-35. For further commentary on anti-American propaganda in the USSR see James Reston, "For

Listeners to NBC Radio's fictional detective series, *Mr. Moto,* learned that the Soviets would stop at nothing to discredit their arch-enemy. In a program broadcast June 21, 1950, Mr. Moto ("New York's keenest Japanese-American detective") slips behind the Iron Curtain to free kidnapped American businessman Alec Gleason. There he learns that, for weeks, the imprisoned Gleason has been badgered by a Russian doctor with a brainwashing contraption (the device comes complete with electrodes, a red light, and an "evil hum"). Reduced to a babbling tool of the Soviets, the once proud Gleason can now utter only Communist polemics such as: "In America there are only two kinds of people—Wall Street warmongers and starving workers," and "I have never known anyone who owned a washing machine." Moto (who passes as a Russian because of his "slanty eyes") is told that the hapless businessman is scheduled to speak at a youth rally in Moscow. There Alec Gleason will denounce his American citizenship and slander his homeland. The clever Mr. Moto manages to smuggle Alec out of Eastern Europe just in time. Before exiting East Germany, however, Mrs. Gleason—enraged at her husband's programming—tears into a Red Army officer involved in the escape scheme purely for profit. She delivers a punishing lecture on the evils of dictatorship and the denial of the Four Freedoms, to which the Red can only reply, sheepishly, "You, you must hate me." "No," replies the bristling Mrs. Gleason, "I don't hate you, you're too pathetic."[23]

Along with the "hate-the-West" campaign, Stalin worship and praise for everything Soviet was another favourite topic of American observers. In *Newsweek's* "It's Stalinmas, Not Christmas" (1949), it was explained that while Stalin remained mysterious and unaccountable to the Soviet people, his photographs were "everywhere...watching them." With pictures accompanying its text, *Newsweek* described the omnipresence of the "kindly

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Soviet Eyes Only," *New York Times* (November 20, 1953); "Curse You, Sinister Sam!" *Collier's,* Vol. 124 (September 17, 1949), p. 78; F. D. Whitehair, "Hate America Campaign," *Vital Speeches,* Vol. 18 (September 1, 1952), pp. 685-7; A. Kendrick, "Hate, With Russian Dressing," *Collier's,* Vol. 120 (May 8, 1948), pp. 20-21. For a more academic discussion see Frederick C. Barghoorn's "What Russians Think of Americans," *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 26 (January 1948), pp. 290-301.

[23] "Mr. Moto: Assignment 031," NBC Radio (June 20, 1951), rebroadcast on CKNW, Vancouver, B.C., August 5, 1992.

looking" portraits: "Stalin is there...at a sports festival...at a chess game on a Russian ship...voting for the supreme Soviet...outside a humble department store...and floating on the ocean." Those Russians who could afford gifts, *Newsweek* observed, could choose from an array of Stalin novelty items from song collections to miniature statues.[24]

In his review of classroom texts, *I Want to Be Like Stalin!* (1948), George Counts stated that the title of his book would also be most appropriate for describing the entire Soviet school system. More and more, he claimed, Stalin as Leader, Stalin as Scientist, and Stalin in various other guises emerged as the "Greatest of the Great." *Collier's* magazine apparently agreed when it observed that "Stalin [was] addressed in terms so fulsome" that they would have "embarrassed Ghenghis Khan." Examples of these efforts to cultivate a blind and unswerving loyalty to the Leader and the Party were plentiful and often padded with quotes from actual Soviet publications. In *Communism and the Conscience of the West* (1948), for example, Bishop Fulton Sheen made reference to Soviet high school texts written during World War II which insisted that Stalin "never slept"; and in the postwar versions, Sheen discovered, Stalin was "envisaged as 'being able to see through a wall and illumine the world like the sun.'" NBC and Associated press correspondent Robert Magidoff found other "typically absurd" passages in a widely circulated volume entitled *Zemlya Russkaya* (*Russian Land*). Here a teary-eyed Soviet citizen exclaims: "Stalin! Always we bear in our souls his dear name. And here in the Kremlin, his presence touches us at every step. We walk on stones which he may have trod only recently. Let us fall on our knees and kiss those holy footprints." And American film critics reported that similar tears were shed in Soviet films such as *The Fall of Berlin* (1950) and *The Donets Miners* (1951). In the first of these, the director was described by John Rimberg as displaying "almost unmatched cynicism" when—with the city of Berlin barely occupied by the Red Army—Stalin's plane arrives at the airport and the Generalissimo proceeds to offer paternalistic encouragement to enthusiastic crowds. The second film

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[24] "It's Stalinmas, Not Christmas," *Newsweek*, Vol. 34 (December 26, 1949), p.22; "Everywhere, Tovarich, Uncle Joe Is Watching You," *Newsweek*, Vol. 34 (December 26, 1949), p. 23; "It's Stalinmas...," p. 22.

reviewed portrays labourers working in mines "comparable to the Moscow subway," under the direction of Stalin and his ministers. Rimberg quotes old miner Stepan Nedolya, who apparently cannot contain himself: "'Our beloved Comrade Stalin cares for the miners as if we were children!'" ("Tears of gratitude stream down his face.") Rimberg and Paul Babitsky wrote that "in every case [of the Soviet documentaries] Stalin towers at the center, in gigantic dimensions, overshadowing all others and inspiring them to heroic exploits." Such sappy displays seemed to confirm suspicions in the minds of many Americans that Stalin was a megalomaniac who possessed an insatiable appetite for the enlargement of himself to the point at which he was being endowed with "the attributes of a living god." One historian noted that "it should be clear here that we are dealing with the most striking example in all history of a man who has succeeded in inventing himself."[25]

The Soviets' apparent penchant for airbrushing history was described at length in Bertram D. Wolfe's disturbing "Operation Rewrite: Agony of Soviet Historians" (*Foreign Affairs,* 1952). Wolfe characterized history under Joseph Stalin as a "weapon" which was used primarily to justify changing Soviet policy through reference to "'facts' and 'documents'" of the past. Russian history, he explained, changed course with each political shift or change in mood, frequently contradicting itself and constantly being redirected and even suddenly reversed:

> Stalin's latest word is always the last word in history, even though Marx, Engels, Lenin and yesterday's Stalin may all be united against it....All books, articles, and documents that testify to the contrary must be consigned to the Orwellian "memory hole" to be consumed in flames, or must be "rectified" and brought up to date without any mention of the fact that there was ever an earlier version.

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[25] George S. Counts, *I Want to Be Like Stalin* (London: V. Gallancz, 1948), pp. 30-31; Goodfriend, *If You Were Born In Russia* ((New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1950), p. 18; Fulton J. Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1948), p. 154; Robert Magidoff, *In Anger and Pity: A Report on Russia* (New York: Doubleday, 1949), p. 257; Paul Babitsky and John Rimberg, *The Soviet Film Industry* (New York: Praeger, 1955), pp. 195; *Ibid*; Bertram D. Wolfe, "Operation Rewrite: Agony of Soviet Historians," *Foreign Affairs,* Vol. 31 (October 1952), pp. 45-46. Also see "Compleat Genius: Or, What Stalin Does In his Spare Time," *Newsweek,* Vol. 33 (May 9, 1949), p. 30.

In this milieu, undesirable historical figures such as Leon Trotsky became "unpersons," groups like the Volga Germans became "unpeople," and politically embarrassing objects in national museums became "unobjects." There were no safe topics—historians would appear, disappear and reappear, while others were never heard from again. "The process is vast and all-embracing," wrote Wolfe in his chilling conclusion, "even as the total state is total." "It takes total organization and power, not propaganda skill, but the union of pen and sword in a single hand—to do so complete a job."[26]

As with history, Americans regarded Soviet science as an effective weapon of politics, an "instrument," wrote George Counts, "through which the Party conquers nature, vanquishes enemies, and builds socialist society." American books, magazines, and newspapers frequently fumed or poked fun at the Kremlin's efforts to instill pride in its subjects by claiming that "the majority, if not all" of the world's greatest discoveries and inventions were the products of Russian minds. In *This is Russia, Uncensored!,* journalist Edmund Stevens wryly summed up claims made in the Soviet media:

> The Italian Marconi shamelessly appropriated the radio invented by the Russian Scientist Popov. The German Siemens literally stole the blueprints for the telegraph from Yakobi (Morse isn't mentioned). The Wright brothers usurped the glory of Mozhaisky (credited with flying his airplane near St. Petersburg twenty years before the event at Kitty Hawk)....Continuing the list: Yablochkov, not Edison, invented the electric-light bulb, which was also known as the "Russian light"....others fathered rocket propulsion, the steam-driven locomotive, steamboat, tractor, submarine, the balloon, the internal combustion engine, the tank, the television, synthetic rubber, the helicopter, penicillin, the bicycle, the law of the conservation of mass, the principles of radar and a host of others.

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[26] Wolfe, "Operation Rewrite," p. 40; Wolfe, p. 43; Wolfe, p. 39; Wolfe, p. 57. Also see Gleb Struve, *Soviet Russian Literature, 1917-1950.*

Perhaps the ultimate deception, however, was uncovered by two other Soviet-watchers who reported that the Russians were now crediting themselves, "and not Columbus," with having discovered America.[27]

Stalin's thesis of Soviet supremacy made American headlines in a big way when the Soviets made fools of themselves during l'affaire Lysenko in 1947. Trofim D. Lysenko was a Soviet botanist who claimed that he had successfully transmitted acquired characteristics from one generation of plants to its offspring. Rather than attempt to explain to Stalin why this was impossible, Lysenko's fellow-academicians went along with the new doctrine. Almost immediately, Lysenko was elevated to the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Now, at least in the USSR, proletarian biology had finally swept bourgeois biology aside. The liberal American magazine *The Nation* found the efforts to impose ideology on breeding understandably humorous. "From now on," wrote its editor, "plants and animals in the Soviet Union will transmit acquired characteristics, or the Central Committee of the Communist Party—and the MVD—will know why." Most other accounts, however, were not so jovial. *Russia Magazine*, one of the few American publications which had actually bought into Lysenko's theory, was terrified at the prospects of a world overrun by Soviet-grown mutants. "Theoretically," its editors reasoned, the diabolical Reds could "create new races of human beings," a "master race of supermen, and races of beastlike creatures fit only for the slave camps." But American botanist R.C. Cook offered a more typical caveat in his article "Lysenko's Marxist Genetics." "When intellectual freedom does not exist," he wrote, "the consequences for science are disastrous." Cook and several of his colleagues produced a series of articles which insisted that Marxist dogma had ruined science in Russia, forcing recantations of scientists whose knowledge was not acceptable to Stalin and the extermination of scientists who produced undesirable results in their studies. For Cook, Conway Zirkle, H.J. Muller, and other American

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[27] Counts and Lodge, *The Soviet System of Mind Control*, p. 193; Edmund Stevens, *This Is Russia, Un-Censored!*, pp. 156-157; Magidoff, *The Kremlin vs. the People*, p. 232; Nicholas Prychodko, *Moscow's Drive for World Domination* (Pamphlet, Free World Publishing: 1951), p. 231. Two similar accounts include J.P. Thomas, "Russia Grabs Our Inventions," *American Magazine*, Vol. 143 (June 1947), p. 16, and, in cartoon form, William O'Brian, "Russians Invented Everything, They Say," *Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 223 (May 19, 1951), pp. 44-45.

researchers, the bogus logic of Lysenko's genetics was a sad reflection of "the warped Communist mind" which had "enslaved" the entire Soviet scientific community and sought to destroy "scientific fact" in a postwar wave of political bigotry "unequaled" in human history.[28]

In their discussions of the forced confessions and the absolute subjugation of members of the Soviet scientific community, the American botanists believed that they had touched on a much wider problem. Like many others, they were convinced that Soviet propaganda and terror had succeeded in robbing the Russian people of their individuality, creativity, integrity, sense of identity and, quite likely, their desire to revolt.[29] In *Authoritarianism and the Individual,* even the private world of the individual's own mind was said to be hemmed in by the all-embracing Soviet monster. Metz and Thomson asserted that, with the help of new technologies, the state placed so much demand on its citizens' time and imagination, worked so hard to monopolize all their waking attention, and lashed out so severely at any non-conformist outward behaviour, that only the most imaginative and stubborn individual could possibly maintain any sense of private freedom. Nina Alexeiev agreed in her article in *Reader's Digest,* "I Didn't Want My Children to Grow Up in Soviet Russia" (1947). "The most tragically unhappy men and women in a totalitarian society," she told readers of the *Digest,* "are those with minds of their own—or with hearts responsive to human travail. There is no room for 'softness' or sympathy or mental independence. The only way to survive is to conform." The editor of the *New York Post,* James A. Wechsler, summed up his own dark image in

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[28] *The Nation* quoted in Geoffrey Perrett, *A Dream of Greatness: The American People, 1945-1963* (New York: Coward, McCann and Geoghegan, 1979), p. 104; *Russia Magazine* (June 1950), p. 10. Descriptions of Soviet science in R. C. Cook, "Lysenko's Marxist Genetics," *Journal of Heredity,* Vol. 40 (1949), pp. 169-202; H. J. Muller, "The Crushing of Genetics in the USSR," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists,* Vol. 12 (1948), pp. 369-371; H. J. Muller, "The Destruction of Science in the USSR," *Saturday Review of Literature* (December 4, 1948); H.J. Muller, "Back to Barbarism Scientifically," *Saturday Review of Literature* (December 11, 1948); and Conway Zirkle, *Death of a Science in Russia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1949).

[29] The assertion that the Russian people had, for the most part, been tricked into accepting their system and had no desire to revolt can be found in Walter Bedell Smith, "Why the Russian People Don't Rebel," *Saturday Evening Post,* Vol. 222 (November 26, 1949), 22-23, 105-108; H. E. Salisbury, *New York Times* (October 14, 1950), p. 6; and J. B. Philips, "Iron Curtain of Ignorance," *Newsweek,* Vol. 33 (January 31, 1949), p. 32.

his widely read book, *The Age of Suspicion* (1953): "This [Stalin's Russia] was the concrete triumph of the monolithic mind; this was the rigid pattern of communist movement expanded to a whole society...the functioning of the mind dealt with in the same terms as factory output.[30]

Some Americans argued that the effects of this mechanization of humanity could be seen most clearly in the leveling-down, homogenization and ultimate destruction of Russia's once rich cultural life. One of them was defector Andrei Olkhovsky, whose book *Music Under the Soviets: The Agony of an Art* touched on all the general features which most often recurred in American descriptions of Soviet art, literature and theater. In scarcely two paragraphs, Olkhovsky managed to describe Soviet music as "artificial," "lifeless," "oversimplified," "unoriginal," "tasteless," "banal," "monochrome," "functional," "homophonic" (i.e., having the same pitch or sound), "mechanical," and "maddening." Fenced off from the rest of the world by an Iron Curtain and under the absolute control of a few Party bureaucrats, the creative originality of Russian music was being reduced to "nonexistence." Artists were being replaced or transformed into mere "technicians" who churned out folk tunes and hymns to hydroelectric plants and cement works. (As for the meaning of criticism in the USSR, Olkhovsky wrote, it was "well known: it is the authority which the Party possesses to assert that white is black and black is white.") The leading form, "the mass song," reportedly resounded from early in the morning until late at night in the ears of millions of people. "Soviet citizens work and rest—in so far as it is possible to rest at all—with its insistent melody in their ears," moaned Olkhovsky. "And when they sleep the mass-song takes to the ether, filling the airwaves with communist propaganda." With no escape from this politicized pounding, the mass-song was said to "cripple the ear, memory and taste" of the listener, sometimes even driving more sensitive citizens "out of their skulls." Horrified by what he perceived as the "complete enslavement of

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[30] Metz and Thomson, *Authoritarianism and the Individual*, pp. 363-364; Nina I. Alexiev, "I Didn't Want My Children to Grow Up in Soviet Russia," *Reader's Digest* (June 1947), p. 15; James A. Wechsler, *The Age of Suspicion* (1953) quoted in Benson L. Grayson, ed., *The American Image of Russia, 1917-1977* (New York: Ungar, 1978), p. 132.

creativity for political purposes," Olkhovsky had an ominous warning for his fellow-American audience:

> The symptoms of the agony of Soviet music have a deeper and broader significance than their relation to the present day and music alone. They are the component parts of that gigantic struggle in which the contemporary world is engaged concerning the question: which is more important, man or the system which enslaves him, the personal or the impersonal, the spiritual or the material.... It is a struggle for life, a defense of humanity against barbarism.[31]

This belief, that the Russian people were being ruthlessly transformed into a mob of dull, godless, and militaristic robots, was a theme repeated over and over again by America's leaders and the popular media.[32] On his immensely popular early fifties television program *Life Is Worth Living,* Bishop Fulton J. Sheen labelled the root cause of this regimentation as the Soviet system's absolute suffocation of liberty. "Liberty for them exists only when the citizens desire what the state desires, and do what the dictators order, and think only what the Party thinks," he said. "Such is the liberty of dogs under the leash of their masters, and the liberty of cuckoos in cuckoo clocks, or the liberty of prisoners in prison." In April 1950, President Truman expressed similar sentiments, describing Soviet Communism as "a force which crushes the minds and bodies of those under its control.... The State is

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[31] Andrei Olkhovsky, *Music Under the Soviets: The Agony of an Art* (New York: Praeger, 1955), p. 160; Olkhovsky, p. 272; Olkhovsky, p. 11; Olkhovsky, p. 162; Olkhovsky, p. 13; Olkhovsky, p. 276. The "mechanization" of Soviet culture is also depicted in Harriet Barland, "Stalin's Tastes: Review of Taming of the Arts," *New Republic* (April 30, 1951), p. 20; Joseph P. Lash, "Artists and Bureaucrats; Soviet Doctrine," *New Republic,* Vol. 120 (January 10, 1949), pp. 11-14; and M. Koriakov, "Tolstoy in Soviet Hands," Vol. 182, *The Atlantic Monthly* (October 1948), pp. 53-57.

[32] See O. Anisimov, "Education in Soviet Russia," *Reader's Digest* (October 1950), p. 59; Deane, John R. *The Strange Alliance* (New York: Viking, 1947), p. 4; and "Preview of the War We Do Not Want," *Collier's* (October 27, 1951), p. 38. Russian people as "robots" is also the subject of a Resolution referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, dated April 17, 1951. The resolution is quoted in Roman Smal-Stocki, *The Nationality Problem of the Soviet Union, and Russian Communist Imperialism* (Milwaulkee: Bruce, 1952), p. 465.

the all-powerful arbiter of men's words and acts. Human dignity and human freedom are meaningless."[33]

One of the most influential contributions to this vision of Stalinist Russia and its people was the anonymous article by "Mr. X" (George Kennan) on "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," published first in *Foreign Affairs* in July 1947 and subsequently, for a wider audience, in *Life* and *Reader's Digest.* According to Kennan, the former chargé d' affaires in Moscow, there was little hope of the Russian robots being turned back into humans any time soon. In Russia, he wrote, the "iron discipline of the Communist Party" and belief in the "infallibility" of the leaders rendered any hope of changes from below inconceivable at the present time. "The individuals who are components of this machine," he wrote, "are unamenable to argument or reason." No "normal logic" could reach them.[34]

The degree to which the Russian-as-submissive-robot image had entrenched itself in the American mind was demonstrated in a 1948 American Legion "docudrama" portraying the Soviet takeover of a Mid-Western town. Following a cartoon invasion of Europe by goose-stepping Red Army soldiers, a narrator breaks in to describe footage of even more ominous developments:

> Ah, but this is Europe you say? But let's see what can happen elsewhere, in say the small town of Mosinee, Wisconsin. [We see a tranquil street scene]. Peaceful, isn't it? But the Red trenchant falls and the chief of police is hustled off to jail. Next, public utilities are seized by fifth columnists. Watch carefully what happens to an editor who operates under a free press. He goes to jail too and his newspaper is confiscated—exit freedom of thought. Yes, this is life under the Soviet form of government.

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[33] Bishop Fulton J. Sheen quoted in J. Fred MacDonald, *Television and the Red Menace: The Video Road to Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1985), p. 129; Harry Truman quoted in *Russia Magazine* (June 1950), p. 15.

[34] Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," p. 573; Kennan, p. 574.

We are then shown another series of clips with now stone-faced citizens of Mosinee raising a Red ("Soviet States of America") Star and portrait of Stalin over city hall, standing in soup lines, and marching mechanically down the town's streets carrying "Stalin is The Leader" and "The Communist Party is the Only Party" signs—their right arms raised in obedient salute. Utterly drained of their humanity, the poor Mosinians look as if they would have been better off dead (except perhaps for one woman who somehow managed to hang on to her mink stole and jewelry). In an emotionally-charged voice, the narrator signs off with a warning: "The little town of Mosinee made this experiment for 24 hours, a public service to *all* America. It can't happen here? Well, this is what it looks like....IF IT SHOULD!"[35]

Whether described as "robots," "cogs," "cannon fodder," "atoms," or "masses with a capital M," to most Americans the Russian people seemed fated to be stripped of their identities, and the Soviet Union as a whole reduced to a regimented "country of the blind."[36]

In American popular culture, the obsession with Soviet-like conformity and regimentation was reflected in the slew of alien invasion, "we'll-all-be-zombies" films of the early 1950's. These two-hour flirtations with doom featured Martians, sea monsters, and giant insects serving as direct stand-ins for Communists. Cold, calculating and completely lacking in

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[35] The American Legion film is shown in part in *The Atomic Café* (1982) on Thorn Emi Video; also see "U.S. Town Stages a Communist Coup," *Life* (May 15, 1950), pp. 46-47. Another mock-Soviet takeover occurred for 13 hours on Los Angeles radio station KMPC on September 28, 1951. With two men in Red Army uniforms patrolling the premises, the station announced "Red Friday at KMPC." During the day, listeners were offered "Breadcrust soup" recipes on the morning cooking show, told that listening to American jazz "is a crime punishable by death," and constantly threatened with arrest. To avoid alarming the public, programs were interspersed with frequent announcements that it was all a hoax. Gladwin Hill, "Station on Coast Mocks Red Radio," *New York Times* (September 29, 1951), p. 6.

Fears of a Soviet takeover were later spoofed in the 1966 film *The Russians Are Coming, The Russians Are Coming!* By the early 1980's, however, Hollywood sensed that some of the American public once again saw this threat as serious business: Commie-life in the former United States is as gloomy and vacuous as ever in the mid-eighties made for TV mini-series *Amerika;* Chuck Norris almost single-handedly takes on a Soviet-backed invasion force in the action film *Invasion U.S.A.* (1985); and, in my personal favourite, teenage football players head for the Colorado hills in pick-up trucks loaded with shotguns and archery sets to battle Russians and Cubans in *Red Dawn* (1984).

[36] These descriptions are offered in Metz and Thomson, *Authoritarianism and the Individual,* P. 364, and George Moorad, "Where Are the Russian People?" in the Overseas Press Club of America, *As We See Russia* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1948), p. 117; Counts and Lodge, *The Soviet System of Mind Control.* p. 349.

emotion, these creatures showed the same robot-like traits that were said to plague Stalin's subjects and, as the movies delighted in pointing out, Americans were vulnerable to them.[37]

The Thing from Another World (1953), *Them!* (1953), *Invaders from Mars* (1953), and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) are prominent examples of the numerous anti-communist/anti-conformist films of the pod and blob variety. The Thing is a giant man-eating creature resembling a carrot that crashlands at the North Pole in a flying saucer and before long is devouring men and dogs as it reproduces at will. While the Thing appears to be a part of the natural world, a kind of super-vegetable, film historian Peter Biskind has pointed out that its behaviour more resembles that of a robot than an animal. Like a machine, the Thing feels no pain, has no emotions, and is not restrained by moral principles. *Them!,* one of Warner Brothers highest grossing movies of 1953, features giant homicidal ants that run amok in the Los Angeles sewer system. A scientist explains that "ants are savage, ruthless, and courageous fighters...the only creatures on earth aside from man who make war....Chronic aggressors, they make slaves of those they can't kill." It is also repeated that the ingenious ants (like Martians) have an unsettling talent for "social organization." If ants are like humans it is obvious which people Americans regarded as the most antlike. The political allegory of *Them!,* anti-Communism, is carried a step further in the nightmarish *Invaders from Mars* (1953). This is the story of a small boy who knows that Martians are kidnapping prominent citizens and implanting crystals in their brains which will drive them to commit treasonous acts. The Martians and the programmed Earthlings are all are under the control of the same leader—a disembodied silver head inside a plastic fish bowl who gives orders like a commissar—they are "slaves to his will." Worst of all, by assuming *human* form, the clever Martians are insidiously normal; like real Commies, the spaced-out folks must be ferreted out! In *Body Snatchers,* released three years later, humans actually become "hosts to an alien form of life." Extra-terrestrial plant pods want "not just our bodies but our minds," so

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[37] William W. Savage, Jr., *Comic Books and America, 1945-1954* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1990), p. 37.

the body snatchers are "taking us over cell by cell." The Thing, the ants, the Martians and the pods proliferate identities. The beings they create are interchangeable, members of a mechanistic mass society; devoid or robbed of their souls they lack any sense of emotion or stamp of individuality. Significantly, the alien creatures are also technologically advanced, except for the giant ants which we learn are the mutant by-products of atomic testing. They are all, in the purest sense, the New Soviet Man.[38]

At the movies, the audience watched heads in fish tanks and queen ants direct the creation of a world too horrible for Americans to even contemplate. In the real world USSR, Americans believed, such mindless mass behaviour already existed, and the Soviet octopus was purportedly reaching out for more. What kind of people were behind all this?

Americans had always sensed that Communists were not "normal," not natural, just not *right*; and during the early Cold War era, some writers suspected Soviet leaders and many of their most fanatical followers of being mentally unbalanced, even crazy. In his book *Dictators and Disciples* (1948), Dr. Gustav Bychowski discussed Stalin and his most loyal subjects as mental cases. Bychowski cautioned that it was dangerous to base America's foreign policy on the belief that a Communist response to it would be rational. This image of Communists as lunatics and impossible to deal with reasonably was evident in American responses to the speeches of Andrei Vishinsky, Stalin's Assistant Commissar of Foreign Affairs. During the fall of 1947, Vishinsky unleashed several explosive tirades at the United Nations—condemning the entire range of United States foreign policy as flagrant economic imperialism. Newspapers and magazines in the United States reacted by portraying Vishinsky as an irrational "kook" wildly spewing Red diatribes. Here is the description of one Vishinsky speech offered by *Time* magazine:

> The voice, now hoarse, now high pitched, now menacing, now withering, was the voice of Vishinsky; the hand that manipulated the speaker was the pudgy hand of Stalin....It was the voice of revolutionary Communism shouting that

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[38] Peter Biskind, *Seeing Is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), p. 134.

> Russia was being encircled and calling for the overthrow of capitalism. It was the voice of Prosecutor Vishinsky of the Moscow purge trials, shouting monstrous falsifications as matters of legal fact. It was the voice of Hitler, screaming that Germany was threatened by her smaller neighbours.

The House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) suggested that the origins of this "lunacy" could be traced all the way back to the "father of Communism," Karl Marx. Seemingly oblivious to the sharp rise in industrial output in post-revolutionary Russia, and to social and economic conditions in the Third World that might make such a Communist system appear most appealing, the Committee charged: "Marx had the idea that people could never be happy, have enough to eat, make enough money, or have success in the kind of world we know. The USA is living proof that he was as wrong as a man can be." In its booklet *100 Things You Should Know About COMMUNISM,* the House Committee described Marx as an "evil and crazy man" whose "preaching of destruction appealed especially to people who wanted to rule others and didn't know how. It still does."[39]

By the late 1940's, hundreds of crazed Soviets were showing up in American films, novels, and comic books as well. Out of the more than fifty anti-Communist films that flooded from Hollywood's movie studios between 1948 and 1953, Nora Sayre writes that one of her favourite "mad scenes" appears in Republic's *Red Menace* (1949). The segment features a Communist woman in Washington, D.C., who is beset by imaginary drumbeats while being politely questioned by the Department of Justice. The Red functionary shrieks, "You're too late!....Our ammunition is already here." The soundtrack starts pounding as we too begin to hear drums. "The legions—they're entering the city. In a few minutes they'll be here." The drums rumble even louder. "Hear them!" she laughs deliriously. "You fools! Don't you hear them!" As she is led out of the room cackling, one puzzled FBI agent says to

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[39] Gustav Bychowski, *Dictators and Disciples* (New York: International University Press, 1948); *Time,* Vol. 50 (September 29, 1947), p. 20. [Similar reactions to Vishinsky appeared in Edmund Snow, "Venomous Doctor Vishinsky," *Saturday Evening Post,* Vol. 223 (October 11, 1950), pp. 19-21, and the *New York Times* (September 19, 1951)]; H.U.A.C., *100 Things You Should Know About COMMUNISM and Religion,* p. 33; *Ibid,* p. 34.

the other, "We only wanted her statement for clarification." The main villain in Mickey Spillane's *One Lonely Night* (published in 1951, it sold more than three million copies) is also an insane lackey of Uncle Joe's. Just before he chokes him to death, Mike Hammer tells this master killer, Oscar Deamer: "You were a Commie, Oscar, because you were batty. It was the only philosophy that would appeal to your crazy mind. It justified everything you did and you saw a chance of getting back at the world." Once again, the seeming explanation for Communism's appeal is insanity.[40]

Stalin himself was usually portrayed less as a raving kook (like his disciple, Vishinsky) than as an extremely evil and paranoid murderer, constantly coming up with new and often "mad" measures of securing his own personal safety. In shocking portrayals such as Arthur Koestler's novels *Darkness at Noon* (1941) and *The Yogi and the Commissar* (1946), Americans had read blood-curdling accounts of a seemingly crazed, purge-happy Stalin of the 1930's. Articles such as historian Bertram D. Wolfe's "In Soviet Inferno; Russian Purges" (*Saturday Review,* 1952) and *Scholastic's* "Red Russia: By Trial and Terror" (1953) did little to improve the image of the postwar Stalin. For Wolfe, such "random" slaughter only made sense to Stalin on one principle: " 'If you want to make your enemies afraid, begin by cutting off the heads of your friends.' " That Stalin himself was extremely fearful seemed a given to the American public. Journalists from the United States frequently reported that Moscow was being converted into an armed camp "with soldiers carrying tommy-guns on almost every street corner," and that Stalin had deployed look-alikes of himself all over the city to thwart any would-be assassins. What seemed even more peculiar was the *extent* to which Stalin had apparently sealed himself off from the outside world. In *A Window on Red Square* (1953), Frank Rounds, an American Embassy official in Moscow, typically asserted that "*Nothing is known* about Stalin and his inner circle by

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[40] Nora Sayre, *Running Time: Films of the Cold War* (New York: The Dial Press, 1982), pp. 84-85; Mickey Spillane's *One Lonely Night* (1951) quoted in Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p. 36. This image of Communists as murdering psychopaths also emerged in numerous public speeches, such as the one delivered by Francis Cardinal Spellman at the annual dinner of the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick in 1948. With President Truman present, Spellman laid into the Reds as "the world's most fiendish, ghoulish men of slaughter." In Europe, he cried, "we witnessed the killing and enslavement of whole peoples by the Communists, who, with the shedding of blood, became drunk with it!" *Ibid,* p. 96.

anybody in Moscow or by anybody anywhere else." Rounds added that no previous dictator had ever set up such an "abnormal way for himself or his people," and that "there has never before been anything like this on earth." In short, Stalin was completely different from other totalitarian despots because he was "completely unrecognizable as a man." One explanation for this strange behaviour was offered by political philosopher Hannah Arendt in her authoritative work *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). Arendt argued that Soviet Communism was based on a delusion and that, like the paranoiac Stalin, was suffering from visions of persecution and personal grandeur. To avoid contact with the real world, the Soviet leader had erected an Iron Curtain and sealed off all his followers behind it. An enthusiastic reviewer of Arendt's work explained: "These lunatic gangsters want their followers to live in the nightmare world they have dreamed of." If most Americans reports of day-to-day living in the USSR were correct, Stalin and his lieutenants had already got their wish.[41]

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[41] Bertram D. Wolfe, "In Soviet Inferno; Russian Purges," *Saturday Review*, Vol. 35 (February 9, 1952), pp. 13-14; "Red Russia: Rule by Trial and Terror," *Scholastic*, Vol. 62 (February 11, 1953), pp. 13-15; John Fischer, "The Scared Men in the Kremlin," *Reader's Digest* (October 1946), p. 5, also see Chapter 1 of Fischer's book *Why They Behave Like Russians* (1947); Rounds, *A Window on Red Square*, p. 88, and Walter Bedell Smith, "What Kind of Man Is Stalin?" *Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 222 (November 12, 1949), p. 20; Hannah Arendt, *Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1951); Review of Arendt in John B. Sheerin, "Stalin: Madman or Machiavelli," *Catholic World*, Vol. 173 (September 1951), p. 402.

III.

A Day In the Life of the USSR

> When the Curtain was lifted and yielded its secret, the Soviet Union stood revealed as one giant, chaotic slum.
> —*Collier's*, "Preview of the War We Do Not Want," 1951
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> No citizen can have absent from his mind the probability that he is tailed by a spy; accordingly that any act, expression or mood critical of the ruling order can add him without trial to the slave camp millions.
> —Ethan T. Colton, *The Russia We Face Now*, 1953
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> If I were to suggest a theme song for Soviet Russia, I could not think of a better one than a few lines from "Old Man River":
> "Bend your knees and bow yo' head,
> an' pull dat rope until yo're dead."
> —Oriana Atkinson, *Over at Uncle Joe's*, 1947[42]

Most people living in the United States during the early years of the Cold War saw the USSR as a land tailor-made for the "crazies" who ran it. For the average Ivan or Olga unlucky enough to have been born there, daily living was said to be "the closest thing to a hell on Earth." Americans "brave" enough to travel to or work in the Soviet Union reported that they could only get a small taste of what it must have really been like for most of its citizens. Apparently these visitors' imaginations filled in the rest of the story.

"I went to the land of the Soviets with an open mind," insisted American tourist J.T. Smith in a letter to the *New York Sun* in 1946: "I came back hopelessly disillusioned." His troubles apparently began immediately: "From the moment we arrived on Soviet territory, there were continuous, stupid blunders, leading to confusion, annoyance and delay." The Intourist

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[42] "Preview of the War We Do Not Want," *Collier's* (October 27, 1951), pp. 32-33; Ethan T. Colton, *The Russia We Face Now* (Washington: Public Affairs Institute, 1953), p. 40; Oriana Atkinson, *Over at Uncle Joe's: Moscow and Me* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1947), p. 49.

guide, he complained, was "a poor, simple soul" who "did not show a terrible lot of intelligence in her face," and was of no help to him or his disgruntled companions. Rather, she infuriated Smith with "brazen exaggerations" of Soviet superiority which she "tried to ram down my throat at every turn." Mr. Smith refused to be taken in. For him the Soviet monuments, museums and parks were all "flops....just tawdry propaganda" peppered with "cheap plaster statutes of Lenin and Stalin [that] made one nauseated." The repatriated tourist saved his most severe wrath for a fellow traveller in the tour party whom he characterized as a "yes man" of the Soviet guides. When this gentleman claimed that America had nothing like Moscow's Park of Culture and Rest, it was too much for J.T. Smith:

> 'What's wrong with you Bud?' I said, 'Haven't you ever been in Central Park, New York? You know this little space is nothing compared to what has been provided for us in New York and all over America—and provided free, without any secret police trailing you, to listen to every little thing you say and report you if you don't agree with Uncle Joe. In the good old U.S.A. we have free band-concerts, boating, sports, dancing, and everything, including personal liberty.'

While Smith's comments may have been less polished than those of more seasoned (and presumably brighter) Russia-watchers, his overall depictions of the country as one of phony spectacles, slums, gross inefficiency and constant fear were repeated by the vast majority of American visitors to the Soviet Union, and by some Americans who had never been there at all. Excessive militarization, industrialization, and urbanization, a "caste" system, the secret "other" Russia with its horrific "death camps", and bold comparisons to Nazi Germany, rounded out the most frequent portrayals of life in the land of Stalin.[43]

Lydia Kirk, Oriana Atkinson and Frank Rounds, all of whom had lived in Moscow, agreed that phoniness and fakery were everywhere in Stalin's Russia. Kirk, the Ambassador's wife, was apparently amused by the cardboard

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[43] John T. Smith's letter to the *New York Sun* was published under the title of "Soviet Exaggerations!" in *Russia Magazine* (May 5, 1946), pp. 13-14.

hams, chicken, cheese and fruit that she spotted everyday in the shop windows—all of which were never available. She was convinced that even Lenin's tomb, "the death chamber," was a hoax. "He looks no more actual than any image at Madame Tussaud's," wrote Kirk in "Postmarked Moscow," adding that if one looked close enough, he or she could even spot wax dripping off the dummy's face. Oriana Atkinson was more angered than amused in *Over at Uncle Joe's* as she described the goings on at an annual Sports Parade she attended in Red Square. When a dirty boy in rags with only one leg and a crutch showed up at the ceremony, she recalled, Red Army soldiers "furious at such an exhibition of poverty and weakness, chased him savagely down a side street" and out of sight of the crowds. What angered Frank Rounds most about his posting in Moscow were what he called the blatant "lies" of the Soviet leaders who denied the "dreariness and gloom" and who "with straight faces, tell their subjects, tell the rest of the world, that the Russians are the best-shod and best-everything-else people on earth."[44]

General John W. O'Daniel, military attache to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, likewise perceived the Soviet Union as a colossal fraud. In his *Reader's Digest* account, "This is Moscow Today" (1951), O'Daniel wrote that "for all its advertised glory, Moscow impressed me as a vast slum." He offered a case in point by describing the fate of the Palace of the Soviets, which Soviet leaders in 1939 predicted "with 'typical modesty'...would be 'the greatest of architectural monuments ever raised by mankind.'" The palace was to be topped off with a King Kong-size statute of Lenin with the Great Leader's outstretched arm reaching higher than the Empire State Building. Work had begun just before the outbreak of World War II, but the project was a failure and at last all that remained was a pit, blocked from public view by a high fence. "Unwilling to admit defeat," Soviet leaders erected "a brilliant camouflage job," explained O'Daniel, "a poster soaring three stories above the street. Today the poster is gone and only the mammoth hole remains." For

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[44] Lydia Kirk, "Postmarked Moscow," *Reader's Digest* (November 1952), p. 138; Kirk, p. 142; Atkinson, *Over at Uncle Joe's*, p. 295; Rounds, *A Window On Red Square*, p. 132.

General O'Daniel, the Palace of the Soviets was "the symbol of Moscow, the fantastic capital of the false front...the grandiose and unkept promise."[45]

Prior to the Cold War, much of American attention given to the USSR's physical appearance focused on the vast and frigid wastelands of Siberia and the rich farmland of the Ukraine but, by the postwar years, stories about the Soviet urban scene were receiving noticeably more column space. Part of the reason was a strong perception in the United States that, under brute force, the Soviet Union as a whole was being rapidly urbanized. The headline story for the *New York Times* on March 19, 1951, described this transformation in some detail. Correspondent C.L. Sulzberger insisted that the USSR was undergoing a "vast social revolution...to end the differences between city and country life." The method being used, he wrote, was to eliminate the collective farms and amalgamate them together into large "agricultural towns." The relocation process was already well under way and featured the usual "utter disregard for human feelings involved in Soviet state planning." According to Sulzberger, the ultimate result would see the "liquidation of the peasantry" along with the "liquidation of the contrast between town and country." None of this appeared to bode well for the Soviet people.[46]

The overall American image of Soviet cities was that they were ugly, "functional" slums. A sampling of descriptions made by American journalists and diplomats who resided in Moscow reveal their sorry impressions of the Soviet capital: "so much ugliness," "exposed concrete," "dilapidated buildings," "dingy shops," "unpainted facades," "rusty cupolas," "chipped and broken walls and sidewalks," "mudholes everywhere," "dirty, dusty courtyards," "streets littered with refuse," "artificial parks with all the trees cut down," "bleak, treeless stretches of asphalt," "monotonous rows of

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[45] John W. O'Daniel, "This Is Moscow Today," *Reader's Digest* (July 1951), p. 52; O'Daniel, p. 51. J. T. Smith had even harsher words for this failed "Soviet monstrosity," i.e., the Palace of the Soviets: "AS WITH ALL OTHER NIGHTMARES ORIGINATING IN THE DISEASED BRAINS OF THE MARXISTS," he wrote in bold print, "IT HAD NEVER BEEN REALIZED." Smith, "Soviet Exaggerations!" p. 14.

[46] C. L. Sulzberger, "Soviet Merging Collectives In a Vast Social Revolution," *New York Times* (March 19, 1951), p. 1; Sulzberger, p. 8. On the increasing urbanization of the USSR see also *New York Times* (February 5, 1950), p. 32.

concrete beehives," "the architecture of an institution," "grey," "dreary," and "gloomy." In short, except for the few remaining structures of pre-1917 Russia (such as the Kremlin), the Soviet city was thought to be utterly tasteless and characterless. Edmund Stevens wrote in *Life* (1950) that this emptiness reached far deeper than just the architecture. He visited the city of Riga twice, first in 1939—one year prior to the Russian takeover of the Baltic States—and then again in 1949. Upon his return, Stevens tried "in vain" to recapture some sense of the city he had known a decade earlier. But it was apparently too late:

> I have seen many wasted cities in the wake of war.... Hamburg, Berlin, Warsaw. But none, even those razed to the ground, produced such a feeling of final and irrevocable ruin as Riga, where actual physical damage...was small. What had been destroyed in Riga was not the buildings, which are replaceable, but the soul of the city, its character, atmosphere, and personality. Gone without a trace were the pleasant, well-dressed crowds, the attractive restaurants, cafes and bright little shops—prewar Riga had a florist on every block.

As with the Soviet people themselves, it was reported that the growing metropolises in which they resided were spiritually dead.[47]

Americans also knew that, as far as material comforts were concerned, it was very tough going for the average Russian—and, supposedly, it was all the Soviet Government's fault. In 1950 an anti-Soviet advertisement for two Los Angeles shopping centres featured a spokesman who praised the pair of malls as "concrete expressions of the kind of practical idealism that built America." Leaning on a homey mantel-board with a Frederic Remington painting above, he invited California shoppers to experience "the more than four-score beautiful stores, the sparkling assortments and attractive atmosphere, and of course plenty of free parking for all the cars that we

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[47] William L. White, *Report on the Russians* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1946), p. 102; Kirk, "Postmarked Moscow," pp. 142, 144; Sam Welles, "Surprises In Russia," *Reader's Digest* (November 1948), p. 48; Rounds, *A Window on Red Square*, p. 27; NBC Radio, "Mr. Moto: Assignment 031"; Edmund Stevens, "Eyewitness Accounts from Soviet Union," *Life*, Vol. 28 (May 15, 1950), p. 132. Photographs of urban squalor in Moscow were featured in "Russia Uncensored: Photos From Shabby Utopia Show How Ivan Lives Amid Poverty and Decay," *Newsweek* (February 11, 1952), pp. 42-43.

'capitalists' seem to acquire." Then he asked, earnestly: "Who can help but contrast the beautiful, the practical settings of the Arcadia Shopping Hub and the Whittier Quad with what you'd find under Communism?" Nina Alexeiev's *Liberty Magazine* article noted that the very word "shopping" gave her people a "sinking feeling" since it always meant "a fierce struggle" just to obtain the most basic everyday supplies. "We Russians," she wrote, "have reached a point where we join a queue without knowing what it is for." The *Reader's Digest*'s "Soviet Prices and Ours" (1948) asked: "How many hours of labour does the average Russian industrial worker have to put in—compared with his American counterpart—in order to buy the necessities of life?" According to the *Digest*'s chart, ten to forty times as many. Pitiful shortages of consumer goods were also described in Sam Welles' "Surprises in Russia." Welles, who spent ten weeks in the Soviet Union, claimed that the Russians were "so short of everything" that they asked Americans to leave garbage as tips in hotels and that they thought "a U.S. mail catalogue as magical as Aladdin's lamp." Similar reports described the crowded conditions in communal apartments where two or more families were crammed into one small room. This lack of privacy, so the stories went, led to vicious quarrels which contributed to "reciprocal hatred—ideal for spying and denouncing." While Americans measured their homes and apartments by the number of rooms, it was pointed out that the average Russian did so by square meters of floor space. The U.S.-Soviet comparisons were also a dominant feature of what *Collier's* magazine called its "most spectacular" issue ever—when more than a dozen prominent American officials, journalists, historians, and novelists contributed articles to a "Preview of the War We Do Not Want" (1951). The fictional war between East and West ends with the United States' bringing civilization and happiness to the surviving Soviet citizens via a stage production of *Guys and Dolls*, a loan from Walter Reuther to restore democracy to Soviet labour unions, and a display of Hattie Carnegie hats for "fashion starved" women at Moscow's Dynamo Stadium. The implied message was clear, that what the Russians needed most was a good dose of free enterprise, American style. Conspicuously absent from all of these stories were any comparisons of living standards in the Soviet Union to those in Tsarist Russia, mention of the material destruction inflicted on the

USSR during the Second World War, or any discussion of Communism's accomplishments in Russia—including social welfare, cheap housing, a sharp rise in the number of doctors and hospital beds, and full employment.[48]

According to the popular media, Stalin's land of "dingy and crowded apartments," "dry crusts of bread," "unfilled prescriptions", "no soap," "no toilets," few shoes, and clothing that "looked as if it had been passed down from their grandfather" had taken a severe toll on the health and dignity of the average Russian.[49] William White attended a concert at Tchaikovsky Hall where even distinguished Soviet guests were reportedly shabbily dressed and underfed. He noted in his widely read *Report on the Russians* (six months on the best-seller list) that many of the women had poor complexions and bad bone structure which "seems to indicate a lack of vitamins and years of malnutrition." White also observed that the average Red Army officers on the average were a "half a head" shorter than their American counterparts. But these points were minor compared to what the ordinary Russian allegedly had to endure. Lydia Kirk told Americans of "gruesome operations" in the Soviet hospitals where people had their appendices removed without anaesthetic: "They strapped [their] arms and legs to the table and proceeded with the operation[s]." Kirk was also horrified, daily, by "the dingy, dusty mass of folk that throng the streets. And the beggars," Kirk insisted, "I've never seen as many or as pitiful ones. It's curious in this society that boasts of its social consciousness, that the infirm and aged should swarm about the streets, tugging at your sleeve, holding out their hands and calling down blessings for every Kopek." Alexander Orlov reported that poverty was so severe that hordes of young Russian girls had to resort to prostitution to keep from starving to death. In areas hit worst by famine, he insisted, there had

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[48] Shopping mall commercial appears in Thorn Emi Video's *The Atomic Cafe;* Alexeiev, "I Didn't Want My Children to Grow Up in Soviet Russia," p. 14; "Soviet Prices and Ours," *Reader's Digest* (November 1948), p. 47; *Russia Magazine* (April 1952), p. 12; "Preview of the War We Do Not Want," *Collier's,* p. 32. For additional accounts of crowded apartment life in the Soviet Union see Kirk, "Postmarked Moscow," p. 140; O'Daniel, "This Is Moscow Today," p. 52; and "Preview of the War We Do Not Want," *Collier's,* p. 32.

[49] Alexeiev, "I Didn't Want My Children to Grow Up in Soviet Russia," p. 12; Ann Montgomery Drake, "Russians in Hungary," *America* (March 1, 1947), p. 603; Welles, "Surprises in Russia," p. 47; "The Appeal of An Expatriate," *Russia Magazine* (February 15, 1946), p. 12.

even been "discovered cases of cannibalism" where dissected bodies were sold as fresh meat in the public markets."[50]

Thanks to a Communist "caste system," however, this "rampant" misery and poverty reportedly did not extend to everyone. According to Edmund Stevens' *This is Russia, Un-censored!*, a trip through Moscow's "Forbidden Zone" along the Moskva River revealed another side of the USSR which foreigners never saw. Here the Party bosses lived not in cramped, filthy apartments, but in beautiful country cottages with picket fences, neatly arranged flower beds, and Cadillacs and Buicks parked in the driveways. "It is like an enchanted land out of a Russian fairy tale," Stevens wrote, with "immaculate policemen....at every intersection." Alexander Orlov complained in his book on Stalin's "secret" crimes that things were even better at the Kremlin. There Chief Pauker of the Kremlin Guard, a "resident 'Santa Claus'," reportedly dazzled members of the Politburo with the latest in products from abroad. For the top Communists themselves, wrote Orlov, there were custom-made automobiles, pedigreed dogs, wines and radio sets; for their wives, dresses, silks, perfumes "and a lot of other things that appeal to the woman's heart"; and for the kids' box loads of pricey toys. None of this would have come as a surprise to President Truman who years earlier had characterized the entire Soviet Union as a "hotbed of special privilege."[51]

These stereotypes of the Communists as blatant hypocrites—materialists at heart who could easily be wooed away from their professed ideology by consumer goods—was also an important theme in Hollywood's miniature Cold War. According to movies such as *I Was a Communist for the FBI* (1951, "based on the true story" of counterspy, Matthew Cvetic), high living was right at the top with insanity as prime motivating factors of the

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[50] William L. White, *Report on the Russians* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1945), p. 105; Kirk, "Postmarked Moscow," p. 143; Kirk, p. 139; Alexander Orlov, *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes* (New York: Random House, 1953), p. 317.

[51] Stevens, *This Is Russia, Un-Censored!*, p. 32; Orlov, *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes*, p. 318; Harry Truman quoted in Michael H. Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 156. Also see Magidoff, *The Kremlin vs. the People*, p. 228; and H.U.A.C., *100 Things You Should Know About COMMUNISM and Labour*, p. 101.

American Communist. As a Party boss in Pittsburgh offers Cvetic some champagne and caviar, he encourages the FBI informant to enjoy himself. "It's the way we're all going to live after the Revolution!" "The workers too?" asks Matt. "The workers will ALWAYS be workers!" comes the cynical reply. In *Walk East on Beacon* (1952), a Red resembling Al Capone chuckles, "Someday we won't have to worry about dough.... A commissar gets everything for free...everything!" He then glances pointedly toward an attractive blonde across the room.

An extremely low standard of living for all but the pampered elite was not the only major theme with regard to the state of the Russian economy—it was combined, paradoxically, with a flood of reports on Soviet industrial might. A typical example appeared in the *Wall Street Journal* ("How Strong Is Russia?") on July 28, 1947. The article warned Americans not to underestimate Soviet power. Despite the shortages of consumer goods, food and housing, the *Journal* explained, Russian industrial-capacity had greatly expanded during World War II so that heavy industry was operating at a production pace well over 20 percent above pre-war levels. The manufacture of munitions, to be used for both external and internal security, was *always* given top priority. Such reports displayed a genuine respect for Soviet military and industrial strength—a respect that generated real fear in the United States. They also reflected contempt for Gosplan, the Soviet planning agency which determined how much of every article the country should produce. In a story that appeared in *Time* (1947), Samuel Welles assailed this massive military buildup as yet another hardship scheme of Russia's "brutal" leaders, who "put machines ahead of men, industrial recovery ahead of human recovery." He then explained: "The Russian people's living can be pinched to whatever degree financing requires by the 'butters' being sacrificed for 'guns.'" Central planning of every aspect of the Russian economy—indeed, planning of every Russian citizen's "entire life from cradle to grave"—was deemed "madness" by American government officials and journalists alike. According to Robert Magidoff's *In Anger and Pity,* even these "dazed" citizens could not help notice that the armaments industries were being pushed out of all proportion to the economy. The book relayed a joke—allegedly circulating in Moscow—involving two Russians:

> "Well Comrade", one says, "things are looking promising these days. By 1952, we'll have five atom bombs, we'll put them into five suitcases, get them over to the United States, plant them in five strategic cities—New York, Pittsburgh, Washington, Chicago, Detroit—terrorize America into submission, and the world is ours!"
>
> "You're wrong Comrade", the other replied. "I don't think that by 1952 we can produce as many as five suitcases."[52]

The building of a massive military and the maintenance of internal political security were both perceived as having a crushing effect on the average Soviet worker. *Collier's* and *Reader's Digest* reported that the "obedient industrial soldiers" of the USSR were forced to work at least six days a week, with no limit on unpaid overtime hours (including Sunday workdays), and were coerced into turning over at least one month's pay to buy non-interest bearing Stalin bonds (those who refused were supposedly labelled as "traitors of the state"). The periodicals added that the punishment for attempting to organize a strike was death, while being even twenty minutes late for work was punishable by a six-month to one year prison sentence—at best. Not surprisingly, Soviet trade unions were usually described in the American press as a "fraud," the real purpose of which was to get as much work as was "humanly possible" out of each labourer. An NBC journalist voiced the dominant view in 1951: "They [the unions] function primarily as an enormous, well-oiled, nation-wide machine for transmitting to the great working masses the endless official ballyhoo campaigns aimed at keeping the worker constantly pepped up so that he will exert his utmost effort." Publications such as the Research Institute of America's bulletin, "If You Worked in Soviet Russia" (1950) and HUAC's "100 Things You Should Know About Communism and Labor" quoted numerous Russian "witnesses," including ex-factory and collective farm workers, to drive home similar assertions. One of them lamented, "Most of the time we are just

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[52] Harry Schwartz, "How Strong Is Russia?" *Wall Street Journal* (July 28, 1947) quoted in Anne T. Golden, "Attitudes to the Soviet Union as Reflected in the American Press, 1944-1948," (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Toronto, 1970), p. 322; Samuel Welles, *Time*, Vol. 50 (July 7, 1947), p.22; Colton, *The Russia We Face Now*, p. 28; Magidoff, *In Anger and Pity*, p. 240.

weary and afraid. We find it better to do our work, sleep, and think as little as possible." Similar dreary comments were offered by a former Russian engineer: "My men are hungry and unhappy.... Life itself, not illiteracy and unemployment and industrial backwardness, as they claim, is being liquidated by our masters." In these, as in virtually all American accounts of labour in the Soviet Union, the image was that of a vicious sweatshop system, pitting worker against worker in an effort to speed up their already "deadly" production pace. Yet these Russians were said to be the lucky ones. An even worse fate allegedly faced millions of other labourers who had been imprisoned in the nightmarish "other" Soviet Union—a world that foreign visitors never saw.[53]

Reports that the Russians were running their own network of Nazi-like concentration camps were plentiful in the postwar era. In 1955 the Massachusetts Institute of Technology published a selective bibliography of about 400 titles of books, pamphlets and magazine articles all on the subject of *Forced Labour in the Soviet Union.* Though the most violent period of Stalin's rule had passed, this subject probably received so much attention because it was viewed by most Americans as *the* most gruesome aspect of life under the Soviet regime. One of the most widely read magazine articles, Max Eastman's "The Truth About Russia's 14,000,000 Slaves" (*Reader's Digest,* 1947), claimed that slave labourers were an essential component of the Soviet economy.[54] Sometimes, he wrote, when a camp needed more workers, the secret police would simply pick up people on the street or drag them out of

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[53] "Preview of the War We Do Not Want," *Collier's,* p. 37; O'Daniel, "This Is Moscow Today," p. 54; "If You Worked in Soviet Russia," reprinted in *Reader's Digest* (April 1951), p. 35; H.U.A.C., *100 Things You Should Know About COMMUNISM and Labor,* p. 107; "Preview of the War We Do Not Want," p. 37. Other portrayals of misery in the Russian workplace include "A Day in the Routine of Comrade Josef Doakevsky: All Work No Play, Plus Propaganda and Spying," *Newsweek,* Vol. 34 (December 12, 1949), pp. 40-41; Metz and Thomson, *Authoritarianism and the Individual,* pp. 173-175; Drew Middleton, "Life Termed Drab For Soviet Worker," *New York Times* (February 4, 1948), p. 8; Prychodko, *Moscow's Drive For World Domination,* p. 7; and "Soviet Industrial Gains Cost Dearly," *Business Week* (April 7, 1951), pp. 149-150.

[54] Estimates of the number of prisoners interned in the camps usually ranged from 10,000,000 to 22,000,000. Those on the high side included Kravchenko in *I Chose Freedom* (est. 20,000,000) and Allen Nevins in *Collier's* October 20, 1951, p. 80, (est. 22,000,000). Since it was agreed that the vast majority of the prisoners were men (Dallin estimated 85-90 percent), and given that the total adult male population of the USSR numbered only about 40,000,000, these were amazing estimates indeed.

their beds at night. Soviet citizens were condemned to a life of slavery for *any* minor aberration, Eastman claimed, even for "forgetting to salt the food" or for "selling lemonade." The colourful ex-Communist described the camps' living conditions as "worse than those endured during the Stone Age." The inmates lived in "corrals surrounded by stockades topped with barbed wire, watched day and night by riflemen in turrets with powerful search lights." They reportedly had hardly any clothing in frigid climates, slept on mud or corpses infested with disease, ate mush, drank from ditches and puddles, and were confined to "isolator" cells on a regular basis. Guards, he said, had to live up to Soviet standards of cruelty or they too would be condemned to slavery, and doctors were there to kill rather than cure patients. "The principal purpose is to punish and exterminate," Eastman insisted, "with incidental profit." Two of the most sweeping accounts of life in the "death camps" were David J. Dallin's *Forced Labour in Soviet Russia* (1947) and Albert K. Herling's *The Soviet Slave Empire* (1951). Dallin's account of slave labour saw it as an "organic element" of the Soviet social structure. To him this "invisible Russia" was a gigantic heap on which were deposited, "whenever desirable, entire groups and classes of the population." Incredibly, he and others suggested that as many as half of the USSR's total adult male population was enslaved in the Gulags to perform the heaviest and most grueling of tasks: mining; lumbering; forest clearing; and constructing roads, railroads, canals, and military installations. It was "a genuine hell," wrote Dallin, "a diabolical invention scientifically organized according to the latest police techniques." Herling's book was based on the 1949 hearings of alleged victims of forced labour, eyewitnesses and "experts" in the field—all brought together by the Worker's Defense League, "a non-communist agency." "Fortunately" for the American public, the author says he has "deliberately withheld some of the most harrowing stories, with their detailed descriptions of almost unbelievable tortures." In a concluding chapter entitled "America Next?" Herling describes life in a Soviet America as one that would entail the mass extermination of millions—including all car dealers, teachers, and

policemen: "This," he declares, "is what will happen here if the Kremlin can put it over."[55]

Interestingly, Dallin, Herling and other Americans who tried to instruct the public on the nature of the Soviet camps were careful to point out that they were dealing here with what the American Federation of Labour emphasized was a "*new form* of slavery." Albert Herling wrote: "We are faced today with a slave system unmatched in history.... It is tied to the marvellously efficient Twentieth Century machine civilization, which is also unmatched in human history." Under the absolute control of the state bureaucracy and organized on a mass basis, the individual slave in the modern totalitarian nation was described as "merely a number and not a personality with dignity." As such, he or she was savagely abused, exploited and, sooner or later, exterminated by a detached and inherently immoral government concerned solely with production ("murder" in the slave camps, wrote Hannah Arendt, "is as impersonal as the squashing of a gnat"). With this vision fixed in his mind, Herling proclaimed without hesitation that in the "colonialism" which the USSR practiced in Eastern Europe, "even the worst of what has ever been done by the most brutal imperialisms of the white man in Africa, Latin America, Asia, and the North American continent pales into insignificance."[56]

Another aspect of life in the modern camps given special emphasis in American reports was their alleged destruction of the "human spirit." An

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[55] Max Eastman, "The Truth About Russia's 14,000,000 Slaves, *Reader's Digest* (April 1947), p. 140; Eastman, p. 141; Eastman, pp. 142-143; Eastman, p. 141; David J. Dallin, *Forced Labour in Soviet Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1947), p. 31; Albert K. Herling, *The Soviet Slave Empire*, (New York: Wilfred Funk, 1951), p. vi; Herling, p. 203. Other widely read and equally dreary accounts of life in the camps include "Soviet Prison Camps," *Life*, Vol. 25 (September 27, 1948), p. 53; and "Communists," *Time*, Vol. 51 (March 22, 1948), pp. 20-23. *Time*'s reviewer of Dallin's book commented that it "gives the slave-camp horror a third-dimensional depth and breadth and establishes the Soviet version for what it is: history's most monstrous crime against the individual."

[56] American Federation of Labor, *Slave Labor in Russia: The Case Presented by the American Federation of Labor to the United Nations* (New York: 1949), p. 14; Herling, *The Soviet Slave Empire*, p. 204; A. F. L., *Slave Labor in Russia*, p. 16; Hannah Arendt, "The Concentration Camps," In Philip Rahv and William Philips, eds., *The New Partisan Reader, 1945-1953* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1953), p. 234; Herling, *The Soviet Slave Empire*, p. 205. Also see the collection of essays in Roger Baldwin, ed., *A New Slavery: Forced Labor, the Communist Betrayal of Human Rights* (New York: Oceana Publications, 1953).

eyewitness quoted in Eastman and Dallin offered this typically terrifying description:

> Nobody who has not studied the records of life in these hells can come within miles of understanding to what abyss of moral stupor and animal need a human being is reduced by all this. Everything which is capable of sustaining individual and human dignity is remorselessly ground out of existence. All privacy, decency and gentleness are liquidated. The animalizing effect of prolonged hunger and the accompanying stupefying of mental and moral powers is always at work. The human being within the carcass dies progressively; and a suffering, stupefied animal takes its place.

This dehumanizing influence of the camps was said to be especially prevalent in the recently occupied Iron Curtain countries where millions were being interned as "enemies of the dictatorship." Having just arrived home from a year long visit to Southeast Europe, the Balkan correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor,* R.H. Markham, wrote a series of articles published in late 1946 condemning Soviet policy there. To most Eastern Europeans, Markham wrote, America was viewed as a "saviour":

> They've thrown their arms about America and beg for our support....They live in fear and dread, they have the impression of being surrounded by darkness and helplessness. They imagine that Soviet Russia and world communism is locking them in a giant prison from which they cannot escape. But they still have enough faith to pray that the whole world may not be converted into a prison.[57]

Some of those Americans who were most influential in perpetuating the impression that fear and oppression were part of day-to-day living behind Stalin's Iron Curtain were former double-agents and, in particular, ex-Communists who had written books about their "real life" experiences. Louis

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[57] Eastman, "The Truth About Russia's 14,000,000 Slaves," pp. 145-146; Eastman, p. 143; *Christian Science Monitor* (July 16, 1946), p. 16 quoted in Golden "Attitudes to the Soviet Union," p. 305.

F. Budenz, former editor of the *Daily Worker,* was the first to break away from the American Communist Party publicly. Budenz reminded readers in his well-received autobiography *This Is My Story* of the ever-present situation in the Party, where "a huge whisper machine is constantly at work" with the comrades constantly keeping tabs on one another. Growing disillusionment with the "sinister tactics" of the Soviets and Communists eventually led to his break from the Party. The most influential of the ex-Communists, Whittaker Chambers—editor of *Time* and author of his own best-seller testament, *Witness* (1952)—likewise described his own life as an alleged communist "underground" agent in Washington, D.C. as one fraught with terror and assassination. "For a year," he told HUAC, "I lived in hiding, sleeping by day and watching through the night with gun or revolver within easy reach. That was what underground Communism could do to one man living in the peaceful United States in the year 1938." Americans knew that in the USSR this terror had been "institutionalized" on a nationwide scale—there was *nowhere* to hide.[58]

American print media sources frequently noted that well over one million personnel made up the Soviet political police, the MVD. This organization, rated as "the best housed, fed and clothed forces in the Union," was also portrayed as the most wicked. Feared by even high Soviet officials, the MVD—with its hidden microphones, torture chambers, and concentration camps—recognized no inalienable human rights and answered to no one but the top Kremlin hierarchy. "Its sleuths infiltrate the domestic population at every angle," insisted one of the reports, "from the topside down into each local party segmentation, armed unit, factory, office, collective farm and apartment and more than possibly one's own family." Indeed, according to *Collier's,* every five Russian families had at least one agent watching them day and night: ("one's every move is watched"). In an atmosphere that was "always tense and cautious" people were afraid even to talk to one another. "The helpless masses", so the account went, never knew which of the neighbours might turn out to be an informer, for "everyday"

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[58] Louis F. Budenz, *This Is My Story* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1947), p. 323; Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952), p. 548.

somebody would be arrested "to vanish into the unknown." As one "witness" in Eastern Europe told *America* magazine in 1947: "More and more the people I know are disappearing. They have heard the knock on the door at night."[59]

At the movies, the MVD had its counterpart in "the Party doom squads" assigned to stalk big-screen American Communists. America's Red-spy films instructed the viewer especially on how "Stalin's gangsters" were supposed to look—and they looked and behaved almost exactly as Hollywood's Gestapo had a few years earlier. Stalin's henchmen were shown to wear black gloves and had their hair slicked back like Joseph Goebbels, they were also often disgracefully pudgy. Completely void of any sense of humour, they grimly demanded explanations of "jokes" and had terrible manners, except when they were offering "More Scotch?" to potential recruits. Moreover, movie-Communists walked on a forward slant, revealing a fanatical dedication to their cause, and were extremely vicious—to animals as well as people (we do not know how they treat children because, as one reviewer noted, "they never have any"). On many occasions, they could be detected by their method of exhaling cigarette smoke: like Himmler's bunch, the Reds expelled smoke very slowly from their nostrils before they threatened someone's life or suggested that "harm" would come to his family. Above all these villains were murderers, especially of other fellow travellers who wanted to repent. They thoroughly enjoyed hurtling deviant associates out of windows, pushing them in front of trains or "hounding" them to suicide.[60]

After 1945, the comparisons between the nations of Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union also returned with unequalled scope and intensity.[61] Like

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[59] Colton, *The Russia We Face Now*, p. 40; Colton, p. 40; "Preview of the War We Do Not Want," *Collier's*, p. 34; "Preview of the War," p. 34; Drake, "Russians in Hungary," p. 601. A more in-depth description of the Soviet secret police is Chapter 12, "MVD—The Thing that Stalks," in Stevens, *This Is Russia, Un-Censored!*

[60] For a more detailed description of movie-Communists see Sayre, *Running Time*, pp. 80-83.

[61] See Leslie K. Adler and Thomas G. Paterson, "Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930's to 1950's," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 75 (April 1970), pp. 1046-1064; and David A. Smith, "Stalin's Reich: The American Image of Soviet Russia as a Postwar Version of Nazi Germany, 1945-1953" (University of Victoria: B.A. Honours Paper, 1988).

the Third Reich, the USSR was said to come complete with a "madman" dictator, a ruthless secret police, the crushing of the individual, the destruction of basic freedoms, regimented labour, "death camps," hate-filled brainwashing, massive armies, and international imperialism. In the minds of many, Stalin's Russia had, in effect, taken over where Hitler's Germany had left off. By 1948, however, Harry Truman had taken his earlier Nazi-Soviet comparison a step farther. "It is a Frankenstein dictatorship worse than any of the others, Hitler's included," he wrote in a letter to a friend. In his book, *After Hitler Stalin?*, hard-boiled historian Robert Ingrim believed that the Soviets had surpassed Germany as "the most efficient" of the "totalitarian mowing machines." "After German occupation," explained Ingrim, "the liberated nation had lost most of its Jewish compatriots. After Russian occupation [of Eastern Europe], it will have lost [not only] the top stratum of its society, but a good deal of its middle layer." Ex-Communist Max Eastman concurred, declaring that Stalinism was more ruthless, barbaric, immoral, and anti-democratic than Hitlerism. After listing an array of familiar charges against the Number One Soviet, Eastman declared that Marshal Stalin's atrocities made Hitler's "look like a sophomore hazing party." "If the shed blood of innocent men were measured," he insisted, "Stalin's would be a lake, Hitler's a duck-pond; Mussolini's could be dipped up by the car-tankful." In Eastman's own mind, Stalin was best described as a "super-fascist."[62]

In many respects, the pictures drawn of life in the USSR and the "satellite" countries were simply a magnification of the grim living conditions thought to pervade life under Nazi occupation. Americans believed that most Eastern Europeans "knew the score" and had a deep hidden desire to overthrow their "hated" governments—if only they could. For the Russian people, however, the grey misery, squalor, and constant fear and terror had seemingly become a way of life. The young, it was suggested, had never known anything better and, given the ever-tightening noose of twentieth-century totalitarianism, perhaps they never would.

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[62] Margaret Truman, *Harry S. Truman* (New York: Morrow, 1973), p. 360; Robert Ingrim, *After Hitler Stalin?* (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing, 1946), p. 225; Ingrim, p. 224; Max Eastman quoted in Grayson, *The American Image of Russia, 1917-1977*, p. 147; Grayson, p. 144.

American images of the USSR were often simplistic and charged with emotion. As has already been touched upon, the Soviets had some impressive accomplishments to their credit: no ten years in the history of any Western nation had ever shown a rate of economic growth as dramatic as the decade of the first two five year plans (1928-1938); an energetic campaign against illiteracy had been carried out successfully throughout the USSR; a national medical program was set up which benefited the entire population; and the Soviet Union had somewhat miraculously driven back the massive German onslaught of World War II and, despite tremendous losses, was on the road to economic recovery. These and other apparent pluses of Soviet rule, however, were almost never acknowledged in mid-century America. Reports on Soviet life tended to highlight those aspects which were most repulsive to Americans and to minimize those which might have seemed more acceptable. The outcome was an overall set of images which negated and even reversed American values and visions of an "American way of life." Still, in some respects, the images of life under Red rule remained a somewhat intangible set of ideas until they received expression in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (published in 1949), the anti-Utopian novel by English socialist George Orwell. For serious scholars and the general public alike, *1984* provided a model of Stalinist totalitarianism—combining almost all of the most terrifying Soviet images into one hideous nightmare.

When Orwell's book was published in the United States in 1949, it gained a vast popular as well as intellectual following. *1984* was chosen as a Book of the Month Club selection, was condensed in *Reader's Digest* for its September 1949 issue, and quickly became required reading in universities and schools. The novel became a runaway best-seller, selling eleven million copies by the early 1970's. In his essay, "America's View of George Orwell," political-scientist John P. Rossi notes that *1984* won Orwell a larger following in the United States than in his homeland, and that, while some English critics initially blasted the work as unbelievably gloomy or as an ideological "superweapon of the Cold War," there were virtually *no* negative reactions or reviews in the United States. "Orwell had his English admirers," writes

Rossi, but their views of the man and his work were "more balanced and more realistic than many of their American compatriots."[63]

According to Orwell's biographer and friend George Woodcock—and several other contemporary critics[64]—the subject of *1984* was not intended to be just Soviet Russia but Western industrial nations as well, including the United States. Woodcock insists that, first and foremost, *1984* was written as a satire (even "caricature") of modern society and as a warning about the future dangers of the interaction between technological development and human life. But, regardless of Orwell's intentions, most Americans chose to receive the book as a realistic portrayal of life in the Soviet Union. *Life*'s editors did not hesitate in identifying the character of Big Brother as a "mating" of Stalin and Hitler, and noted that London was an obvious substitute for the novel's real setting—Russia. "Behind the iron curtain," they insisted, Orwell's dystopia "will not seem strange or imaginative at all." The *Life* commentary expressed one concern: that the book was, in fact, "so good, so full of excitement and horror, that there is some danger of its message being ignored." In a 1950 obituary of Orwell, the *Saturday Review of Literature* similarly praised *1984* as "the most convincing indictment of the Russian Government that any novelist has given us to date." *Time*'s lengthy review interpreted the story as a future vision of Soviet life "the foundations [of which] are firmly laid today." Nicholas Prychodko likewise warned readers of *Moscow's Drive for World Domination* that Orwell's vision was "no fantasy, but a clear preview of what is entirely possible. Read that book and decide for yourself whether you want to be involved in that second billion to fall on your knees before the throne of Stalin!" One of the most exhaustive attempts to demonstrate the alleged similarities between *1984* and Soviet life appeared in Philip Rahv's *Partisan Review* editorial, "The Unfuture of Utopia" (July 1949). Rahv cited "factual" parallels in the Soviet Union's social structure,

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[63] John P. Rossi, "America's View of George Orwell," *Review of Politics*, Vol. 43 (1981), pp. 574, 575, 578.

[64] See Jenni Calder, *Chronicles of Conscience: A Study of George Orwell and Arthur Koestler* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968), pp. 229-230; Erich Fromm, "Afterword" in George Orwell's *1984*, pp. 262-263; and Irving Howe, *Politics and the Novel* (New York: Meridian Books, 1957), pp. 240-244.

police methods and legal system, its repression of artists, its attitude toward love and marriage, its use of propaganda to enforce conformity, and its falsification of history and statistics. "If it inspires dread above all, it is precisely because its materials are taken from the real world as we know it," Rahv explained. *1984,* he believed, was merely "an extension into the near future of the present structure and policy of Stalinism." Echoing Prychodko, Rahv concluded firmly that "the novel is the best antidote to the totalitarian disease that any writer has so far produced. Everyone should read it." For all of these reviewers, *1984* was not viewed as a partly real, partly unreal vision, but as a direct attack on the system already existing in the Communist world. Given this general reaction it is hardly surprising that, almost immediately, the terms coined by Orwell—"Newspeak," "Mutability of the Past," "Ministry of Truth," "Thought Police," "Crime-think," "Double-think," "Hate Week" and the well-known caption "Big Brother is Watching You"—began showing up everywhere in American newspaper articles and speeches on the subject of the USSR and communism. Meanwhile, on the streets of New York, a news vendor thrust a copy of *1984* into the hands of historian Isaac Deutscher, saying, "You must read it, sir. Then you will know why we must drop the atom bomb on the Bolshies!"[65]

Appearing just as the Cold War reached its zenith, Orwell's vision gave substance to the "nightmares that obsess...millions of men and women who are too inarticulate to put their fears into words." *1984*'s nightmarish picture of totalitarianism was confirmed daily in reports on the USSR by America's press, political leaders, and popular culture. To Americans in the post-war decade, it appeared that if this frozen apocalypse had not already been realized its arrival could not long be delayed. The Soviet Union "was the enemy, absolute and evil in the best Orwellian tradition." To the containment and ultimate collapse of the Soviet government, America's leaders and people felt they must dedicate themselves.[66]

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[65] George Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit: A Study of George Orwell* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1966), p. 218; *Life,* quoted in *Reader's Digest,* Vol. 55 (September 1949), p. 156; *Saturday Review of Literature,* Vol. 33 (February 4, 1950), p. 23; *Time,* Vol. 53 (June 20, 1949), pp. 91-96; Prychodko, *Moscow's Drive for World Domination,* p. 72; Philip Rahv, "The Unfuture of Utopia," *Partisan Review,* Vol. 16, p. 744; Rahv, p. 746; Isaac Deutscher quoted in Woodcock, *The Crystal Spirit,* p. 53.

[66] Walsh, *From Utopia to Nightmare,* p. 134; Blumoff, "Popular Fiction," p. 7.

IV.

The Devil Made Them Do It: Soviet Morality, Religion and Family Life

> In their homes, schools and churches, Americans learn to be honest, truthful, considerate of others. They learn to be faithful to their families, their friends, and to the principles of right. If lying, betraying one's friend or country, or even murder serves the purposes of the Communists, then all these things are right.
>
> —*The Story of American Democracy* (high school text), 1950

> The doctrines of Communism are a slow poison that bit by bit eat away at the moral fiber of the victim, and destroy the human soul. Communism is the enemy of free government because it destroys morality, which is the basis of freedom....We never want the people of the United States to live as the people of the Soviet Union live today.
>
> —Harry S. Truman, 1952

> Almost all ministers of the gospel and students of the Bible agree that it [Communism] is master-minded by Satan himself.
>
> —Billy Graham, 1953[67]

In the eyes of millions of Americans, the USSR was a thoroughly evil, atheistic society which placed no value on human life; a society which denied its citizens individual rights and freedoms; a society completely void of any moral restraint; and a society which sought to destroy the church, the family, and the human soul. An "ends-justifies-the-means" mentality was supposedly representative of all Soviet methods. It was widely perceived that, in an effort to maintain absolute control and to spread revolution elsewhere,

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[67] Mabel B. Casner and Ralph Henry Gabriel, *The Story Of American Democracy* (New York: Harcourt, Grace, 1950), p. 600; Truman's address to National Conference on Citizenship (September 17, 1952) quoted in Stanley J. Jados, *Documents On Russian-American Relations: Washington to Eisenhower* (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University Press, 1965), p. 191; Billy Graham quoted in Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, p. 81.

even the most heinous crimes imaginable had become the "daring virtues" of the Stalinist state. It is "a system," warned George Kennan, "which is based on the evil and wickedness in man's nature—which attempts to live by man's degradation, feeding like a vulture on his own anxieties, his capacity for hatred, his susceptibility to error, and his vulnerability to psychological manipulation."[68]

Depictions of the alleged moral bankruptcy and wickedness of the Soviet Union were everywhere in the American popular media between 1947 and 1953, and the spokesman who consistently reached the largest audience on the subject was Roman Catholic monsignor Bishop Fulton J. Sheen. Sheen's prime time television program, *Life Is Worth Living*—"sponsored by God" and by the Admiral Corporation—enjoyed a spectacular run for half a decade in prime time on the Dumont network and ABC. The Emmy winner as 1952's "Outstanding Television Personality," Sheen reached between twenty- and twenty-five million viewers each week during the early 1950's; his political as well as his moral views were also heard on one hundred and twenty-three radio stations and in a river of sermons, articles, speeches, and over sixty books. A mystical looking man with dark deeply set eyes and a spellbinding voice, Sheen regularly chided the Communist state for "denying God, denying morality, denying conscience, but keeping confession and guilt." In one *Life Is Worth Living* program on the Soviet Union, Sheen told viewers that Communists value men only as members of a class, not as individuals. "Man is likened to lower forms of life," he said, "in which an individual fly, an individual gnat, an individual ant is of no consequence; what is important is the species." Sheen then illustrated this prevalent view of the Communist idea by speaking of tanks running over wounded bodies in wartime: "Communist tanks ran over the bodies of their wounded," he charged. "No one would even kick them out of the path of the great machines, because they are no longer of worth." Next Sheen read off a list of Soviet leaders who had been murdered since 1917, indicating that expediency is all-important, that no individual mattered in the least. At the end of the

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[68] Grayson, *The American Image of Russia*, p. 148; George F. Kennan, "America and the Russian Future," *Foreign Affairs* (April 1951), p. 360.

lengthy list was "all the members of Lenin's first post-Bolshevik Politburo, except Stalin." Another Soviet sin which Sheen described in the same program was their elimination of what he called the "rejection of authority" value. The bishop declared:

> a man is free on the inside because he can call his soul his own; he is free on the outside when he can call his property his own. Communism, knowing that it cannot possess man as long as he has this freedom—namely, private property—affirms as its basic principle, socialism, or the putting of all property in the hands of the state.

Along with the right to private property, said Sheen, went political freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of the press, all of which Americans "hold sacred." "Hence the Soviet Constitution recognized freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech, only on condition that they are used to support the Communist system. Any person who affirms that he can decide for himself is automatically considered an enemy of Communism." To the Soviets, Sheen reiterated, a person was merely an object, not a subject. He closed his talk with an often used truth: "A person has more worth than the universe: What doth it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul?" Bishop Fulton Sheen's views were widely respected and helped reinforce those already held by much of the public. Perhaps the most famous Sheen program aired on February 24, 1953, when he presented a lively reading of the burial scene from Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar,* replacing the names Caesar, Cassius, Mark Antony, and Brutus with Joseph Stalin, KGB chief Lavrenti Beria, Georgi Malenkov, and U.N. ambassador Vishinsky. When Stalin died unexpectedly a few days later, some believed that Sheen's words might have been responsible.[69]

From the top down the people of the USSR were seldom characterized by American observers as having *any* morally redeeming qualities; naturally,

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[69] Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War,* pp. 170-171; MacDonald, *Television and the Red Menace,* p. 129; Sheen, quoted in Mary Jude Yablonsky, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Selected Television Speeches of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen on Communism—1952-1956," Ph. D. dissertation (Ohio State University, 1974), p. 141; Yablonsky, p. 73; Yablonsky, p. 73; Yablonsky, p. 74; Yablonsky, p. 74; Yablonsky, p. 109; MacDonald, *Television and the Red Menace,* p. 129.

as was the case on *Life Is Worth Living*, Stalin came in for some of the most venomous descriptions. In early 1953, one of the few accounts which purported to "uncover" details of Joseph Stalin's personal life hit the shelves of American bookstores—Alexander Orlov's spectacular *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes* (reprinted in a four-part series in *Life*). Incredibly, the former Soviet diplomat turned defector quotes from meetings between Stalin and other members of the Politburo as if he were actually there to record their conversations. The Leader himself emerges from the book as a kind of evil comic book villain. First Stalin appears as short and ugly. No doubt many readers were amused by Orlov's account of how the Soviet Chief tried to make himself look taller by wearing "elevator boots" and of Stalin's desperate but unsuccessful efforts to cover his "horribly pock-marked face" with custom made skin or "crater cream" (similar revelations would appear forty years later about another, albeit, lesser enemy of the United States, Manuel "Pineapple Head" Noriega). Stalin is also shown to have a wild temper. In one story Orlov reports that the Premier gruffly ordered barking dogs who disturbed his sleep shot, and their owners too. And, not surprisingly, Old Joe was a disgrace as a family man. A chapter entitled "Stalin's Hobbies" reveals that he was a pornography-monger, an alcoholic, a wife-beater, and a master of "the most obscene jokes and foul language." The author claims that Stalin so brutally mistreated and humiliated his first wife that it left a bitter life-long hatred between him and his oldest son, Jacob. As far as the world was concerned, Stalin's second wife died of illness at age 30, but Orlov insists that she actually either shot herself or that Stalin had her killed. The author writes that he is not certain, but that, "from what I know about the way Stalin treated his wife, I am inclined to think that she shot herself."[70]

By the outbreak of the Korean War, American comic book writers, television cartoonists, and even trading card companies were having a field day depicting the Soviet leaders and their people as perfidy personified. Russian secret agents, mad scientists and military officers seemed to be showing up everywhere to threaten and attack decent, hard-working folk who just wanted to be left alone. For kids who liked their enemies especially

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[70] Orlov, *The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes*, pp. 319, 320, 350, 345-346, 316.

vile there was "The Atom Squad"—a serialized weekday television cartoon which premiered in 1953. The Squad was a team of crack American agents who regularly foiled plots by crazed Russians bent on destroying the "forces of freedom." One week the heroes had to deal with Reds who attempted to disrupt American shipping by building an enormous under sea magnet and, a few weeks later, Communists teamed up with ex-Nazis and almost flooded the United States by manipulating the weather. In the comics, equally diabolical Russians with names like "Boris 'The Butcher' Kasilov" appeared in bunches to harass UN soldiers in Korea or murder peaceful non-Communist leaders who stood in their way. *Marvel Comics'* "Terror In Tibet" (1951) for example, features two sinister Soviets who knife the Dalai Lama ("We bring you greeting from the Communists of the world," announces one of the scowling assassins upon their arrival in the peaceful "Llamasary." "And we bring you....DEATH!—ARRGGHHH!"); they then attempt to take his place to foment a Red uprising among the holy one's followers. The Bowman Gum Company played its part in the Cold War by releasing "Fight the Red Menace" trading cards in late 1950. Some displayed hideous portraits of the Kremlin hierarchy, their faces painted green, while others brandished sketches of Russian slave labour camps. "All over the world," one card explained, "agents of the Red Menace seek chances to make trouble. They even fool well-meaning people into helping them do their dirty work." In all of these popular media, the Soviets were typically portrayed as militant, deceitful and cruel. They stirred up revolutions, craved power and lived in a godless, gray world. Arrogantly, these miserable Russians tried to remake the rest of the planet in their own dismal image.[71]

Many Americans clearly believed that Stalinist society was so thoroughly evil that it was without any moral base—save the needs of the revolution. Underneath Communist ethics, Bishop Fulton Sheen explained in his best-seller, *Communism and the Conscience of the West* (1948), was the principle that the "ends justifies the means." "But is there any limit to chicanery, duplicity and devilry?" asked the Bishop. "Absolutely none!"

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[71] MacDonald, *Television and the Red Menace*, p. 123; Savage, William W., Jr., *Comic Books and America, 1945-1954* (Norman: University of Oklahama Press, 1990), pp. 44-50; Buckingham, *America Sees Red*, p. 73.

Arthur Koestler had reached a similar conclusion in his shocking 1941 novel, *Darkness at Noon.* The Communist, he proclaimed,

> is damned always to do what is most repugnant to him: to become a slaughterer in order to abolish slaughtering, to sacrifice lambs in order that no lambs may be sacrificed, to whip people with knouts so that they may learn not to let themselves be whipped, to strip himself of every scruple in the name of scrupulousness, and to challenge the hatred of mankind because of his love of it—an abstract and geometric love.

Given such characterizations, reports that sexual depravity, cannibalism, torture, racism, and alcoholism—to name but a few vices—were running rampant in the land of the Soviets, appeared entirely possible, even probable.[72]

In *The Vital Center* (1949), historian Arthur Schlesinger described Communism as "something secret, sweaty and furtive like nothing so much, in the phrase of one wise observer of modern Russia, as homosexuals in a boy's school." Schlesinger's connection between political and sexual "perversion" was a powerful one in the minds of many Americans during the early postwar era. The Soviet Union itself had long been regarded as a cesspool of sexual immorality, and, despite Stalin's ushering in of morally conservative family policies during the early forties, the reports of "gross Bolshevist animalism" persisted. In "Soviet Terror in the Baltics" (*Reader's Digest,* 1949), Albert Kalme charged the Russians with promoting "books of a licentious nature," "free love" and the "numerous incidents of rape" which were supposedly forced upon Latvian youths under the new Soviet school system. Oriana Atkinson was revolted by "the blatant homosexuality" she saw with her own eyes in Moscow. Bishop Sheen chided the USSR's busy abortion clinics. And *Russia Magazine* lamented "the once beautiful, charming Russian girls...once the pride of Russia" who were now reportedly "selling themselves" on Soviet street corners. At the movies, Americans

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[72] Fulton J. Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West,* p. 66; Sheen, p. 67; Arthur Koestler, *Darkness at Noon* (New York: Macmillan, 1941), quoted in Sheen, p. 67.

were reminded that the Reds in the United States also had an inexhaustible supply of woman with loose morals. In *The Red Menace* (1949), California Communists use sex as bait: a potential dupe says to the evil blonde seductress, "I always thought that Commies peddled bunk. I didn't know they came as cute as you." She lets him kiss her, then pulls away to hand him a copy of *Das Kapital.*

Reports of Soviet sex crimes in Eastern Europe, meanwhile, were terrifying and graphic. Brutal eyewitness accounts of Soviet perversion and barbarism in the satelite countries appeared throughout the American media—many containing vivid descriptions of Red Army atrocities. This account entitled "Russians in Hungary" (1947) is one example:

> Rape was organized and wholesale, permitted by the High Command as a reward for fighting. Apartment houses were surrounded by soldiers with tommyguns and transformed for a night into brothels. There was practically no hiding place; for attics, cellars, elevator-shafts and coal-bins were searched too. Our neighbor, a Pole who spoke good Russian and dared to protest as an 'ally' for the sake of his fiancee, got three shots through his eye. His corpse was made to sit up on the couch and one eye glared at five soldiers taking possession of his girl in the presence of his family. Other Comrades played the harmonica and sang to the performance. After this there was no resistance in the house. Few houses in Budapest escaped a similar fate. This lasted about two months after the occupation.[73]

Racism was described as another unsavory feature of Soviet society and here the movies provided some of the most vivid imagery. In *I Was a Communist for the FBI,* Soviet stooges chuckle in private about the greed of Jews and the low intelligence of blacks. A leader says, "To bring about Communism in America we must incite riots." So the Communists encourage blacks to assault whites—"Yes, those niggers ate it up"—and figure

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[73] Arthur Schlesinger, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), quoted in Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War,* p. 43; Albert Kalme, "Soviet Terror in the Baltics," *Reader's Digest* (January 1949), p. 35; O. Atkinson, *Over at Uncle Joe's,* p. 246; Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West,* p. 143; *Russia Magazine* (February 15, 1946), p. 2; Sayre, *Running Time,* p. 245; Drake, "Russians in Hungary," p. 602.

that "if after this meeting, a black goes out and kills a white man," the party will profit from the money raised for the defense. The comrades happily take credit for "the Negro riots" in Detroit and Harlem in 1943. "When blacks died," an FBI agent tells us, "they never knew that their death warrants were signed in Moscow." The Communists also force a strike on the Pittsburgh steelworkers' union, and those who refuse to join the picket line are smashed over the head with the *Jewish Daily Forward,* so that Jews will take the blame for the beatings. The fact that Americans had mistaken these fictional images for reality was made evident when *I Was a Communist* received a nomination for an Academy Award as the best feature-length *documentary* of 1951.[74]

The most horrifying images of Soviet debauchery often centered on their alleged methods of torture and charges of Red cannibalism. Fortunately for the reader, the worst forms of cruelty were usually labelled as "too revolting to discuss in detail," but some accounts, such as the *New Leader's* "The Real Enemies of the Russian People"(1947) and Harold C. Gardner's "Hucksters in Death" (*America,* 1947), did their best to at least provide a few harrowing descriptions of what went on in the sound-proof rooms. No accusations, it would seem, were too gruesome to appear in print. Witness, for example, the following testimony of William Bullitt given before HUAC Chairman John E. Rankin in late 1946:

> Rankin: Is it true that they eat human bodies in Russia?
> Bullitt: I did see a picture of a skeleton of a child eaten by its parents.
> Rankin: Then they're just human slaves in Russia?
> Bullitt: There are more human slaves in Russia than ever existed anywhere in the world.

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[74] Sayre, *Running Time,* p. 87. A lengthy discussion of alleged Russian mistreatment of minorities can be found in Smal-Stocki's *The Nationality Problem of the Soviet Union.* On anti-semitism in the USSR see "Anti-Semitism Is Shown in the Soviet 'Cultural Purge,'" *Newsweek* (April 4, 1949), p. 30; and Solomon Schwarz, *The Jews in the Soviet Union* (New York: Arno Press, 1972, c1951).

Such charges of torture and cannibalism were even sanctioned by some history texts on the USSR, including W. Kirchner's *Outline History of Russia.*[75]

Equally hysterical stories circulated concerning the Soviet scientific community. During the Stalinist period, Soviet science and medicine had much to its credit (as the success of the five year plans would indicate); from about 1947 onward, however, the American media typically portrayed Russian scientists as evil creatures, dutifully plotting new ways to achieve world conquest. In September 1947, ABC's Walter Winchell—the most popular commentator in late 'forties radio—let loose a vicious attack upon the USSR, telling his listeners that

> the Third World War is already being fought....We are losing it....When the Communists are ready, there will be fifty Pearl Harbors, atomic explosions erasing our cities....The Communists have germ warfare already....The cholera plague in Egypt is suspected abroad of being a Soviet experiment.... We must start rearming now.

Had Winchell been reading the *Los Angeles Times* in 1950, his temperature might have risen even further. The *Times* suggested that Klaus Fuchs, who had confessed to spying for the Soviets while working on the Manhattan Project, had also betrayed "the secret" of a "hormone ray" that could potentially "feminize" enemy troops. Completely void of any sense of morality, the Red leaders were said to have no reservations about using science and technology to advance their own sinister aims—whether that meant using it to help conquer an enemy (provided they could get away with it) or as a means of consolidating their absolute control over the lives of Soviet citizens.[76]

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[75] Smal-Stocki, *The Nationality Problem of the Soviet Union*, p. 34; Alexeiv Kirill, "The Real Enemies of the Russian People," *New Leader* (January 30, 1947), p. 9; Harold C. Gardner, "Hucksters in Death," *"America*, Vol. 76 (January 25, 1947), p. 463; Bullitt, quoted in James Aronson, *The Press and the Cold War* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1970), p. 32; excerpts from Kirchner's text in Smal-Stocki, *The Nationality Problem*, p. 49.

[76] Walter Winchell's radio commentary is quoted in J. Fred MacDonald, *Don't Touch That Dial! Radio Programming in American Life, 1920-1960* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall, 1979), p. 317; *Los Angeles Times* article paraphrased in Buckingham, *America Sees Red*, p. 78.

The professed atheism of the Soviets and its threat to the established church was another major characteristic of the American view of Soviet life. Religious freedom in the traditional American sense was widely believed to be non-existent in the USSR. At all levels of society and government, influential figures brought strikingly similar interpretations to bear on this issue. There were three basic, interrelated images: (1) that Communism itself was a *secular* religion, (2) that the survival and expansion of the Soviet state required the degradation and eventual annihilation of other religions, and (3) that efforts to achieve those goals had long been underway in the USSR and, more recently, in Eastern Europe.

For President Truman, FBI Chief J. Edgar Hoover, Bishop Fulton Sheen and countless others in positions of leadership, "godless" Communism appeared not just as a political philosophy but as a complete philosophy of life—a "materialistic religion"—different from other secular systems in that it seemed to attempt not only to control human actions but "the whole man, body and soul." Materialism, as opposed to a spiritual or humanistic faith, was seen as the guiding Communist concept. Oriana Atkinson's stay in the USSR had apparently reinforced her own similar interpretations. In her colourfully written *Over at Uncle Joe's* she declares:

> Communism is not only a political science but a religion.... The believers have to accept it without reservation....The modern ikons are the heroic statutes and portraits of Lenin and Stalin in every public building and the huge portraits of the minor prophets, carried by the believing multitudes on holidays.
>
> The literary style of Soviet propaganda overflows with religious expressions of love, gratitude, high resolve and sacrifice for future life; Moscow is not only the capital but holy city of the Communist faith; and Lenin is the father, Stalin is the son.

As if this deification of the "Red dictators" were not appalling enough to Americans, many also concluded that Lenin and Stalin were "jealous gods" bent on wiping out all other religions. Bishop Sheen offered the alleged roots

of this jealousy on his television show. "If a man believes in God, then he cannot be totally possessed by the State," said Sheen, "for he is in relation to a reality which evades social control. Communism knows it cannot possess man totally unless it persecutes religion, which holds that man does not exist for the state."[77]

The powerful image of the Soviets as the violent enemies of religion was evident throughout the American press and popular culture. Frequent eyewitness accounts from the Soviet Union reported that the Communists were in the process of destroying religion by promoting atheism, persecuting and ridiculing sincere religious beliefs and practices, corrupting the natural religious instincts of children, murdering religious leaders, and destroying churches and related institutions. Articles such as *America*'s "Armenian Catholics in the Soviet Union" (June 1947) and the *New York Times* headline story "Soviets Step Up Fight on Religion" (August 14, 1949) reported on the confiscation of cultural possessions, the tearing down or transformation of churches into shops and government buildings, and the killing and enslavement of clergy. Ann Montgomery Drake's "Russians in Hungary," meanwhile, described the severe beating allegedly inflicted on Cardinal Mindszenty, Primate of Hungary, who according to the reports had been left "simple-minded." In addition, Drake insisted that "hundreds of priests have been tortured, deported or killed." Spiritually, the young were said to be the most tragic victims of all, since atheism was forced on them from an early age. One eyewitness report, which appeared in the William Randolph Hearst press, quoted a Polish war orphan who had just been released from a labour camp in Siberia: "We were taught to say after the teacher in the camp school, 'There is no God but Stalin and the state, man came from animals. He needs no God but Stalin.'" In the United Artists' science-fiction movie *Red Planet Mars* (1952), the Deity Himself has apparently had enough of all this and chooses sides in the Cold War. God takes to the airwaves on the Voice of America to deliver a condensed version of the Sermon on the Mount, and soon we see scenes of inspired Russian

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[77] Hoover's views presented in Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, p. 85; Harry S. Truman, "A Fighting Faith for America," p. 59; Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West*, p. 58; Atkinson, *Over At Uncle Joe's*, pp. 91-91; Sheen, quoted in Yablonsky, "A Rhetorical Analysis," p. 199.

peasants tearing down portraits of Stalin from their walls. A rebellion follows, and the Soviet Politburo is replaced with a new American style government. Churches are reopened, while the West pays tribute to "a nation finding its soul." Short of divine intervention, however, Americans seldom perceived cause for much optimism.[78]

In American eyes, even Soviet sex roles had been warped and debased by the all-intrusive mob in the Kremlin. Almost every American journalist and diplomat who published accounts of their experiences in the Soviet Union during this period included their impressions of Russia's women workers. They were disturbed that Soviet women had been "thrust" into public life and collective production under the same conditions as the men. Many observers reported that, in Moscow, herds of forlorn, unhappy Soviet women were forced to take on the hardest, most punishing labour—digging ditches, chopping ice, working the mines and sewers, operating pneumatic drills, and shoveling snow, often in sub-zero temperatures.[79] As a result, these "muscular, thick set" Russian women had, it was frequently implied, been desexualized if no longer "nationalized" by the state. According to Lydia Kirk, "There seems to be no job that is too rough or heavy for Russian woman." After watching them heaving stones and bricks, she noted that all laboured away "with the same plodding submissiveness, more animal-like than human." Then, at the end of the workday, "trucks come by to pick them up and off they go, loaded on top of whatever load the truck may be carrying, a sexless lot, indistinguishable from the sacks of cement or flour or rags."[80]

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[78] "Armenian Catholics in the Soviet Union, Comment of the Week," *America*, Vol. 76 (January 25, 1947), p. 452; "Soviets Step Up Fight on Religion: New Efforts Are Being Made to Limit Churches and Help Cause of Atheism," *New York Times* (August 14, 1949), p. 1; Drake, "Russians in Hungary," p. 604; "Polish War Orphans Reveal Oppression at the Hands of Reds," *Pittsburgh Sun Telegraph* (June 9, 1946), quoted in Bonnie Sharp Jefferson, "The Rhetorical Restrictions of a Devil Theory: The Anti-Communist Press View of Communism, 1945-1947," Ph. D. dissertation (University of Pittsburgh, 1984), p. 106.

[79] See Atkinson, *Over at Uncle Joe's*, pp. 221, 225; O'Daniel, "This Is Moscow Today," p. 52; Rounds, "Eighteen Months Inside Russia," pp. 110-111; Rounds, *A Window On Red Square*, pp. 27-28; Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West*, p. 142; Stevens, *This Is Russia, Un-Censored!*, p. 205; and White, *Report on the Russians*, p. 104.

[80] Kirk, "Postmarked Moscow," p. 143.

Under this Soviet system which "forced women out of the household" and into the "defeminizing" tasks of the workplace, the family was thought to have all but disintegrated: fathers were no longer the leaders of the household, and the role of the mother had been demeaned as children were taken away to child care centers to be raised by the state. In his "Mr. X" article, George Kennan stated that "such things as normal security and placidity of the home environment have practically ceased to exist in the Soviet Union outside of the most remote farms and villages." Kennan then expressed concern over just what "mark" the "abnormal strains of childhood" in the USSR would leave on the generation then coming to maturity. Nina I. Alexeiev, a Soviet mother, who claimed she risked "death" to bring her children to America, elaborated on these supposedly "abnormal strains" and offered her version of their immediate results. She testified that forcible collectivization had wrecked family life and transformed innocent children in "once fat and smiling villages" into homeless juvenile delinquents and slave labourers. Countless hordes of "wild children—dirt-crusted urchins in shredded rags, most of them diseased and depraved—roamed the land, begging, robbing, dying like flies," bemoaned Alexeiev. Apparently unaware that the age limit for capital punishment in the USSR was eighteen, Alexeiev added: "The fact that 12-year olds in Russia are subject to the death penalty for political crimes does not shock Soviet public opinion. Young people seek to escape from their drab and half-starved existence in mischief wherever they can find it." She then insisted that, in addition to the delinquents, millions of other boys and girls, "as property of the state," were torn away from their families and forced to work in the mines and factories. The "little slaves" were worked and starved until they collapsed. Those children fortunate enough to stay with their families lived in "an endless misery....with no toys....their minds and souls maimed by abnormal conditions." Pathetically, boys and girls played "'Prison' and 'Liquidation,' making games of the troubles around them."[81]

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[81] Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," p. 577; Alexeiev, "I Didn't Want My Children to Grow Up in Soviet Russia," pp. 11, 12, 14, 12, 14.

Pictures of family destruction frequently focused on the idea that the only respect for authority in Russia was respect for the Soviet Government. Parents in particular were not given the traditional respect expected in a religious culture. Supposedly, Russian children were taught to betray their parents, thus operating as a network of little spies. Oriana Atkinson was angered as she relayed the story of one "little devil" whose father was trying to discipline her. The "headstrong young daughter" reportedly said to him "firmly and coldly: 'Do not forget, please, that I am a Soviet citizen and if you attempt to punish me I shall report you to the police.' " In her discussion of brainwashing in the schools (placing the minds of the young in a "straight jacket") Mrs. Alexeiev claimed that "spying on their elders" and "contempt for parents have been implanted in children almost from babyhood." She then told the story of one "young hoodlum" of her acquaintance who had informed on his father for hiding forbidden religious icons from the state. According to her account, the boy's father, mother, and four brothers and sisters were immediately dragged off to Siberia. "When I recall such incidents—and there are many," Alexeiev insisted, "a chill runs down my spine. What if my own children had been infected with that kind of 'vigilance'?" Similar stories of betrayal also appeared in influential works such as James A. Wechsler's *The Age of Suspicion* (1953), Bishop Sheen's sermons, and American high school textbooks.[82]

Alcoholism, spouses assigned to work in different cities, and a high divorce rate were also said to have taken their toll on the Soviet family. Most descriptions of the former emphasized the depressing and dangerous nature of "swilling," Russian-style. "It is sullen and deadly," wrote Frank Rounds in *A Window on Red Square.* "People drink to get drunk and pass out, and they do all over the street." Americans also read that husbands and wives were often assigned to jobs in different cities as part of an overall Stalinist effort to break family ties. Both of these "facts," together with "lax divorce laws," were believed to have led to an exorbitant number of marital break-ups in the

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[82] O. Atkinson, *Over at Uncle Joe's,* p. 278; Alexeiev, "I Didn't Want My Children Growing Up in Soviet Russia," p. 15; Alexeiev, p. 12. See James A. Wechsler, *The Age of Suspicion* (1953), quoted in Grayson, *The American Image of Russia, 1917-1977,* p. 132; Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West,* p. 143, and Casner and Gabriel, *The Story of American Democracy,* p. 601.

USSR, and according to Hannah Arendt, the slave labour camps took the heaviest toll of all. In her 1953 essay "The Concentration Camps," Arendt maintained that a Soviet woman almost always sued for divorce immediately after her husband's arrest in order to protect herself and children. Should her husband attempt to return upon his unlikely release, wrote Arendt, "she will indignantly turn him out of the house....Grief and remembrance are forbidden." Such was the perceived nature of family loyalty in the USSR.[83]

The overall American image of "The New Soviet Man" was summed up rather well in an article of the same title published in the November 1950 issue of *American Mercury.* The author, Ada Siegel, repeated the assumption that this new "Bolshevikinian" had been "artificially created" by a modern system of control that shaped peoples' thoughts and planned all activities from cradle to grave. Living in a constant state of fear and paranoia, the average citizen was "distrustful of his brother, his son, his wife, his best friend." For, in accordance with the stereotype, Siegel declared that they never knew who among them had orders to report *every* tiny detail of their lives and thoughts. The New Soviet Man, Siegel likewise reaffirmed, was utterly insensitive to the suffering of others. Enduring the constant sight of family and friends being arrested, carried off to slave labour camps, or killed, the Russian had supposedly become "immune" to the anguish that such experiences would produce in "normal people." (Thus Siegel, like many Americans, was very suspicious of Soviet defectors who left their loved ones behind in the USSR to suffer severe punishments on the charge of "guilt by association." As was almost always the case, however, he seemed to have no problem believing *any* of their stories which portrayed the USSR in a sinister light). Above all, Siegel was disturbed by what he pictured as "the spiritual enslavement of the human personality, the torturous creation of a new type of man for whom Terror, hardened into a perfect, all embracing system, is as natural as the daily morning shave in America."[84]

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[83] Rounds, "Eighteen Months Inside Russia," p. 116 (also Atkinson, *Over at Uncle Joe's,* p. 34); Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West,* p. 143; Hannah Arendt, "The Concentration Camps" in Philip Rahv and William Philips, eds., *The New Partisan Reader, 1945-1953* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1953), p. 242.

[84] Ada Siegel, "The New Soviet Man," *American Mercury,* Vol. 71 (November 1950), pp. 530, 531.

In the first years of the Cold War, Americans envisioned Stalinist ideology as an abomination—"Satan's version of religion," in the words of evangelist Billy Graham—which had denied intrinsic moral standards and spiritual or humanistic values and replaced them with a materialistic false creed. As former Ambassador to the USSR William C. Bullitt had phrased it in *Life,* the struggle for the planet between the "free world" and the Soviets came down to "the deepest moral issue of man as a son of God with an immortal soul, an end in himself, against *man as a chemical compound,* the tool of an omnipotent state, an end in itself." Defeat in this battle was unthinkable for, in the American mind, this would mean the creation of a miserable world diametrically opposed to their own traditions, ideals, and aspirations, a world of empty, soulless creatures who became hard, cold, and boorishly enslaved to ideology and the "artificial" structures of the twentieth century.[85]

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[85] Billy Graham, quoted in Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War,* p. 81; William C. Bullitt, "The World From Rome," *Life,* Vol. 18 (September 1944), p. 109.

PART THREE

THE AGE OF ANXIETY

V.

Red Alert:
Some Previous Explanations for American Anti-Communism

Americans' excessively bleak and dismal perceptions of life in the Soviet Union were rooted in many sources. As mentioned in the Preface, previous accounts of American attitudes toward the USSR have not focused primarily on accounting for the images of life under Stalin. A great number of studies have, however, offered convincing explanations for the general hostility that Americans felt toward their Russian enemies in the early Cold War era. These explanations offer some key reasons for the general hostility and negativism that helped to intensify and, to some degree, shape the dominant images of Russian life that have just been presented. As such, they must be taken into consideration in any study of this nature and will be surveyed in this chapter. Chapter VII and the Epilogue will then offer alternative explanations for visions of Soviet life by examining the anxieties and frustrations besetting American life at mid-century.

The most convincing general arguments made for explaining postwar Americans' especially intense hatred for the USSR can be separated into seven basic components: the perceived external threat from the Soviet Union, fears of Communist internal subversion, the high level of religiosity in the United States, cultural hostilities, a tendency to see the world in terms of good versus evil, the American sense of mission, and the seemingly recurrent need for an enemy.

Clearly, the intensity and pervasiveness of Americans' generally negative images of the postwar Russians were due in part to their fears and obsessions regarding the external threat from the USSR. During the First Red Scare, Bolshevik Russia was an anathema, but not yet viewed as a mortal threat; after 1946, however, the Cold War with Russia became a life and death struggle. Americans' willingness to contain and confront the Soviets was primarily a product of their fears that the Kremlin had its own ideologically

driven Hitlerian blueprint for world domination. To most, the USSR appeared as an inherently expansionist state ruled by paranoid fanatics who constantly sought to absorb 'soft spots' of territory into their realm as part of a long-term scheme for building a global Communist empire. With the lessons of Munich fresh in their minds, Americans were very much aware of their nation's new role as leader of the "free world" (and, as such, the largest obstacle to any *Pax Sovietica*). It thus seemed logical to assume that the Soviets ultimately planned to encircle, isolate, and conquer "the arsenal of democracy"—making America, as Dwight Eisenhower said, "communism's final and greatest victim-to-be." The *New York Daily News* repeated the usual descriptions of what Stalin had planned for the United States in its 1947 story "Patterns of Red Conquest" (June 8, 1947):

> All the time they [the Communists] are aiming for the overthrow of our social and economic system and for the establishment of a carbon copy of the Russian slave state in this country. The fact that probably 97% of Americans detest the notion of Communism cuts no ice with the Reds. They are determined someday to clamp their system on us—and to massacre as many of us in the process as they deem necessary.[86]

Such a vision seemed especially plausible in an age when the technological revolution, and in particular the development of the atomic bomb, was finally negating the geographic security that the United States had enjoyed throughout its history. The basis of confidence of "the good old days" when "America's defeat was as inconceivable as the earth going around the

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[86] "Patterns of Red Conquest," *New York Daily News* (June 8, 1947), quoted in Golden, "Attitudes to the Soviet Union," p. 28. The editors of *Look* magazine offered the same scenario in their 1948 article "Could Reds Seize Detroit?" Pictures of dead telephone girls, radio announcers being shot through glass windows, and children being blown up on bridges told the story as Detroit, with its "vulnerable factories," apparently collapsed to the Soviet menace. It was assumed by *Look* that it was only a matter of time before the Soviets would attempt to force their rule by terror on the United States. (One comforting note was allowed: "The Reds will find the Detroit police department tough foes.") President Truman expressed similar fears in his April 10, 1951, Radio Address to the American People: "The communists in the Kremlin," he warned, "are engaged in a monstrous conspiracy to stamp out freedom all over the world. If they were to succeed, the United States would be numbered among their principal victims." Truman's speech appears in Jados, *Documents on Russian-American Relations*, p. 185.

sun the wrong way" had been eliminated. To make matters worse, events overseas forced Americans into the realization that, at any moment, the Cold War could turn hot. The Communist coup in Czechoslavakia in February 1948, followed by the alleged suicide of Jan Masaryk, enraged American observers. Four months later the Soviet blockade of the western sectors of Berlin helped intensify public hostility as America's policy of containment, or resistance to Soviet power all over the world, appeared directly challenged. News from overseas went from bad to worse in 1949 with the Chinese revolution, and, that same year, the Soviet Union exploded its first atomic bomb. Then, in 1950, the United States was shocked further by the "fall" of China to the Communists and the outbreak of war in Korea. Suddenly, the very survival of the West appeared threatened. In July 1950, as moderate and respected a figure as Earl Warren announced that "our country is at war, ostensibly with North Korea, but actually with the Soviet Union." Warren talked "not just of a possible but a probable third world war." In August, the Gallup organization reported that 57 percent of Americans believed that their country was indeed already "actually in World War III." Given a choice between fighting a total (and potentially suicidal) war with the Soviets and allowing a further expansion of Soviet power, 70 percent chose war. The "guns before butter" portrayals of the Soviet Union as a heavily industrialized military monster with an economy geared almost entirely for the production of weapons was in part a product of these tensions. As one historian of the Cold War era has noted, for most Americans "the world was clearly divided into two bitterly hostile camps, guns at the ready, waiting and preparing for a devastating atomic showdown." In this environment, hostilities toward the USSR, the most powerful enemy Americans believed they had ever faced, were very much intensified.[87]

Nightmare visions of Soviet life were also closely related to the alarm over Communist subversion at home. As Richard M. Fried argues

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[87] Sidney Lens, *The Futile Crusade: Anti-Communism as American Credo* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964), p. 19; M. J. Heale, *American Anti-Communism: Combatting the Enemy Within, 1830-1970* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), p.155; Gallup's findings appear in Heale, p. 155; Perrett, *A Dream of Greatness*, p. 159; Wesley T. Wooley, *Alternatives to Anarchy: American Supranationalism Since World War II* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 89.

convincingly in his recent book *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective*, during the early postwar years there was a broadly based anti-Communist consensus that was shared by the majority of Americans and seldom challenged by anyone, regardless of whether they were among the elite or just "regular folks," Democrats or Republicans. Strikes, racial tensions, crime, and a host of other problems were frequently blamed on the ubiquitous forces of the Red Menace. These fears over Communist subversion were accompanied by the equally troubling conviction on the part of many Americans that Soviet agents and their "dupes" were constantly plotting to steal the "secret" of the Atomic Bomb. In February 1948, amidst a rash of Red spy scares, a plurality of *Fortune Magazine*'s respondents were convinced that the Communist Party operating within the United States was approaching the point at which it presented a real threat to the nation. While most Americans may not have been "trembling lest they find a Red under the bed," 35% did feel that the "Commies" had gained control of many industries and labor unions, and 10% felt that they had even gone beyond that. In another survey 62% of those questioned indicated the belief that the American Communist Party took its orders directly from Moscow. Asked in March 1949 if the government should register Communists, 83% favoured such action. And when asked 18 months later if members of the ACP should be eliminated from war production industries, 90% responded in the affirmative, only 6% in the negative. In August 1950, an American Institute public opinion poll asked its informants, "What do you think should be done about members of the Communist Party in the U.S. in the event we get into a war with Russia?" It received the following reactions:

Put them in internment camps	22%
Prison	18
Send them out of US; exile them	15
Send them to Russia	13
Shoot them; hang them	13

Let them rave but watch them; register them	4
Nothing, everyone is entitled to freedom of thought	1
Miscellaneous	9
No opinion	10
	105%[88]

As discussed earlier, Americans have always held profound cultural aversions toward Communism. The long tradition of American anti-radicalism has been examined in-depth in David Brion Davis' *The Fear of Conspiracy: American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present* (1971) and David H. Bennett's *The Party of Fear: From Nativist Movements to the New Right in American History* (1988). Both not only point out that the alarm over Communism precedes the Second Red Scare of the late forties and the fifties, but that, in fact, the reactionary conviction that all social and political change is the result of radical conspiracies had a history as old as the nation itself. (In the early nineteenth century Mormons, Freemasons and Catholics were seen by many to embody those traits that were the precise antithesis of American ideals—"an inverted image of Jacksonian democracy and the cult of the common man," writes Bennett. A similar national mind set was evident with the "slave power conspiracy" of the mid-1800's and the crusade for Prohibition in the twenties.) Peter H. Buckingham's *America Sees Red* (1988) emphasizes that the individualist roots in American culture, such as insistence on civil liberties, property rights, and entrepreneurialism, and American political traditions—most notably, the growth of two highly competitive, broad-based centrist political parties, and the public's long-standing distrust of radicalism, collectivism, and strong centralized government—have always made life extremely difficult for the left. (As we have seen, many of these strong sentiments were made evident, over and over again, in the negative images of Soviet life.) In this century, years before Senator Joseph McCarthy and others hit upon the Communist issue, it had been used by those opposing reform—especially, but not solely, by the

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[88] See Richard M. Fried, *Nightmare in Red: The McCarthy Era in Perspective* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 12 (Summer 1948), pp. 350-351 and Vol. 12 (Spring 1948), p. 150; George H. Gallup, *The Gallup Poll, 1935-1971*, Vol. II (New York: Random House, 1972), pp. 808, 933; *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 14 (Winter 1950-51), p. 802.

Republicans. Since HUAC's creation in 1938, it had led the attack on the New Deal, claiming that Franklin Delano Roosevelt had taken his nation a long way on the road to Moscow. George Sirgiovanni's *An Undercurrent of Suspicion: Anti-Communism in America During World War II* (1990) finds that this "undercurrent of suspicion" towards radicals, especially Communists, was even present among a broad cross-section of Americans during the 1941-1945 period and that this built momentum near the end of the war to soon become "a tidal wave of anti-Soviet resentment, hostility, and fear." As these and numerous other studies have argued quite convincingly, low public tolerance for political deviants, President Truman's anti-Communist rhetoric (aimed at gaining support for his containment policy), the Republicans' subsequent exploitation of the issue, and related frustrations and anxieties fueled by the Cold War are all crucial elements in explaining the Second Red Scare at home and the genuine hostility felt by Americans toward the Soviet Union.[89]

Another characteristic of American society that appears to have been conducive to anti-Soviet sentiment is the high level of religiosity in the United States, a trend particularly evident at mid-century. Compared to citizens of other Western democracies, pollsters have consistently found that a higher percentage of Americans belonged to church or religious organizations and believe in the existence of God and heaven.[90] During World War II, a nationwide revival of organized religion began which gained momentum through the early years of the Cold War. Between 1940 and 1950, formal church affiliation grew from 49 percent to 55 percent and, over the next decade, it rose from 55 percent to 69 percent—the largest increase in this century. From 1949 to 1953 the annual distribution of Bibles increased by 140 percent. An amazing 26.5 million copies of the Revised Standard Version of

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[89] The sanctity of private property and free enterprise in America is made evident by the cover story that *U.S. News and World Report* ran in 1961: "If Bombs Do Fall—What Happens to Your Investments?" (Cited in Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, p. 223); Sirgiovanni, *An Undercurrent of Suspicion*, p. 189.

[90] Polls examined in Jon Hurwitz and Mark Peffley, "Fear and Loathing of the USSR: Public Images of Communism and the Soviet Union," in *Soviet-American Relations: Understanding Differences, Avoiding Conflicts*, eds., Daniel N. Nelson and Roger B. Anderson (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources Books, 1988), p. 40.

the Bible were sold within one year of its publication in 1952, and scriptural stories appeared regularly in popular magazines and the Sunday comics. As a participant in the opening of the American Legion's "Back to God" crusade, President Eisenhower said from the podium: "Recognition of the Supreme Being is the first, the most basic, expression of Americanism. Without God, there could be no American form of government, nor an American way of life." And on Ike's Inauguration Day in 1953, the parade of floats from each of the forty-eight states was led by a float to God. The reasons for this general revival were complex but it was at least partly shaped by the stresses of wartime followed by the special tensions of the Cold War. During the late forties and the fifties, religious faith might calm the anxieties of an uncertain and dangerous world; more to the point, the confrontation with the Soviet Union's "athieistic communism" invited comparison with the spiritual strength of the United States. As we have seen, Americans came to despise the USSR as a "Red mad-house of irreligion" and condemned Communism as a mortal threat to all the religious, ethical, cultural, and moral values of Christian civilization. As early as October 1947, 72 percent of those surveyed held that, if given the chance, the Soviets would destroy Christianity. Going to church was one way for each citizen to demonstrate his or her adherence to the "American way of life" as opposed to the "godless" ways of their enemies in Russia. Again, the United States was unique among Western nations in experiencing such a strong upsurge in postwar piety: in this century, church membership had never been so high as it was in the 1950's and has not been as high since.[91]

Americans' tendency to see the secular world in moral terms should also not be underestimated. Especially in the Cold War universe of the 1940s and 1950s, it was all too easy for Americans to see the world in black-and-white terms, with peace, freedom, democracy, and individualism on one side, and dictatorship, tyranny, and collectivism on the other—divided by an "iron

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[91] Church affiliation statistics provided in William Graebner, *The Age of Doubt: American Thought and Culture in the 1940s* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1990), p. 62, and M. J. Heale, *American Anticommunism*, p. 170; Peter Biskind, *Seeing Is Believing*, p. 115; Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, p. 84; Biskind, *Seeing Is Believing*, p. 116; *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 11 (Winter 1947-1948), p. 643.

curtain." Nationalism was and is a powerful force in the United States. The patriotism and pride that most Americans express for their country and its symbols, such as "Old Glory" and the Constitution, are unusually high. Public opinion polls taken up to the present day show that a majority of Americans believe that their system of government is the best in the world and that it should be used as a model by other countries. Many Americans agree without hesitation to ethnocentric statements such as "While the American form of government may not be perfect, it is the best form of government yet devised," and "Other countries should try to make their governments as much like ours as possible." As articles such as "Soviet Prices and Ours" and the anti-Soviet advertisement for the two Los Angeles shopping centres would also indicate, there is a strong strain of what might be called "Amway-ism," the interpretation of economic success as evidence of a benevolent God's grace. (Indeed, during the early postwar era, success and goodness were so easily equated that after *Life* published *The Old Man and the Sea* [1952], Eisenhower's future Secretary of the Treasury, industrialist George M. Humphrey, was puzzled by the popularity of Hemingway's story. "Why would anybody be interested in some old man who was a failure," he wondered, "and never amounted to anything anyway?") A United Nations survey of eight Western nations in 1951 found that, by a wide margin, the highest proportion of people selecting their own nation as offering the best life was Americans, with a whopping 96 percent choosing the United States. The same survey also asked the peoples of these nations to describe their attitudes toward the Russians. By revealing contrast, Americans regarded themselves as the "least friendly" with 91.1% "Unfavorable" and 0.9% "Favorable"; significantly, no other people, not even Russia's enemies of World War II, responded with such clear animosity.[92]

The fact that patriotic feelings and ethnocentric beliefs appear to go hand in hand with a fear and hatred of The Enemy has been the subject of

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[92] Hurwitz and Peffley, "Fear and Loathing of the USSR," pp. 40-41; George M. Humphrey quoted in Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, p. 71; U.N. Survey appears in William Buchanan and Hadley Cantril, *How Nations See Each Other: A Study in Public Opinion* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953), p. 83; see also an October 1953 poll presented in Tom W. Smith, "The Polls: American Attitudes toward the Soviet Union and Communism," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. 47 (1983), p. 280.

several studies. Charles W. Kegley and Eugene Wittkopf's *American Foreign Policy: Patterns and Processes,* Daniel J. Levinson's "Authoritarian Personality and Foreign Policy," and Milton J. Rosenberg's "Images in Relation to Policy Processes: American Public Opinion on Cold War Issues" all argue that "in-group" loyalty often results in "out-group" hostility, and in foreign affairs (for various cultural and political reasons already discussed) the obvious out-group was the Soviets.[93]

The particular intensity of American hatred toward the Soviets, as compared with that existing in other Western nations, was made evident in popular culture. On television, no entertainment series did more to promote anti-Communism in America than *I Led Three Lives* a weekly show based on Herbert A. Phillbrick's best-selling story of his days as an F.B.I. agent who, like Matt Cvetic, posed as a member of the American Communist Party. It enjoyed tremendous success and ran for 117 half-hour episodes which were released to syndication in 1953. A typical episode might involve Soviet plans to introduce a cheap drug to America's youngsters, and while each week the forces of Americanism inevitably triumphed, the Reds were never fully vanquished. As was the rule throughout the early postwar period, the appeal of Communism was never attributed to larger social conditions—not to bankers, or racists, or bosses, or the cops. Communism merely *created* problems. Phillbrick's series somehow managed to trace every disappointment, every danger, every weakness in the country back to Kremlin. (Unfortunately, as one observer has noted, even had the Soviets and their "agents" abroad all became vegetarians and pacifists America's problems would have remained.) Notably, the overseas reception of *I Led Three Lives* was not as favourable as it had been in the United States. In Australia and Hong Kong, the series was banned, and when the BBC aired several episodes in the mid-1950's, the series became a subject for debate in the House of Commons.[94]

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[93] Charles W. Kegley, Jr., and Eugene Wittkopf, *American Foreign Policy: Patterns and Processes,* 3d. ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987); Daniel J. Levinson, "Authoritarian Personality and Foreign Policy," *Journal of Conflict Resolution,* Vol. 1 (1957), pp. 37-47; and Milton J. Rosenberg, "Images in Relation to the Policy Process: American Public Opinion on Cold War Issues," in *International Behavior* , ed., Herbert C. Kelman (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965).

[94] MacDonald, *Television and the Red Menace,* p. 105.

In his essay, "The Devil and Soviet Russia," Harold J. Berman looks at another factor which predisposed many Americans to see the world in terms of "good vs. evil"—the Puritan tradition, with its fire-and-brimstone concept of hell. Berman writes that while there were real and significant differences between the United States and the USSR, a devil theory distorted nation-state relations by creating a "closed" explanation for all Soviet motives. If the Soviets acted belligerently (on the international or domestic scene) this demonstrated their evil nature; if they acted moderately (even humanely or friendly), this, in turn, proved their duplicity, dishonesty and once again their evil nature. Such a strong strain of Puritanism, stresses Berman, "tends to turn opponents into enemies, enemies into devils, and devils into ugly monsters." He notes that it was unthinkable to many Americans that Stalin, the same cruel despot who had ordered countless numbers of his people sent to labour camps in Siberia, might also have set up a system of law and justice designed to operate fairly in nonpolitical cases; or that the same Communist Party that had monopolized power had also set up programs which saw the number of doctors in Russia increase by ten times and the literacy rate fall from over fifty to less than ten percent in the 1917-1950 period. In short, Berman points out, the "devil theory" led some Americans to assume automatically that Stalin and his helpers could do no right.[95]

The creation of an external symbol of evil can also be linked to the long-standing belief in America's mission to emancipate mankind. In January 1776, Thomas Paine wrote of the most attractive possibility of Americans renovating a gray and tired world, the prospect of beginning "the world all over again"; John Adams subsequently described the United States as no ordinary nation but one "destined in future history to form the brightest or the blackest page." Historian Michael H. Hunt notes in *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy,* that it was these men who gave voice to the strong millennial strain which has since prevailed in American nationalist thinking. Significantly, he adds that throughout the nation's history

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[95] Harold J. Berman, "The Devil and Soviet Russia," *The American Scholar,* Vol. 27 (Spring 1958). pp. 147, 150.

> Americans increasingly understood their redemptive role in active, missionary terms rather than merely passive and exemplary ones. They were saviors with a duty to reach out to enslaved and backward peoples.... Their duty was clear. Mankind groaning in bondage cried for liberation. The forces of evil were on the march. World peace hung in the balance. Time for action was short.[96]

At few times, if ever, was this mission perceived as more urgent than during the early stages of the Cold War. For President Truman, the United States was "faced with the most terrible responsibility that any nation ever faced." America, blessed with the "greatest government that was ever conceived of by the mind of man," he proclaimed, would have to lead the resistance against the Soviet "hordes" who threatened the forces of morality, Christianity, honor and peace around the globe. Questions of whether or not American values and conceptions of liberty exported well were apparently not considered. The major point of the Truman Doctrine Address of 1947, and one which the President made clearly, repeatedly, and emphatically was that it was now the task of Americans "to save the world from totalitarianism." This vision of a noble national crusade to establish Americanism everywhere proved to be persuasive. Michael Hunt asserts that, like Truman and his advisors, the American public came to view themselves as standing at a crucial crossroads in history where a successful implementation of national will and power would promote freedom and liberty overseas while reinvigorating the American spirit at home. Defeat, on the other hand, would surely mean "the end of civilization itself."[97]

Finally, American xenophobia toward the Soviets has been linked to a phenomenon described in works such as David B. Davis' *The Fear of Conspiracy*. Davis believes that there is a "striking correlation" between Americans' fears of a purely evil conspiratorial enemy and their aspirations to national greatness. "It is almost as if the nation's grandiose mission to

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[96] Thomas Paine, quoted in Hunt, *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, p. 191; Hunt, pp. 191-192.

[97] Quotations from Harry Truman in Hunt *Ideology and U.S. Foreign Policy*, p. 157; Hunt, p. 159.

liberate and democratize the world could only be confirmed by proving the maliciousness and power of [an] enemy," he writes. The author lists similar patterns in the history of both religious and, more recently, secular searches for the millennium. "A transcendent cause that demands communal commitment and self-sacrifice," he concludes, "will require a satanic force against which to struggle, whether it is the devil himself, infidels and heretics or 'bourgeois deviationists' who have been unfaithful to the words of Chairman Mao." In short, Davis concurs with Berman's "Devil theory": Americans, they insist, *need* an enemy.[98]

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[98] David B. Davis, ed., *The Fear of Conspiracy: Images of Un-American Subversion from the Revolution to the Present* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), p. xxiii.

VI.

Projected Images, or: "Red Dawn" in America

All of the common interpretations of American hostility toward the Soviets are likely contributors to Americans' overwhelmingly negative visions of Soviet life, but such interpretations can only partially explain the specific content and pervasiveness of American attitudes. Interestingly enough, when looking at the American images of life in the USSR during this period, we find that they contain in magnified form many of the very same characteristics that Americans were most intent on denying in themselves. Stalin's Russia was depicted over and over again as an enormous concentration camp and as the embodiment of all the most negative effects of twentieth-century social change, including conformity, secularization, regimentation, mechanization and the utter sterility and ugliness of an urban environment that was methodically destroying the natural world. In direct contrast to these images of Soviet life, Americans wanted to identify themselves with a vision of an America where all its people were free, individualistic, self-reliant, spiritual, and close to nature. This deep-seated uneasiness and insecurity with the shape of mid-twentieth century American life led to a process of denial as Americans transferred their worst fears onto an enemy which, from the very start, had violated their deeply entrenched conceptions of morality, justice, and self-determination.

It is paradoxical that, in an age when America had reached the peak of its power and influence in the world, many of its people would be so obsessed with finding a release from their own *frustrations*. Certainly after World War II was over, there was considerable talk among Americans about how good the times were. Never before anywhere had so many people enjoyed such a high level of prosperity. As we have noted, by common agreement the United States was the strongest and freest country on earth. For those who bought into Henry Luce's vision of an "American Century," it was a time of tremendous confidence and a deep faith in American possibilities.

("American experience is the key to the future," the influential publisher pronounced in 1945. "America must be the elder brother of the nations in the brotherhood of man"). No doubt some Americans during this period held such an absolute faith in their nation's superiority and the inevitability of its progress that they experienced little if any fears about the future. But despite the widespread arrogance and self-righteousness on the part of some, the paranoid nature of the nightmare images of the USSR would suggest that more reflective Americans were feeling uneasy. Many were beginning to question, if only subconsciously, some of the central assumptions of their own culture as they became increasingly bewildered by the deep social and political changes at work in the twentieth century. Against the backdrop of a terrible Second World War, the extermination of six million Jews in the Holocaust, the construction and use of the atomic bomb, and the beginning of the Cold War (the outcome of which could not be predicted with any certainty), Americans of the early postwar era were increasingly doubtful about the innate rationality and goodness of man, inevitable progress, the plausibility of freedom, and the benefits of science.[99]

Uncertainty reigned in early Cold War America. Fears and anxieties about the end of progress and the decline of civilization and about a "historical past that was at best not relevant to the present and at worst the source of present problems," dominated "intellectual and cultural expression."[100] While some Americans continued to cling to Arnold Toynbee's alleged hopes for an American styled future for mankind,[101] for others, the belief in a steady, dependable, linear progress seemed increasingly unreasonable. Professor Edward Arlington Ross, once a firm believer in progressive dreams, put it bluntly: "After the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps, the butcheries of the Jews, the treatment of civilians in occupied Russia, the easy optimism of a half century ago will be left to born

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[99] Henry Luce is quoted in John Patrick Diggins, *The Proud Decades: America in War and Peace, 1941-1960* (New York: Norton, 1988), p. 74.

[100] Graebner, *The Age of Doubt*, p. 61.

[101] For a contemporary interpretation of Toynbee's *A Study of History* (1947) see especially Whittaker Chambers' cover story "The Challenge," *Time* (March 17, 1947), pp. 71-81.

ninnies and youths in their early 'teens'." Pacifist A.J. Muste too felt that history had lost its "rationality" and now appeared "like a fluid, rushing cataract on which we toss about impotently." Writing in 1952, theologian Reinhold Niebuhr argued that Americans had had things come too easily for them historically, and that they had wrongly attributed too much of their success to their own inherent superiority rather than to plain luck (the frontier, geographic isolation, the abundance of resources, etc.). For Niebuhr, the traditional attitude that American "know how" would be equal to any and every task was not only false but also dangerous. His essential point, that man could not necessarily control the course of history, that there were some problems which might simply prove insoluble, struck a responsive chord in many Americans' minds in the aftermath of World War II and amidst the stalemate in Korea. Belief in the American mission to save the world was a powerful motivating force in this era, but it would appear that for some this 'faith' was more a product of their desperation to hang on to simple and traditional ideals than of any genuine sense of confidence.[102]

On the domestic front, postwar anxieties were particularly intense due primarily to negative perceptions of rapid social change. Many Americans had become increasingly convinced that phony twentieth-century values were destroying traditional morality, that modern technology, urbanization, industry, government bureaucracy and the media were sapping citizens of their freedom and individualism by forcing American culture into a homogenized mass of conformity, and that, overall, America's best days were behind and the worst was yet to come. As we shall see, Americans' most prominent and harrowing inner fears about the future mirror, almost exactly, their overt images of contemporary life in the USSR. This mirror image was no mere coincidence.

For Americans, the Soviet Union loomed as a symbol of what the United States might become if its people became too "soft." Many contemporaries not only feared that the Reds could destroy America through

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[102] Edward Arlington Ross quoted in Graebner, *The Age of Doubt*, p. 65; A. J. Muste quoted in Paul S. Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light: American Thought and Culture at the Dawn of the Atomic Age* (New York: Praeger, 1985), p. 280; see Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1952).

internal subversion or atomic attack, but that the USA was in grave danger of suffering a complete moral collapse—and ultimate self-destruction—from within. Anxiety over such a breakdown was closely related to a growing sense that it was now more difficult than it had ever been for individuals to ground their conduct in a stable system of values. While moral contingency had been a matter of widespread concern since the Darwinian revolution a century before, new developments of the forties appeared to confirm that humanity as a whole had been cut loose and set adrift from its ethical anchors. Values, beliefs and moral standards seemed transient, coming and going without any pattern or reason. If some Americans remained smug and genuinely confident, more reflective Americans feared that their own nation might succumb to the same "moral anarchy" that was said to have pervaded Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. After the horrific events of the previous decade, Arthur Schlesinger declared, it seemed as if we were all potentially extremists inside: "There is a Hitler, a Stalin in every breast."[103]

Critics of ethical relativism attacked those persons and groups most often associated with its spread: philosophic pragmatism and, in particular, its offspring progressive education came under the most severe attacks for having helped create a confused and spiritually bewildered culture. Betsey Barton, the youngest participant at the 1948 *Life* roundtable on the "pursuit of happiness," took the popular position that modern pragmatic philosophy had produced moral confusion for a new generation of Americans that "had 'no inner authority that they can trust.'" Progressive education was an obvious and highly visible target for those wanting to expound similar sentiments. Two of the most vehement attacks on progressive education were Mortimer Smith's *And Madly Teach: A Layman Looks at Public School Education* (1949) and Bernard Iddings Bell's *Crisis in Education: A Challenge to American Complacency* (1949). Both publications represented the first wave in a movement that lashed out at advocates of progressive methods supposedly guilty of promoting action and "self-realization" while neglecting morality, values, rigorous drills in the basic disciplines, and the great Western traditions. "Eternal" truths and standards, critics insisted, were rapidly being

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[103] Arthur Schlesinger, quoted in Biskind, *Seeing Is Believing*, p. 136.

replaced with transient values that would have dangerous consequences. Insisting that Soviet-like "free love" and a "politics based on force" were the unavoidable results of amorality, Smith and Bell called for a more prominent role for religion both in the American home and in the schools. (There was clearly some truth to the claim that Americans had drifted away from their moral roots and toward relativism. Inevitably, after the carnage of World War II, some of its survivors looked back at the enormous death and destruction and viewed it as less justifiable than it had seemed at the time—they then sometimes became skeptical of the moral certainties they had possessed during wartime.)[104]

Concerns over ethical relativism were especially evident in the numerous declarations of "crises" said to be plaguing postwar American family life. Postwar domesticity was a powerful force which strongly affected the vast majority of Americans but, despite its strength, the family was relentlessly portrayed in the media as an increasingly vulnerable, besieged, and failing institution. In countless books, articles, sermons and speeches, the American family was said to be rampant with the same problems of divorce, disloyalty, dependency on alcohol and drugs, male-female "role confusion" and juvenile delinquency that had supposedly led to the destruction of the institution in Russia. Reuben Hill typically declared in *Families Under Stress: Adjustment to the Cities of War, Separation, and Reunion* (1949): "The day of taking the American family for granted is drawing to a close. The critical situation in family life cannot be denied. The evidence is apparent everywhere."[105]

Bishop Sheen was among those who described the culprits of family disintegration in his *Communism and the Conscience of the West.* "Belief" in divorce, especially in the cities; "free love"; birth control; and a rise in neurosis and psychosis cases, homicides, and alcoholism ("500 percent since 1920"), wrote the Bishop, "these are unmistakable signs that America is rotting from within." After describing the pattern of family destruction in

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[104] Graebner, *The Age of Doubt,* p.27; Smith and Bell are quoted in Graebner, p. 27.

[105] Reuben Hill, *Families Under Stress: Adjustment to the Cities of War, Separation, and Reunion* (Westport, CN: Greenwood Press, 1949), p. 360.

Russia—where he blamed loose morals and disloyalty in the home for having sown the seeds for a Bolshevik government that actually promoted family disunity—Sheen outlined his version of the same widely-perceived threat to America's future. "The disturbance of family life in America is more desperate than at any point in our history," Sheen insisted in a tone similar to Hill's. "The family is the barometer of the nation. What the average home is, that is America....What happens in the family will happen later in Congress, the White House, and the Supreme Court." Sheen's message was blunt: the American family was a wreck and the nation had little time left to set things right.[106]

One of the most pressing family-related anxieties of the day revolved around the six million American women who had left their traditional roles as homemakers and taken up previously all-male blue collar factory jobs during the Second World War. What would happen if they continued to work? Would American women become frigid, masculinized automatons, supposedly like their Soviet counterparts? Would the structure of the American family completely disintegrate as had the Russian? Many postwar "experts" were pessimistic. As early as 1942, Philip Wylie, the widely-read columnist for women's magazines, released a book of social criticism entitled *Generation of Vipers* and was selected by the American Library Association in 1950 as one of the most important nonfiction books of the first half of the twentieth century. Upon its re-publication in 1948 it remained a bestseller. Wylie insisted that working women were increasingly becoming the victims of role confusion. He attacked female sexual aggression and those who abandoned their children to take up careers of their own; instead he advocated companionate, sexually-fulfilling marriages. In the forties and fifties, the themes touched upon in *Vipers* were expanded upon in numerous magazine articles and books. Housewives were repeatedly advised to put the family first and equality in the work place second. "Absolute equality of

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[106] Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West*, p. 149; Sheen, p. 148. In 1948, Sociologist Ernest W. Burgess categorized postwar American families, as compared with those in other countries, as having become, proportionally, more urbanized, secularized and "unstable" (or prone to divorce) than their counterparts in Western Europe. Ernest W. Burgess, "The Family in a Changing Society," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 53 (May 1948), pp. 417-418.

opportunity is clearly incompatible with any positive solidarity of the family," wrote sociologist Talcott Parsons, who believed that women were being cut off from their natural closeness to their children. Among the more noticeable documents of this era was Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham's *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947). For Lundberg and Farnham, the American woman was fast becoming a "psychologically disordered" "bundle of anxieties" lacking the one anchor of her happiness—secure status "as a woman, a female being." Ravaged by the "deep illness" of feminism, they insisted, many women had abandoned their place in the home as mothers and become "truly displaced persons." Alcoholism, promiscuity, a "sky-rocketing" national divorce rate, and juvenile delinquency were all blamed by the American press on the "aggressive and uncontrolled behaviour" described by Lundberg and Farnham. Some apparently even assumed that Communists, lurking behind the scenes, were partly responsible for all the confusion. In 1947, the *New York World Telegram* that charged child care centers were a plot conjured up by Reds and "pinkoes" operating out of Communist "social work cells." In short, if American women were to avoid becoming "sexless" harridans, like their Russian counterparts who were "indistinguishable from sacks of cement or flour or rags"; if they were to prevent their children from being subjected to the "abnormal strains of childhood" inflicted on Soviet youths left in day-care centers; and if they were to fulfil their "natural roles" as the key defenders of a happy and stable family life, then they had best stay home and look after the husband and children.[107]

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[107] Philip Wylie, *The Generation of Vipers* (New York: Rinehart, 1942, 1948); Talcott Parsons, quoted in Peter Biskind, *Seeing Is Believing*, p. 278; excerpts from Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham, *Modern Women: The Lost Sex* appear in Graebner, *The Age of Doubt*, p. 107; *New York World Telegraph* quoted in William Henry Chafe, *The American Woman—Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1975* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 187. A survey of anti-feminist articles appeared in Frances Levison, "American Woman's Dilemma," *Life* (June 16, 1947), 101-111. For an especially intense attack on the "masculinization" of American women see Lee Mortimer and Jack Lait, *U.S.A. Confidential* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1952), pp. 2, 46-53.

Along with the print media, popular fiction and film frequently punished women for leaving the home; the classic study of the evil career woman was, of course, *All About Eve* (1950)—but occasionally a direct link was made between the Russian way of life and the working woman. In RKO's *Jet Pilot* (filmed in 1951) the Soviet Air Force pilot who makes a surprise landing at an American airbase is a woman (Janet Leigh). Her difference is stressed from the moment she emerges from the cockpit. Colonel Jim Shannon (John Wayne) and two fellow-officers dash to the plane and when they get a look at her, starting with Shannon and each in his own close-up, they describe her as "A woman! A lady! A dame!" One of the officers interrogating the pilot says, "I can't get used to woman soldiers." At the end of the film she

Margaret Mead's *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (1949) made many of the same arguments as the anti-feminist movies and paperbacks—it also examined and encouraged the related obsession that American men were becoming "overdomesticated." For Mead the question of fulfilling one's "biological roles" was one on which the very "survival of civilization" depended. Boys, like girls, she wrote, *needed* precise role models. A writer in *Better Homes and Gardens* expressed similar concerns when he asked, "Are we staking our future on a crop of sissies? You have a horror of seeing your son a pantywaist, but he won't get red blood and self-reliance if you leave the whole job of making a he-man out of him to his mother." For most of the public this was no joke. One English anthropologist concluded that concern about children becoming "sissies" was "the overriding fear of every American parent." Clearly, many Americans thought that a clear link existed between the "sissy" of today and the homosexual or "pervert" of tomorrow— at the height of the Cold War, in particular, this was viewed as both distasteful and dangerous. In Russia, Arthur Schlesinger and others had noted, Communist politics and perversion went seemingly hand in hand. The same situation was said to be taking root in America. "Deviants" were figured to be security risks because it was assumed that they were so easily susceptible to seduction and then to blackmail—or, since they were so lacking in backbone or moral control, they were easily drawn voluntarily into Communist organizations. Historian John D'Emilio described the prevailing underlying assumptions:

> The satisfaction of animal needs dominated their [homosexuals] lives until it atrophied all moral sense. Communists taught children to betray their parents; mannish women mocked the ideals of marriage and motherhood. Lacking toughness, the effete overly educated male representatives of the Eastern establishment had lost China and Eastern Europe to the enemy. Weak-willed, pleasure-seeking homosexuals—'half men'—feminized

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chooses to become a refugee instead of a spy and settles down with Shannon. Reassuringly, at least in *Jet Pilot*, family, patriarchy and love prove stronger than Communism, the state, and sex.

> everything they touched and sapped the masculine vigor that had tamed a continent.[108]

The perceived collapse of the nation's moral fibre was exemplified in mid-1947 when, at about the same time that reports of "bestial" Soviet behaviour at home and in Eastern Europe began appearing in the American press, a nation-wide sex crime panic spread across the United States which would last until about 1955. Sensationalized media coverage appeared in all the nation's most popular magazines, including *Collier's* treatment in its 1950 series "Terror in Our Cities" ("Who knows where the next psychopath might strike?" the magazine asked. "In your town? In your street?") and J. Edgar Hoover's *American Magazine* piece, "How Safe Is Your Daughter?" In that article, Hoover declared: "Should wild beasts break out of circus cages, a whole city would be mobilized instantly. But depraved human beings, more savage than beasts, are permitted to rove America almost at will." The photograph accompanying Hoover's story featured three little girls fleeing a huge hand that threatened to snatch them up from behind; in the background a beat-up garbage can served to remind readers that the problem was an urban one. Despite the fact that arrests for sex offenses actually fell after the war (returning to prewar levels in 1952), the public was convinced otherwise. By 1952, 21 states and the District of Columbia had enacted tough new sexual psychopath laws; police in many cities were carrying out regular roundups of "perverts"; and vigilantes inflicted numerous beatings on suspected offenders (one mob in Connecticut even attempted a lynching). Behind Stalin's Iron Curtain, where debased behaviour was said to be "endorsed wholesale" by the government, sex criminals allegedly ran amok.

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[108] Margaret Mead's *Male and Female: A Study of the Sexes in a Changing World* (New York: William Morrow, 1949), quoted in Graebner, *The Age of Doubt*, p. 106; *Better Homes and Gardens* quoted in Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), p. 147. Warnings over the need for precise role models also came from Dr. Benjamin Spock in his extremely popular *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*, see Graebner, *The Age of Doubt*, p. 107; John D'Emilio quoted in May, *Homeward Bound*, p. 95.

Americans reminded one another, again and again, that they must act in their own country before it was too late.[109]

Preventing the destruction of the nation's moral fibre was certainly on the mind of Mickey Spillane's tough-guy Mike Hammer, who waged a one-man war against the "Commie," "fag" "eggheads" that supposedly had Uncle Sam teetering on the brink of a complete moral collapse. Incredibly, of the nation's top ten fictional bestsellers of the fifties decade, six of them were Spillane's anti-Communist thriller mysteries: number three, *The Big Kill* (1951); number five, *My Gun is Quick* (1950); number six, *One Lonely Night* (1951); number seven, *The Long Wait* (1951); number eight, *Vengeance Is Mine* (1950); and number nine, *Kiss Me Deadly* (1952). By 1953, seventeen million of these six paperbacks alone had been sold. *Kiss Me Deadly* and *One Lonely Night* feature sinister or stupid women working for the Kremlin who try to steal atomic secrets from spineless scientists unable to resist their advances. In *One Lonely Night,* Hammer brags about the exhilaration he experienced as a result of his literal extermination of those involved in the Soviet plot. After an evening of carnage, the victorious hero gloats, "I shot them all in cold blood and enjoyed every minute of it. I pumped slugs in the nastiest bunch of bastards you ever saw....They were Commies....They were Red sons of bitches who should have died long ago....They didn't know there were still people like me in this country....Pretty soon what's left of Russia and the slime that breeds there won't be worth mentioning and I'm glad because I had a part in the killing....It was fun!....They figured us all to be soft as horse manure and just as stupid." Mike Hammer was not "soft as manure" because he did not allow himself to fall victim to the evil female secret-stealers. The hero had to save America from its own moral deficiencies because other men were too weak to control their passions. Had they been able to resist temptation and had the women behaved properly, there would have been no need for Hammer's murderous exploits.[110]

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[109] *Collier's,* quoted in Graebner, *The Age of Doubt,* p. 22; J. Edgar Hoover, "How Safe Is Your Daughter?" *American Magazine,* Vol. 144 (July 1947), p. 32, quoted in Freedman, "Uncontrolled Desires" (the actual photo appears on p. 93); Freedman, pp. 97, 93.

[110] Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War,* p. 35; Mickey Spillane, *One Lonely Night,* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1951), pp. 170-171. In the same spirit of self-flagellation, American kids kept reading comic books filled with heroes who beat up, burned, ran over, lynched and fed to sharks Soviet agents of

The same themes found in the self-flagellating, anti-Soviet literature of Mickey Spillane were also prominent in the dozens of "problem pictures" released in Hollywood during the 1947 to 1953 period. Subjects hardly touched upon before the Second World War were suddenly all over the screen. Insanity, racism, alcoholism, juvenile delinquency, adultery, greedy politicians, brutal policemen and sadistic gang violence all became subjects for treatment. Heavily atmospheric, these films capture the anxieties and fears of modern American life and, in many respects, bare striking similarities to the purported realities of Soviet life. In an atmosphere every bit as "dreary" and "spiritually dead" as a Moscow or Riga, they are wrought with low-key photography, un-attractive close-ups, stark contrasts of light and darkness, gloomy indoor sets, and gray, ugly and rainy exteriors. Full of disillusionment and despair, these films also feature large doses of sadistic violence often inflicted by psychopathic "Boris-the-Butcher" like characters who are not merely in rebellion against accepted moral standards but dead to their existence. Significantly, without exception, the nightmares of film noir were urban tales, set amid the dark alleys, night clubs, and rain-slicked streets of America's big cities. The message in films such as *D.O.A.* (1949), *Quicksand* (1950), *Sorry, Wrong Number* (1948) and, though not precisely of the film noir genre, *The Asphalt Jungle* (1950), was clear: the city was a dangerous trap seething with ugliness darkness, and vice—genuine country folk ought best to stay home.[111]

If there is one film that most emphatically reflects the various moral traumas of the postwar era—and conveniently links them directly to Communism—it was Paramount's *My Son John* (1952). This high-budget movie features a small-town, Irish Catholic family with a schoolteacher

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evil bent upon destroying the moral fibre of the United States. These defenders of good often resorted to vigilanteism because Washington was portrayed as being too permissive.

[111] The sinister city theme is an important ingredient in all of these films. *D.O.A.'s* main character's poisoning is clearly related to his trip to Los Angeles and occurs in a seedy bar as a beebop band plays urban "jive." In *Quicksand*, auto mechanic Danny Brady is tempted into crime by a woman miserably raised in a steel-town boardinghouse; at one point she admits, "I never saw a star until I was sixteen." And *The Asphalt Jungle* centers on Dix Handley, an intelligent "hooligan" with integrity who joins a gang planning a major jewel heist. As the movie closes, a wounded Dix makes his way back from the "asphalt jungle" to his hometown, where he dies in a pasture on the farm on which he was raised.

mother (Helen Hayes), a Legionnaire father (Van Heflin), and two hefty football-playing sons. John (Robert Walker) is the weak, cerebral black sheep who is somehow manipulated by sinister creatures able to sucker the well-meaning "dupe" into the American Communist Party and bend him to their will. In this film it is especially emphasized that "breaking up homes is a Commie specialty." As in all movies of this type, Communism is portrayed as so incompatible with Christianity that the Party members even look uneasy when someone realizes, "It's time for mass." John's own cynical views of religion are in stark contrast to his family's earnest church attendance. This, combined with John's incriminating intellect and education (his mother remarks that he's always been studious—"He has more degrees than a thermometer") and his residency in Washington, D.C., clearly establish the symbolic conflict. It is the materialistic, secular, modern, urbanized world versus the strength of the American family, the church, and the small-town. As Les K. Adler has noted, while the feelings and emotions of the Russian and/or American Communists in the earlier prewar movies like *Ninotchka* (1939) are merely repressed, in *My Son John* they are "deadened." John and his nasty comrades are cruel, cold puppets—traitors who have sold their souls and would just as easily sell out their own country. Their basic knowledge of right and wrong has been replaced by a blind subservience to the dictates of foreign masters. Essentially, John—like the Russian "robots" Americans envisioned —appeared as an 'unnatural' figure who has given up control of his own destiny and, worst of all, his individuality. The definition of morality and Americanism is represented most clearly by John's bellowing Legionnaire father who demonstrates that Christianity can be a fighting faith, as when he whacks his rotten son over the head with the family Bible. In the end, John himself finally realizes that he has sunk so deeply into moral ruination that he must repent to the FBI. But before he can clean up his act, he is mowed down on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, gangland style, by his machine-gun toting comrades. Fortunately, John has left a tape recorded message which is played as a warning to the stunned graduates of his alma mater. "I am a living lie," John concludes, posthumously, "I am a traitor, I am a native American, Communist, spy. And may God have mercy on my soul." Stephen J. Whitfield has correctly noted that if *My Son John* had never been filmed,

students of Cold War movies would have been driven to invent it. Its emphasis on the widely perceived struggle between traditional "Americanism" and the evil, transient Soviet-like values of the twentieth century was indicative of the nation's mood in the early fifties (and helps explain, at least in part, why the script was nominated for an Oscar).[112]

Some of those Americans who were most influential in creating the impression that modern America was on a dangerous path toward totalitarianism were the former double-agents and, in particular, ex-Communists who had written books about their "real life" experiences. The three who received the most attention were Louis F. Budenz, former editor of the *Daily Worker,* who released his well-received autobiography *This Is My Story* in 1947; Whittaker Chambers, the former editor of *Time* magazine (and the most well-known and influential of the ex-Communists), with his testament *Witness* (1952); and Elizabeth Bentley, portrayed by the media as the "Red Spy Queen" in 1948, with her own tale of woe and danger, *Out of Bondage* (1951). They all rested their cases against their former Comrades on the basis of Communist attempts to undermine the moral and spiritual foundations of American life—and none were optimistic about the eventual outcome.

Budenz, Chambers and Bentley all portrayed a world in mortal danger because of an immense Soviet conspiracy of evil battling the weakened forces of liberty. The forces of freedom were waning, they wrote, because the Soviets, their ideology, and their methods were—in an analogy offered by Whittaker Chambers—"like a sea," with its ceaseless pounding against the shore, its constant pressure, and the force of millions of particles controlled by powerful laws. In describing his own journey into the Party underground, Chambers insisted that "a force greater than myself had picked me up and was disposing of me—a force that in the end, would all but cost me my life to break away from." In terms almost identical to those of Budenz, Chambers proclaimed that upon his escape, "what I had been fell from me like dirty rags. The rags that fell from me were not only Communism. What fell from me was the

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[112] Les K. Adler, "The Politics of Culture: Hollywood and the Cold War," in Robert Griffith and Athan Theoharis, eds., *The Specter: Original Essays of the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism* (New York: New Viewpoints, 1974), p. 257; Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War,* p. 136.

whole materialist modern mind." For Whittaker Chambers and the others, the freedom of choice could only be re-captured through a violent, wrenching act of will, a reassertion of individualism, which would mean a complete break from the Party and a return to their American roots. Clearly at the center of their idea of human nature was the belief that, like the Russian "robots" who had been stripped of their identites, people everywhere were manipulable objects, able to be duped without knowing it and capable of little independent thought or action. Western ideals, drained by twentieth century materialism and collectivism—"the breeding ground for the police state" (Budenz)—were at war, and the very survival of civilization itself was on the line.[113]

As in *My Son John,* the three informers all tied the "vast impersonal industrial civilization" of the twentieth century to Communism, while taking pains, over and again, to assert their idealized stereotypes of a pre-modern America. Soviet Communism was branded artificial because of its urban origins and its emphasis on machines and technology, materialistic because of its emphasis on the affairs of this world while ignoring higher, spiritual values, and totalitarian because of its crushing of individual rights and freedoms. These forces of evil were closely linked to New Dealers like Chambers' enemy Alger Hiss—elite-born, urban-bred intellectuals or experts who lived a life somehow contrary to an ideal vision of America. Overall, as the ex-Communists presented it, the Soviet way of life appeared to take in the entire meaning of the twentieth century. In direct contrast, they all invoked the image of an old fashioned, small-town, agrarian America and of a people possessing the attributes of rugged individualism, calmed by harmony and religious faith—at the same time both non-materialistic and spiritual. Even before her highly publicized conversion to Catholicism (under the guidance of Monsignor Fulton Sheen) and subsequent confessions to the Department of Justice, Elizabeth Bentley recalled her retreat to "the small town world" of Old Lyme, Connecticut, which she described as remarkably similar to her own hometown of New Milford: "There were the same old houses with their

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[113] Whittaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952), p. 94; Chambers, p. 282; Chambers, p. 83; Louis Budenz, *This Is My Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947), p. 357.

well-kept lawns and fine old trees, the same white Congregational Church with its tall spire, the same small stores." Those who lived there, she wrote, "have an innate sense of the worth of an individual.... If only the whole country were based on values like these, there would be no fear of the future." Like the "Spy Queen," Whittaker Chambers' search for his roots in the land led him ultimately back to his farm (and the famous "pumpkin patch" of the Hiss Trial), while Louis Budenz and his family chose to clear out of the "Communist milieu" of New York City to settle in Crestwood in the Bronx River country. It was all part of their journeys "back to America" and their self-proclaimed need to re-establish their contact with the land and the people which their participation in the Communist Party had severed. In an urban environment, so read the perception, a person could not remain a self-reliant, free individual, and conflict thus emerged as a struggle between the controlled, "phony" faiths of the city and the independent, open-mindedness of the countryside.[114]

Amidst growing fears of "moral anarchy" and the "decline" of family life, Americans searched for ways to anchor their values and stabilize their lives and, like the ex-Communists, many turned to organized religion. As discussed in the previous chapter, at one level the religious revival of the early Cold War was a reflection of Americans' desire to see themselves as being on "God's side" as opposed to "Satan's version of religion," i.e., Soviet Communism; at another level, though, this revival also demonstrated a strong related desire to return to the days of a supposedly more stable and morally pure America. The fear that modern America was faltering spiritually was a prominent theme in the fundamentalist sermons of the young and highly influential evangelist Billy Graham. In the fall of 1949, just two days after President Truman had disclosed that the Soviets had acquired their own atomic bomb, a Protestant revival opened a tent in downtown Los Angeles in an atmosphere that seemed "apocalyptic." Graham had selected L.A. because the City of Angels was actually "a city of wickedness....known around the world because of its sin, crime and immorality." No warning

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[114] Elizabeth Bentley, *Out of Bondage: The Story of Elizabeth Bentley* (New York: Devin-Adair, 1951), p. 16; Bentley, p. 27; Budenz, *This Is My Story*, p. 328.

could have been more stirring than Graham's message: "God is giving us a desperate choice, a choice of either revival or judgment. There is no alternative!....The world is divided into two camps. On one side we see Communism [which] has declared war against God, against Christ, against the Bible and against all religion.... Unless the Western world has an old-fashioned revival, we cannot last!" Graham was convinced that only Christianity could resist such a force, and that only revivalism could save America itself.[115]

Fulton Sheen delivered a similar message in his books and on television. "Communists are right in saying this world needs a revolution," he told his viewers, "but not their cheap kind which merely transfers booty and loot out of one man's pockets and into another's." Like many Catholics, Sheen called instead for a restoration of family values—"if we restored the sanctity of marriage, raised children in discipline and love of God and became less tepid about defending moral law, then we would have less fear of the enemy." Like Billy Graham, however, Sheen asserted that the success of Communism was directly proportional to the breakdown of morality, and he too offered some ominous warnings for the American public. "There is no doubt that the philosophy of America today regarding family life is the same as Russia's," he stated in *Communism and the Conscience of the West.* "Every country gets the kind of government it deserves. As we live in the home, so shall the nation live."[116]

Along with their obsessions over the collapse of traditional moral standards and the family, many Americans were profoundly disturbed by the startling scientific and technological events that occurred in the middle of the twentieth century—particularly the creation of the atomic bomb and the computer. Science had discovered atomic energy but, in the end, would it serve humanity or destroy it? Paul Boyer's *By the Bomb's Early Light* provides us with an insightful analysis of the psychological impact of the atomic bomb

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115 Billy Graham, quoted in Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War,* p. 77.

116 Fulton Sheen, quoted in Mary Jude Yablonsky, "A Rhetorical Analysis of Selected Television Speeches of Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen on Communism—1952-1956," Ph. D. dissertation (Ohio State University, 1974), p. 102; Sheen, *Communism and the Conscience of the West,* p. 88; Sheen, pp. 148-149.

on the American public from 1945-1950. Boyer demonstrates that initial reactions to Hiroshima included both thrilled elation over atomic empowerment and fear and terror of ultimate annihilation. The scientists who created the bomb were among the first to organize against it and to call for an international agency to control atomic energy. Others soon joined them, but, by the end of the forties, this opposition had been overtaken by proclamations of faith in the bomb as the paramount defender of America's security. During the early fifties, support grew for building more and bigger bombs, and arguments for international control faded as the country prepared for the possibility of all-out nuclear war by initiating new civil defense programs. But Boyer finds it strange that psychologists and the nation's leaders remained remarkably silent on the whole issue of fear of atomic warfare, and, like some other observers of this period, he believes that the denial and silence were more likely a reflection of deep-seated terror than of genuine complacency.

Historian Robert J. Lifton has argued convincingly that the A-bomb forced Americans to question one of their most deeply held convictions: that scientific discoveries would bring about progress. Immediately after World War II, many prominent Americans portrayed the bomb as the absolute refutation of the Enlightenment belief that an increase in man's knowledge would inevitably produce greater individual happiness and ethical improvement. New York minister Henry Emerson Fosdick, a normally positive preacher, was extremely pessimistic on the subject of the bomb and technology in general. In his book, *On Being Fit to Live With: Sermons on Post-war Christianity* (1947), Fosdick proclaimed: "We are Frankensteins, who have created a technological civilization that in the hands of sin can literally exterminate us....Unless great ethical religion" could somehow "catch up...our science will be used to destroy us." In Robert H. Hamilton's morality play, "The Atom Explodes: or Those Blasted Japs" (1945) "Satan" observed: "This atomic plaything is doing what Hitler—that stupid fool—was never able to do. His open attack on men aroused Americans' noblest instincts. My more subtle appeal to their glory and scientific acumen made them vulnerable.

Now they are mine."[117] It is doubtful that the virtual disappearance of such commentaries by the 1949-50 period can be attributed merely to apathy. More likely, this sudden silence was a product of what Lifton calls "nuclear numbing"—the potent psychic hold that the fear of nuclear annihilation had on the nation's subconscious. Unrealistic but reassuring civil defense strategies were clearly the efforts of government officials to control, or domesticate, the fear.[118] But if these attempts at pacification helped to quiet public discussion of atomic war, they did little to satisfy the public's inner suspicions about nuclear fallout. Instead, anxieties were channeled into a fantasy culture in science-fiction films and in popular magazine stories portraying an atomic apocalypse. In January 1952, *Galaxy Science Fiction*'s editor reported that over 90 percent of recent stories submitted to the journal dealt with atomic or bacteriological warfare, devolution, or mutant children. It was not until later in the decade that Americans seemed willing to discuss these fears more openly. In 1959, public opinion polls reported that two-thirds of American respondents rated the possibility of nuclear war as the nation's most urgent problem.[119]

The most revealing speculation about the bomb focused not on its destructive potential *per se*, but on its ramifications for American social, cultural and political life. How would the arrival of the atomic age affect the way the American people behaved and how they viewed themselves and others? How would the nation's governmental, cultural and social structures

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[117] Robert J. Lifton, *Broken Connections: On Death and the Continuity of Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), p. 338; Henry Emerson Fosdick quoted in Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, p. 271; Robert H. Hamill, "The Atom Explodes: or, Those Blasted Japs," *Motive* (November 1945), p. 45.

[118] For some colourful examples, see the *1982* documentary film, *The Atomic Café*.

Sometimes efforts to alleviate fears of total technological devastation led officials to reach back to symbols of a simpler past—as in one of the most widely publicized campaigns, "Grandma's Pantry," the home bomb shelter. In laying out its guidelines for withstanding a nuclear holocaust, the Federal Civil Defense Administration's brochure appealed directly to time-honoured values and nostalgia for less complicated times. It featured the slogan, "Grandma's pantry was ready when the relatives arrived from Nebraska. Grandma's pantry was ready—Is Your Pantry Ready in Event of Emergency?" The brochure contained a photograph of an old-fashioned and well-stocked kitchen and included a long list of foods, canned goods, first aid supplies and other seemingly useful items. It concluded, reassuringly, "With a well-stocked pantry you can be just as self-sufficient as Grandma was. Add a first aid kit, flashlight, and a portable radio to this supply, and you will have taken the first important step in family preparedness."

[119] Gilbert, *Another Chance*, p. 171.

be changed? Issues such as these were under intense, pressing discussion during the early Cold War. Some of the talk was hopeful, but most was not.

The foreboding sense that the splitting of the atom may have sounded the death knell for basic American freedoms and values pervaded a large proportion of post-Hiroshima commentary. By 1946, William L. Laurence of the *New York Times* was cautioning readers that when the mushroom cloud rose over Alamogordo, "your world and mine, the world we knew, came to an end." Theologian Edward L. Long gave his perspective on the social implications of atomic research in his book, *The Christian Response to the Atomic Crisis* (1950). To Long, the Manhattan Project provided a disturbing preview of a technocratic society in which individuals were used increasingly as cogs in enormous undertakings which they could neither understand nor control. Journalist and critic Dwight MacDonald agreed. For him the construction of the bomb demonstrated how easily a modern technocratic state could organize massive projects whose end result was more horrific than words could express "with cities as the laboratories and people as guinea pigs." And, observed MacDonald, it had all been carried out by 125,000 willing workers of whom "only a handful....knew what they were creating." "There is something askew with a society in which vast numbers of citizens can be organized to create a horror like The Bomb without even knowing why they are doing it," he added. "What real content, in such a case, can be assigned to notions like 'democracy' and 'government of, by and for the people'?" To MacDonald, the whole scheme frighteningly illustrated "that perfect automatism, that absolute lack of human consciousness or aims which our society is rapidly achieving." Other gloomy forecasts came from E.L. Woodward, professor of international relations at Oxford who wrote in *New York Times Magazine* that "No matter what shape it may assume," the atomic future "will be an uncomfortable place for the individual," for "this new source of energy.... must increase enormously the power of the state over the citizen." In the Soviet Union, Americans believed, through total organization and power, the Soviet state had gained complete control over the actions of its people, be it in the factory or the slave labour camp. Fenced off from the outside world and utterly lacking any individual rights or freedoms, the Russian "zombies" worked night and day, not for their own

benefit or for that of future generations (as they were told), but instead to help calm the fears and satisfy the evil expansionist aims of their paranoid and unbalanced leaders in the Kremlin. Was the United States now in danger of following some sort of similar path at the hands of faceless technocrats? Charles E. Merriam, the University of Chicago political scientist, discussed the implications of atomic energy in no uncertain terms: "Unless great care is taken," he warned, "human liberty may be lost at this point in the toils of a concentrated dictatorship such as has never been seen before." Finally, *The Saturday Evening Post* offered what was perhaps the most sweeping view of the situation in June 1946 with its discussion entitled, "Your Flesh *Should* Creep." Echoing Dwight MacDonald, its central point was that the decision to base the United States' defenses on atomic weapons had more than just military ramifications: it would, in fact, kill democratic government:

> No true democracy can maintain an immense and powerful armament in a state of twenty-four-hour alert for years and decades on end. No true democracy can confide to a single individual, the rocket controller, such responsibilities as would be his....No true democracy can enforce military discipline among its people, or suspend the right of freedom from search and seizure, or condemn by dictate all its great cities and bodily transplant their inhabitants to new homes.... By painful stages, we shall sink into the mood which begets Fascism.

As Paul Boyer has pointed out, almost every theme at the core of American social thought since the beginning of the twentieth century was encompassed, at least implicitly, in such statements: the fear of class and racial conflicts; worries over the role of the military in a society that liked to think of itself as benevolent and peaceful; concern over enormous concentrations of corporate and/or political power; fear that the individual citizen would be lost in an impersonal technocratic order; wariness about the growing influence of a technological elite; and the long-standing discomfort over the rise of big cities. But while many of these concerns were not new, the context clearly was. Social questions that had been pondered for decades, often without much general interest, were now suddenly charged with new urgency. Indeed it

appeared reasonable to assume that American society *was* about to change in some of the most drastic ways imaginable.[120]

Fueling the fears of radical social change was another important scientific and technological event of the 1940's—the development of the computer. The first digital computer appeared in 1944 and was used by the military during World War II; seven years later, the more powerful UNIVAC was brought into service by the census bureau and then, in 1953, at General Electric. Patricia Warrick writes in *The Cybernetic Imagination in Science Fiction* (1980) that while twentieth-century American science-fiction had been generally optimistic, it became predominantly negative during the early stages of the Cold War. A flurry of giant-brain stories began to appear which invariably placed the computer in the hands of a large institution, either industry or government, thereby reflecting the standard pattern of computer usage that had developed in the real world. Tellingly in postwar fiction, the computer is always used to repress the masses. In some of the most terrifying sci-fi tales of the early fifties—including Kurt Vonnegut's "Player Piano" (1952), Bernard Wolfe's "Limbo" (1952), and Jack Williamson's "With Folded Hands" (1953)—computers take over closed societies and do away with love, creativity and imagination, turning the minds of their victims into virtual machines. ("The nostalgic longing to return to nature," writes Warrick, "is a recurring element of the dystopian fiction.") Kendell Foster Crossen's *Year of Consent* (1954) and Paul Anderson's "Sam Hall" (1953) feature totalitarian governments which establish vast data banks and use an array of electronic devices to invade the privacy of the individual. *Year of Consent* is set in the near future where absolute political surveillance and control are accomplished with an electronic super-brain called SOCIAC (most computers in this genre were given names which were variations on UNIVAC). The American public gives consent to be ruled because the social engineers working in the government have become masters of manipulation and consequently can bamboozle the masses into doing whatever they wish. It is,

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[120] William L. Laurence, quoted in Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, p. 133; Edward L. Long, *The Christian Response to the Atomic Crisis* (Philadelphia: 1950), pp. 32, 34, 58; Dwight MacDonald, quoted in Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light*, pp. 234-5; Ibid, p. 147; "Your Flesh *Should* Creep," *Saturday Evening Post* (June 1946), quoted in Boyer, p. 149; paraphrased from Boyer, p. 149.

essentially, a parallel world to that of Soviet Russia where the Gosplan and the MVD had supposedly used all means at their disposal to penetrate "into every corner of the home of a Soviet citizen" intruding "authoritatively and unceremoniously into his bedroom, kitchen, meal pots, his coffers and at last, but not least, into his brain, soul and liver" (*Russia Magazine,* 1947). Only now all this Big Brotherism was effectively enhanced with computer technology.[121]

Overall, according to fifties science-fiction, to be an advanced civilization was to be looking for trouble. Films such as *Flight to Mars* (1951) gave the viewer the impression that Earth must be the finest piece of real estate in the whole galaxy since it was repeatedly assaulted by advanced civilizations from other worlds who had made a mess of their own planets—using up their resources, polluting their atmospheres, and overpopulating their urban centres. Sometimes these aliens were literally machines —"robots" who trudged across the screens of movie houses with their characteristic jerky movements. That the Soviet people were so frequently likened to these machines is telling. For many Americans the whole idea of robots—heartless, computerized, mechanical beings, was an affront to morality. Susan Sontag first examined this fear of robots, which she contrasted with the earlier fear of animals, in *Against Interpretation* (1967). "The dark secret behind human nature used to be the upsurge of the animal—as in *King Kong*. The threat to man, his availability to dehumanization, lay in his own animality," wrote Sontag. "Now the danger is understood as residing in man's ability to be turned into a machine...this new metaphor for dehumanization."[122]

Reflected in the problem of cybernetics was a major anxiety of the era: that people had become trapped by a frigid, mechanical rationality which had effectively extinguished any sense of traditional morality. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the expert had slowly but constantly replaced

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[121] Patricia S. Warrick, *The Cybernetic Imagination in Science Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: M.I.T. Press, 1980), p. 146; survey of short stories paraphrased from Warrick, pp. 134-155; *Russia Magazine* (June 1947), p. 5.

[122] Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1967), p. 222.

tradition and the community as the primary agent of social authority. By the late forties, however, having witnessed the kind of carnage that science could produce, many Americans developed a strong skepticism towards "expertism." This shift in mood could often be detected in the pages of America's newspapers. Writing in the *Chicago Defender* in 1945, W.E.B. Dubois struck a note that would be repeated frequently by other commentators in the decade which followed: "We have always thought of science as the emancipator. We now see it as the enslaver of mankind."[123]

Sentiments of fear, disillusionment and distrust found expression at many cultural levels; at the movies and in popular literature the image of the scientist as a morally blind, technologically obsessed sociopath, appeared with unprecedented regularity. Films as different as *The Thing, Rope,* and *The Gunfighter* all preferred regular Joes to geniuses. In *The Thing,* head-scientist and Nobel Prize-winner Dr. Carrington is almost as dangerous as the Thing itself. We suspect trouble right from the start when we get our first glimpse of him—with his fat fur hat and goatee, he looks downright Russian. Later, when the base commander, Captain Hendry asks a straight question, Carrington can only reply in polysyllables. "You lost me," Hendry says, and it is obvious to the audience that all the fault lies not with the dumbfounded serviceman but with the technocratically arrogant scientist. Carrington obstructs the military at every turn and even helps the Thing reproduce itself; he is derided throughout the film as an extremist "egghead." "These geniuses," Hendry remarks with contempt, "They're just like nine-year olds playing with a new fire engine." The scientist's antics justify the soldiers suspicions of science, even turning them against the A-Bomb. "Knowledge is more important than life. We split the atom," raves the deranged genius. "That sure made everybody happy," comes the cynical reply from one of the soldiers. Another powerful critique of elitist rationality appears in Alfred Hitchcock's *Rope* (1948), where evil Ivy-League rationalists with no regard for right and wrong commit a murder for "the experiment of committing it" and to convince themselves of their own superiority. Somehow they have lost those qualities of sentiment and feeling that stand between rational man and

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[123] W. E. B. Dubois, quoted in Boyer, *By the Bomb's Early Light,* p. 270.

moral chaos. Meanwhile, articles such as the *Reader's Digest*'s "Must We Change Our Sex Standards?" (1948) and the *Saturday Evening Post*'s "Our 'Unsavory Character' Resents Speed Ratings Applied to Women" (1953) described "ultra rationalist" social scientist Alfred Kinsey as a real-life version of *Rope*'s chief villain for describing human beings by using statistical techniques deemed more appropriate to the study of "woodchucks and insects than people."[124] Supposedly, misguided "techno-geniuses" and number crunchers like Kinsey were cut from the same mold as the "crazed" Lysenkos and Fuchs's who had helped transform Joe Stalin's worst nightmares into a reality for the Russian people. With these purportedly abnormal types gaining positions of greater power and influence in America as well, "regular" Americans feared that their own individual rights and security might be seriously jeopardized. Historian Richard Hofstadter has commented on the growth of anti-intellectualism in postwar America by stating, correctly, "that the resentment from which the intellectual has suffered in our lifetime is a manifestation not of a decline in his position but of his increasing prominence." Hofstadter adds that, while the intellectual was once "gently ridiculed because he was not needed, now he is fiercely resented because he is needed too much."[125]

Overall, the primary anxiety of the age was that modern Americans were being held hostage by ultimately inhuman institutions and values which crushed their most basic desires for freedom of will and action. Science and technology, intellect and rationalism, urbanization, moral uncertainty, large institutions and bureaucracies, mass communications, and culture, ideological systems and a ceaseless contingency—each was blamed by someone for mankind's apparent loss of control. This new fear was the fear of determinism and its closely related ally, the fear of conformity.

By the close of the 1940s there was considerable talk about the widespread acceptance of blandness, phoniness, and the general pressures of

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[124] Kinsey's best-sellers *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953) were known collectively and familiarly as the Kinsey Report. See "Must We Change Our Sex Standards?," *Reader's Digest* (June 1948).

[125] Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage, 1966), p. 6; Hofstadter, p. 34.

conformity. As Henry Miller aptly phrased it, America was usually portrayed as an "air-conditioned nightmare." The daily experience of most Americans was, without question, with an increasingly homogenized culture. Just as the merger movement of the 1890s had led to nationally recognized name brands, and the automobile craze of the 1920s had helped bring about a decline of regional differences, the forties brought a new large dose of cultural uniformity. The mid-century years had seen rapid technological change, standardization, bureaucratization, and gigantism, and, in their desperate, even hysterical desire to find security in a very threatening world, Americans appeared to have retreated into an ultimately boring mass culture. Indeed, conformity seemed to pervade all aspects of life. In John Keats' best-seller, *The Crack in the Picture Window* (1956), the shallow, fearful American of the 1950s was described in the following passage: "He read books to make conversation, listened to music to establish his social position, chose his clothes for the impression they would make on his business associates, entertained his friends in order to get ahead, and held the affection of his wife and children only by continuous bribery." Charles Morris' *The Open Self* (1948) likewise lamented the problems of maintaining an open society under modern conditions. In discussing personal relationships, Morris described the object of conversation as no longer being that of thought or humour but agreement—contradiction and cynicism were considered in bad taste. There were some communities, he noted, where simply wearing a beard would cause a stir, where bearded strangers were frequently asked by local police for identification. One anti-conformist publication reported that even Superman had become a cause for concern. A 1949 interview on comic book heroes quotes a twelve-year old girl as saying: "I like Superman better than others because they can't do everything Superman can do. Batman can't fly and that is very important. Question. Would you like to be able to fly? Answer. I would like to be able to fly if everybody else did, but otherwise it would be kind of conspicuous." This girl's fear of flying may have been well grounded. For most Americans it was said to be better to fit in than to stand out, better to be average and safe than special and sorry. Paradoxically, however, Americans were not complacent about conformity. In fact they were deeply troubled by

this phenomenon, and almost no one defended it (even *Reader's Digest* was critical) or wanted to be accused of it even if they knew it was true.[126]

Some of the most biting commentary centered on the quality of life in the suburbs for, in the decade following the Second World War, the United States experienced the heaviest internal migration in its history. Judging by their words, the critics of the suburbs might just as easily have been journalists on assignment in Moscow. Cheaply-made housing developments, "conceived in error, nurtured by greed, corroding everything they touch," wrote John Keats in *The Crack in the Picture Window,* had been "'vomited up' by conscienceless speculators who defaced the countryside with rows of 'identical boxes spreading like gangrene.'" Many a subdivision touted names such as "Park Forest," "Sweet Hollow," and "Crystal Stream," but a visit soon revealed that trees had been cut down, the hollows filled in, and the streams polluted with "stinking refuse." Furthermore, these ugly additions bred "swarms of neuter drones [who] cannot be said to have lives of their own." Another angry critic was the cultural historian Lewis Mumford, author of *The City in History.* Mumford feared that the creation of "excrescences" like Levittown were doing more to destroy the city than did the aerial bombings of World War II. Like many others, he was also worried that the blandness of suburbia was destroying the American character, leaving it dreary and cautious when it should be daring and creative:

> In the mass movement into suburban areas a new kind of community was produced, which caricatured both the historic city and the archetypal suburban refuge, a multitude of uniform, unidentifiable houses, lined up inflexibly at uniform distances, on uniform roads, in a treeless communal waste, inhabited by people in the same class, the same income, the same age group, witnessing the same television performances, eating the same tasteless prefabricated foods from the same freezers, conforming in every outward and inward respect to a common mold.

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[126] Henry Miller's phrase appears in Thomas L. Hartshorne, *The Distorted Image: Changing Conceptions of the American Character Since Turner* (Cleveland: Case Western University Press, 1968), p. 174; John Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window,* quoted in Perrett, *A Dream of Greatness,* p. 302; Charles Morris, *The Open Self,* paraphrased in Perrett, pp. 297-298; David L. Riesman, *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (Garden City, NY: 1950), p. 105.

"The very word 'suburbia,'" as Scott Donaldson observed, came to have "unpleasant overtones, suggesting nothing so much as some kind of scruffy disease." The exasperation of the times was captured by Far Western politician Richard L. Neuberger, in his 1948 *Harper's* essay "Ah Wilderness—New Style": "Our patron saints are no longer Lewis and Clark," moaned Neuberger, "but Abercrombie and Fitch."[127]

Fear of conformity encouraged the sales of a plethora of anti-conformist books. Some of the most insightful writing on the subject examined the dehumanizing corporate situation that forced middle-class men, at least in their public lives, to be other-directed "organization men," caught in a mass, impersonal white-collar world. This loss of self-direction was genuine. As large companies grew, swallowing up smaller ones, the number of self-employed men in small enterprises was reduced dramatically. The effects were examined in the highly influential (and widely misinterpreted) book *The Lonely Crowd* (1950) by David Riesman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney. This was one of those rare books that was enormously popular with the general public though it had been written for a scholarly audience. Riesman pointed out that the structure of the corporation squeezed middle-class men into deadening, highly scrutinized peer interactions; he argued that only in the intimate affairs of life could one truly be free. Industrial labourers were described as being even less likely to gain any genuine sense of satisfaction from their jobs. Both blue and white-collar workers thus felt a real sense of alienation and subordination in the corporate work force of the postwar era. The archetypal figure of the new age was Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit,* who would dominate the best-seller lists of the mid-1950's. When he returned home from the war, recalled Wilson's creation, "all I could see was a lot of bright young men in gray flannel suits rushing around New York in a frantic parade to

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[127] John Keats, *The Crack in the Picture Window*, quoted in William E. Leuchtenberg, *A Troubled Feast: American Society Since 1945* (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1983), p. 76; Lewis Mumford, *The City in History* quoted in Diggins, *The Proud Decades*, pp. 182-183; Scott Donaldson quoted in Leuchtenberg, *A Troubled Feast*, p. 78; Richard L. Neuberger, "Ah Wilderness—New Style," *Harper's* (October 1948), 79-81.

nowhere...pursuing neither ideals nor happiness....For a long while I thought I was on the sidelines watching that parade, and it was quite a shock to glance down and see that I too was wearing a gray flannel suit." His fictional wife, Betty, added her own impressions of the last decade: "All I know is that we lived in the belief that everything would be marvelous after the war, and that we've both been half-dead ever since you got home....We've learned to drag along from day to day without any real emotion except worry.... All I know how to do nowadays is to be responsible and dutiful and deliberately cheerful in front of the children." The most powerful play of the first postwar decade, Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman,* touched the same responsive chords with the American public. Miller's story was of a mediocre man whose desperate pursuit of success inevitably leads him to failure and hopelessness. According to rumour, each evening when Willy Loman appeared on the stage middle-aged men sat in the darkness beyond the lights, silently sobbing.[128]

William H. Whyte, Jr. was an assistant editor of *Fortune* in the early fifties when he undertook his research of middle-management workers that resulted in *The Organization Man.* He became convinced that the ways of business would shape the larger culture as Americans became locked into the new worship of "team work," "togetherness," and "group think." These fetishes, wrote Whyte, were the products of several converging sources: progressive education theories that stressed adaptation to modern norms and a curriculum aimed at serving society rather than individual curiosity; new colleges of industrial relations that pictured the labour force as a social system in which each worker found his "proper" place; empirical techniques of science; and the personality tests and new interview techniques that sifted out all potential job applicants who might be different or disruptive. As a result of these constantly growing tendencies, the country as a whole was said to be moving away from the older Protestant ethic of hard work, frugality, entrepreneurialism, and self-reliance; in its place had come the increasing acceptance of a "social ethic" based on security, the well-being of the group,

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[128] Quotations from *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* appear in Perrett, *A Dream of Greatness,* p. 303.

and capitulation to the "togetherness of the whole." Even ambition seemed to be in danger as more Americans appeared more concerned with getting along than getting ahead: being popular was all-important. This meant altering one's own behaviour to the pressures of the larger community, whether at the office or at home in "Park Forest." Whyte was convinced that the growing adherence to this social ethic was symptomatic of a dangerous general loss of individualism in the United States. He found the whole idea of the loss of individual autonomy to the powers of the "all-absorbing systems of social organization" so distasteful that he even recommended "cheating" on personality tests.[129] The author, in short, wanted a value system that would teach people to fight the organization, not to surrender to it. This did not mean overthrowing the system, but taking control of it by beating it at its own game. As one historian has noted, Whyte's message still left readers with one very disturbing question left unanswered: "once 'inside the whale' to use George Orwell's expression, where would the authentic person find means to resist the organization's enticements so that autonomy of private conscience would be preserved?"[130]

The links between American fears of conformity and their images of life in the Soviet Union are obvious. The average Russian had reportedly become an "absolute conformist" in the purest sense—a dull, obedient, soldier, completely void of any sense of personal identity. Defector Andrei Olkhovsky had asked: "What is more important, man or the system which enslaves him, the personal or the impersonal, the spiritual or the material?" In the USSR these questions were all said to have been answered wrongly, with horrific results; now, it seemed, similar responses were taking shape in modern American life as well. Millions of Americans feared that they were witnessing their individualism slipping away in a nation of increasing uniformity, phoniness and "bigness". Just how far this trend would continue

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[129] William H. Whyte, *The Organization Man*, quoted in Diggins, *The Proud Decades*, p. 208; Diggins, p. 209; a similar argument to White's appeared in Arnold W. Green, "Why Americans Feel Insecure," in Charles Brossard, ed., *The Scene Before You: A New Approach to American Culture* (New York: 1955), pp. 161-179.

[130] Question posed in Diggins, *The Proud Decades*, p. 208.

in their own country no one seemed to be sure, but that it would continue seemed certain.

Obsessions with conformity in early Cold War America were bolstered by the belief that the human personality could be easily manipulated. Along with the tales of the ex-Communists, a serious academic literature was established on the subject of "brainwashing"—the effectiveness of which seemed to be confirmed by stories that American POW's in Korea had had their fundamental values and beliefs changed by such techniques. The field of communications research had been developed by intellectuals intrigued by the impact of Nazi and, later, Soviet propaganda. Many American liberals grew increasingly concerned about the growing public relations industry and the influential powers of advertising, including subliminal messages.

Some psychologists and parents insisted that—as in the USSR, where youngsters were allegedly taught by government propaganda to betray their elders—the American mass media stood between parent and child. Stories of mindless gang violence in America's cities pervaded the press in the late 1940s and 1950s and led to the widespread impression that sadistic and bored youth were turning to murder and mayhem for amusement. In a "Roundtable on Post-War Juvenile Delinquents" published in *Rotarian* (1946), the always hyperbolic J. Edgar Hoover warned of a new crime wave led by bad juveniles who had reached the levels of adult criminality: "Like the sulphurous lava which boils beneath the slumbering volcano—such is the status of crime in America today." The Bureau reported a steady rise in youth crime until 1956 and, according to Gallup polls, the public almost always blamed the family ("Parents do not provide proper home life, training in home" and "Parents both work, mother needed at home") or a general decline in community for all the trouble. Many, however, also took aim at the powerful mass communications industries. Frederic Wertham's scathing attack on crime comics, *The Seduction of the Innocent* (1953), charged that the mass media represented "the most persistent conditioning of habits of hate ever given to children in the world's history." The comics, Wertham insisted, had numbed some children's sense of right and wrong to such an extent that many fantasized about, and in some cases committed, "the most heinous crimes imaginable... murder, torture, burglary, arson and rape." One of

Wertham's colleagues observed: "In comic books life is worth nothing; there is no dignity of a human being." Soviet children, it was widely reported, had been encouraged to follow in the fiendish footsteps of Stalin but, according to Wertham, American kids were not faring much better with their own role models like "the frightening...anti-masculine" Wonder Woman, or Jo-Jo, the Congo King. *Seduction of the Innocent* and articles in *Life* and the *Ladies Home Journal* all argued that parents could no longer impress their value systems on children who were "seduced" and influenced as much by a new peer culture spread by comic books, movies, radio, and television, as by their elders. This breakdown of communication between the generations and of control, it was claimed, provoked youthful misbehaviour and juvenile delinquency. Here was a familiar idea that had been expressed many times in American history (for example, it appeared as an explanation for the actions of the "flaming youth" in the great silent films era of the 1920s). But this antagonism toward the media was, in one respect, unprecedented. It was new because the media of the mid-twentieth century, in its collective influence, was seen to represent a force almost revolutionary in the history of mass culture and in its impact on American society as a whole.[131]

For a generation that put so much stock in the effectiveness of techniques such as indoctrination, conditioning and manipulation, it is understandable that some of the newest technologies in mass communications generated some of the deepest fears. "Muzak"—"the music that nobody hears"—was the purest example of the uniformization of music during this era and was recognized, correctly, not as a product of natural social revolution but as a musical form of social engineering. In the early 1940s, Muzak had less than eight hundred subscribers, serviced by nine franchises; by 1950 the company had over seventy-five hundred subscribers in over two hundred cities, with sixty-nine franchises. In its 1950 story on Muzak, *Nation's Business* concluded by reminding its readers that the company's foray into hospitals and funeral chapels had already set up a "'womb to the tomb' situation in which Muzak seems to have covered the whole span of

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[131] J. Edgar Hoover, "Who's to Blame for Juvenile Delinquency," *Rotarian*, Vol. 68 (April 1946), pp. 20-24; Gallup, *The Gallup Poll*, Vol. 2, p. 1516; Fredric Wertham, *The Seduction of the Innocent* (New York: 1953), p. 94; Wertham, p. 193.

American life: Was all this talk simply the harmless musing of capitalists intent on new markets?" Or was Muzak actually an evil, therapeutic forerunner of the Soviet-style mass songs? "Cradle to grave" indoctrination and control, Americans purported, was the mainstay of a whole way of life in the land of Stalin. The arrival of television produced a much greater flood of commentary on the new technology. From 1946 to 1950 the number of television receivers in the United States had risen from only six thousand to almost ten million. As suggested above, much of the talk about TV expressed anxiety over the future of the family and other related concerns, but other stories linked the medium to ethical problems of totalitarianism. *Time* magazine's account of Harry Truman's 1949 Inaugural noted that television's coverage of the day's events was far from an objective portrayal of what had actually occurred. Rather, viewers had been shown a specially selected series of clips of what *Time* had appropriately called the "spectacle": "panoramic sweeps of Washington's long vistas," "dramatic close-ups of top-hatted diplomats," "the wide lawn jammed with humanity" and "the impressive overhead flight of B-36 bombers." Within all this sensationalism, Truman's speech was "boring," "the slow movement" when stacked up alongside all the wondrous visual excitement. Both television's coverage and the story in *Time* suggested some disturbing developments. Just as Russian Communism had flaunted spectacle and attempted to use it as a means of replacing political conflict, so had American TV turned a political event into a popular and shallow spectacle. And just as the Nazis had sought to eliminate trade unions and other organizations which acted as mediators between the citizen and the state, so had American broadcasters hailed television's gift of being able to "link the masses *directly* with a spectacularized social 'reality.'" The growing wariness of the spectacle was demonstrated elsewhere. *Life* apparently could not resist comparing the designs for the St. Louis Arch to earlier plans for a monument to Mussolini's fascism. Lewis Mumford had characterized the "unbroken face of brick" which dominated New York's Stuyvesant Town as "the architecture of the POLICE STATE." And in Frank Capra's *State of the Union* (1948), the director showed individuals with vision trying desperately

to be heard under the conditions of the spectacle—conventions, "media circuses", etc.—all of which drowned out effective speech.[132]

The fears and anxieties about postwar conformity sounded familiar. In Russia, individualism was said to have been swallowed up by an all-powerful state that had forced everything and everyone under its complete control. Conformity, there, was a matter of survival. If forced conformity still came in a kinder, gentler form in America—the convenient and cushy land of "mass housing, mass markets, massive corporations, massive government, mass media, and massive boredom" (John Keats)—what would the future hold? Many Americans were deeply disturbed by the highly publicized trends but felt powerless to halt or alter them. Americans, it was said, were losing their backbone, losing their sense of identity, falling for "phony" external values of "togetherness" and materialism, and, in the process, hanging their heritage out to dry. The system was becoming a monster, as freedom was withering away. Tom Rath summed the problem of the age nicely in *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit:* "When a man's got a lot of security, money in the bank, other jobs waiting for him, it's a cinch to be fearless and full of integrity, but when he's got a wife and three children to support, and his job's all he's got, what do you think he ought to do about it then?"[133]

One of the most powerful and revealing anti-conformist/self-flagellation films of the 1950's is the 1956 science-fiction classic *Invasion of the Body Snatchers.* While the film was released three years after the period of this study, it deals with two of the deepest and most pervasive obsessions of the entire Cold War era. First, *Body Snatchers* is an activist film which strongly stresses the need for eternal vigilance. Falling asleep has deadly consequences. When people doze off and become unaware of events around them, the plant pods steal their bodies. "A moments' sleep, and the girl I loved was an inhuman enemy bent on my destruction," says Miles, after Becky has fallen victim to the pods. This is not a tranquil, reassuring film—its

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[132] Muzak statistics in Graebner, *The Age of Doubt,* pp. 79-80; *Nation's Business,* quoted in Graebner, p. 80; "Hail to the Chief," *Time* (January 31, 1949), p. 55; reference to *Life* and Lewis Mumford quote in Graebner, *The Age of Doubt,* p. 85.

[133] John Keats, quoted in Perrett, *A Dream of Greatness,* p. 303; *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* quote appears in Biskind, *Seeing Is Believing,* p. 311.

intention is to mobilize both the people in the film (that is, the psychiatrist listening to Miles' story) and the audience. At stake is the question of who is right, the individual or the group, and *Body Snatchers* challenges the government monopoly on wisdom and action. Individuals must not only act on their own initiative, they must think for themselves as well. The powerful climax comes with Miles standing on a highway, screaming at passing vehicles, "You fools, you're in danger...! They're after us! You're next! You're next!" The warning could not have been clearer: America must be constantly on guard against enemies from both without and within.

Another important theme in *Body Snatchers* is its heavy emphasis on nostalgia for the past and its disdain for the modern technological world of the psychiatrist with his foolish talk of "mass hysteria." At one point in *Body Snatchers,* Becky cries, "I don't want a world without love or faith or beauty." But around her we see scenes of the perversion of small-town life. The family and traditional bonds are being severed. Wilma says of Uncle Ira: "He was always like a father to me. Now there's no emotion." Once again it appears as if science and modern life in general has disturbed the natural order of things. "So many things have been discovered in the last few years, it could be anything," Miles says, as he searches for an explanation for the strange behaviour of the townsfolk. Like the ex-Communists, J. Edgar Hoover, and countless other Americans, *Body Snatchers* clearly preferred the simplicity of the old-fashioned rural values to the modern life of the big city. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* is an important film—the fears, anxieties, and aspirations expressed throughout the movie, though in allegorical form, are powerful and accurate reflections of those which dominated the early postwar era.

For the most part, Americans saw little in the historical past to put their minds at ease about the future. There was another sort of past, however, that could be easily summoned by anyone willing to use their imaginations to go backward in time. Throughout the Cold War era, in an effort to escape reality, Americans clung to their mythical images of a frontier America that was comfortable and dependable. That this desire to return to a simpler and more harmonious style of life, an existence "close to nature," was not unique to Americans is obvious; but, as Leo Marx has argued in *The Machine in the*

Garden, in the United States (with its frontier and colonial experience) it was charged with "peculiar intensity".[134]

Mythical renderings of a pre-industrialized, rural, small-town way of life seemed to be everywhere in early postwar America. Large numbers flocked to small-town pastoral musicals like *The Harvey Girls* (1946) and *Summer Holiday* (1948) which offered them illusions of an America frozen in time, a family-centered culture poised on the brink of the assembly line, World War I, and all the other developments which swept the country into the twentieth century. These films featured plenty of steepled churches, gabled roofs, and quiet and happy streets free of automobiles. The longing to reside there was acknowledged by the editors of *Architectural Forum*. The American "dream house," they wrote, "was a quaint little white cottage, shyly nestled in a grove of old elms or maples, bathed in the perfume of lilacs, and equipped with at least one vine-covered wall....The eaves come down so low that one can almost touch them. Tiny dormers on one side poke themselves through the old roof and let in light through tiny-paned windows to the upstairs bedrooms. In front of the house there is invariably a picket fence, with gay lilies poking their heads between the white palings." As William Graebner has described these visions, it was essentially "Norman Rockwell's America...where the worst thing in life was the embarrassment of a bad haircut." Behind all of this was the assumption that the nation's character was based on an agrarian existence, close to the soil and in tune with nature itself. It was taken for granted that agrarian and democratic naturally went together, while urban industrialism and democracy were incompatible.[135]

The most prominent model for an alternative lifestyle was the historical West—a region that flourished in Cold War films, fiction, radio, television, and comics. The Western genre had first appeared in fiction after the Civil War in dime novels for kids, and then with the publication of *The Virginian* (1902) for adults as well; but it had never been (and will likely

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[134] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 6.

[135] *Architectural Forum*, quoted in Graebner, *The Age of Doubt*, p. 60; Graebner, p. 61; This paragraph was paraphrased from Graebner, pp. 60-61.

never be again) the focus of so much attention as it was in the early post-World War II period. Whether in its original orientation toward children, or in the 'adult' Western that emerged in the 1950's, the Western was relevant drama which embodied the psychology of the East-West struggle. It was there on that "virgin land" that all of the alleged rugged and simple truths of pre-industrial life—individualism, self-reliance, "know how" and higher values—could be portrayed most effectively. In this age of deep social anxiety and international tension, the cowboy offered straight answers with no lollygagging. As David Shea Teeple argued in *American Mercury*, the popularity of the Western demonstrates that "the American...public wants to abandon the gray philosophies of fuzzy minds and to return to the days when things were either black or white—right or wrong."[136]

The heroes of the childrens' Westerns were clearly the types of personalities after which American kids were encouraged to shape themselves—the absolute opposites to the green-faced Soviet ghouls that appeared on "Red Menace" trading cards and the like. The educative side of the TV Western was summed up nicely by Gene Autry in his Cowboy Code. Printed in the early 1950's, the code was a kind of cowboy Ten Commandments which stated clearly the personal and nationalistic force which made up a large part of the genre:

1. A cowboy never takes unfair advantage, even of an enemy.
2. A cowboy never betrays a trust.
3. A cowboy always tells the truth.
4. A cowboy is kind to small children, to old folks, and to animals.
5. A cowboy is free from racial and religious prejudice.
6. A cowboy is always helpful, and when anyone's in trouble, he lends a hand.
7. A cowboy is a good worker.
8. A cowboy is clean about his person, in thought, word and deed.
9. A cowboy respects womanhood, his parents, and the laws of his country.

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[136] David Shea Teeple, "TV Westerns Tell A Story," *American Mercury* (April 1958), pp. 116-117.

10. A cowboy is a patriot.

American kids knew that the leaders of the Soviet world broke every one of these rules as easily as other men drew breath. Fortunately, when the six-gun justice of the frontier locked horns with the transient values of the twentieth century, the outcome was never in doubt.[137]

In his study *Comic Books and America, 1945-1953,* William W. Savage reminds us that despite all the troubles and concerns of the 1950s, the era produced nothing for which the comic-book cowboy would not answer the call—crime, drugs, juvenile delinquency. Whatever was wrong the cowboy did what all good Americans were supposed to do and righted it. Savage's review of one *Roy Rogers Comic* offers a representative case in point:

> When it came to polluting the Western countryside with drugs and sapping its vigor as a preliminary step toward bringing the entire nation to its knees, nobody could top the Communists. And when it came to smashing Reds who were so inclined, nobody could top Roy Rogers, King of the Cowboys, working in conjunction with the F.B.I. In a 1952 story, Rogers intercepted a shipment of something-or-another intended for a spy named Carver. "It's dope," he exclaimed, upon opening the package. "Heroin—the stuff that's rotting the life and soul out of hundreds and thousands of addicts! The most fiendish weapon that the enemies of America have ever used!" He informed the spy that "a higher power than I will judge you...and a higher court than Judge Colt will take care of your sentence," and then he packed him off to the F.B.I., "before you bunch of subversives...can guess what has happened to you."

An enemy so thoroughly evil was clearly capable of anything, and the mythical outriders of freedom, who did their part, had to remain constantly vigilant.[138]

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[137] Gene Autry's Cowboy Code (1952) appears in MacDonald, *Television and the Red Menace,* pp. 135-136.

[138] Summary of "A Challenge in the Big Bend," *Roy Rogers Comics,* Vol. 57 (Dell Publishing Co.: September 1952) in Savage, *Comic Books and America, 1945-1954,* p. 70.

The sources for the popularity of the "adult" Western have also been explored in numerous books, essays and articles. For Peter Homans, writing in 1962, the Western was primarily "a Puritan morality tale in which the savior-hero redeems the community from the temptations of the devil." He describes the Western hero as a religious operative, moving within a secular environment to re-establish the Judeo-Christian morality originally planted in American society by the Puritans. "Tall in the saddle," Homans writes, the Western hero "rides straight from Plymouth Rock to a dusty frontier town "where his Colt .45 is on the side of the angels." Ralph and Donna Brauer's *The Horse, The Gun and The Piece of Property* places greater emphasis on the anti-technological aspects of the Western. "First and foremost," insist the Brauers, "the Western is definitely anti-technology. All Westerns explicitly affirm this. Where the trappings of technology are found in the Western they are always portrayed negatively." The Brauers also note that the Western is against the complex social order which created technology in the first place. With the Westerner described as somewhere "on the razor's edge" between civilization and barbarism, between technology and primitivism, between legalism and amoralism, the cowboy is left completely free with open options and no ties as he roams a territory of endless space. The liberty aspect of the Western was expounded upon by James Arness of *Gunsmoke*. "People like Westerns because they represent a time of freedom," TV's Matt Dillon told *TV Guide* in 1958. "That is why they tune in on Western shows to escape from conformity. They [presumably the male viewers] don't want to see a U.S. Marshal come home and help his wife wash the dishes." John W. Evans agrees in his article "Modern Man and the Cowboy." Evans points out that the adult Western hero has no boss and is not a mere cog in some huge and impersonal organization; rather, the cowboy stands alone and independent. To many Americans, Evans contends, the Western represented a psycho-social answer to the smothering qualities of modern society—a civilization perceived as being fraught with a decline in close relationships, the decay of accepted norms of behaviour and morality, and the shrinking of the individual's range of choice. The basic appeal of the Western story, then, can be found in its invitation to escape to and, even better, participate in a world where "psychological gratifications are almost the perfect antidote to the

alienated conditions of life in the modern industrial society." "Modern Man and the Cowboy" theorizes a step further by suggesting that the gunfight is the modern individual's "substitute in fantasy for the grand confrontation scene which in real life is impossible....Through his vicarious position in the powerful and final act of the gunfight," writes John Evans, "the factory worker or the organization man symbolically shoots down all the individual officials and impersonal forces that restrict, schedule, supervise, direct, frustrate and control his daily existence." As each of these observers has suggested, the Western appeared to give substance to the ideal of personal self-determination and responsible freedom that the realities of modern life and institutions had purportedly denied. As social scientists questioned self-determination and as science and technology seemingly distorted peoples' relationship with nature, the Western appeared to offer a simple natural order which provided clear moral choices and the inevitable triumph of good over evil.[139]

The Western story's pervasiveness during the postwar era, be it in film, TV, radio, comics or in Western magazines such as *Western Story Annual* and *Avon Western Reader* is indicative of many of the obsessions already discussed—a desire to return to "traditional" family values, a certain distrust of technology, the long-standing American hostility toward the city (intensified by the mass urban migrations of World War II and afterward), fear of conformity and determinism, the desire for simple answers in difficult times, and the overall urge to withdraw from civilization's growing power and complexity.

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[139] Peter Homans, "The Western: The Legends and the Cardboard Hero," *Look* (March 13, 1962), p. 89; Ralph and Donna Brauer, *The Horse, The Gun, and The Piece of Property: Changing Images of the TV Western* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1975), p. 20; James Arness, quoted in J. Fred MacDonald, *Who Shot the Sheriff? The Rise and Fall of the Television Western* (New York: Praeger, 1987), p. 75; John W. Evans, "Modern Man and the Cowboy," *Television Quarterly*, Vol. 1 (May 1962), pp. 34, 36.

Epilogue

Americans' suffusive nightmare images of life in Stalin's Russia might have been best understood in the cognitive mind of George Kennan. While Kennan, like most Americans, subscribed to many of the obsessive and exaggerated visions of life in the USSR, he was also aware that, in the American mind, the symbolic image of life under Stalin also existed in the distorted form of a dream. In his essay, "Totalitarianism in the Modern World" (1954), Kennan wrote:

> When I try to picture totalitarianism to myself as a general phenomenon, what comes into my mind most prominently is neither the Soviet picture nor the Nazi picture as I have known them in the flesh, but rather the fictional and symbolic images created by such people as Orwell or Kafka or Koestler or the early Soviet satirists. The purest expression of the phenomenon, in other words, seem to me to have been rendered not in its physical reality but in its power as a dream, or a nightmare. Not that it lacks the physical reality, or that this reality is lacking in power; but it is precisely in the way it appears to people, in the impact it has on the subconscious, in the state of mind it creates in its victims, that totalitarianism reveals most deeply its meaning and nature. Here, then, we seem to have a phenomenon of which it can be said that it is both a reality and a bad dream, but its deepest reality lies strangely enough in its manifestation as a dream.

In all its various forms, this recurring bad dream about life in the USSR was a major foundation for millions of Americans' perceptions of postwar Russia. While some of the most negative American perceptions were, to be sure, not unfounded, many were clearly much closer to the dream than the reality.[140]

Americans' images of their foe reflected not only their fears of Soviet power, but also demonstrated their distaste for modern society. Despite a relatively easy time for the United States during World War II, there was a

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[140] George Kennan's description was reprinted in Adler and Paterson, "Red Fascism," pp. 1063-1064.

strong sense of doom in victory. The war itself had repeatedly displayed the extremes of human cruelty. Mass society, atomic warfare, propaganda, and totalitarianism became words infused with fear and urgency. In the years immediately following it appeared that relativism was undercutting old mores, that the family was rapidly changing, that working women were changing their roles both at home and in the workplace, and that government bureaucracy, big corporations, and new technologies such as the modern mass media were turning American culture into a conformist, homogenized mass that was smothering individualism and preparing the way for a new kind of social order. In this disturbing milieu, Americans transferred their deepest fears onto their hated rival.

Without fully understanding recent social changes, many Americans of the 1947-1953 period also held on to their visions of an earlier age. (The ironies of this dependence were obvious. The amazing spectacle of millions of Americans re-living the "frontier days" replete with individualistic, self-reliant, "natural" role models—all with the aid of the advanced techniques of mass communication—is worthy of a Mencken.) The fact that these idealized images of an older America were repeatedly counterpoised against the negative images of modern life—which the Soviet Union came to symbolize—was indicative of Americans' desperate attempt to define themselves as a people and a nation. In the American mind, the canyon separating the Old American West from the New Soviet East stretched as far as the imagination could reach. If Americans were comfortable with their visions of "the West as America" it would also appear that, in their images of the Soviet Union, they had created an antithetical definition of themselves as protection against their deepest fears and anxieties about the future of their own society. As historian Daniel Boorstin would argue later in the fifties decade: "Whereas formerly we were a non-Europe, now we have become a kind of non-communism."

In American eyes, the Soviet Union was viewed as the embodiment of all the worst aspects of mid-twentieth century technology and social change. Given the Soviets' association with total state control over the individual, with attempts to explain history as a materialistic progression, and with the concerted effort to place machines and production over human needs or

values, it is not at all surprising that the USSR stimulated some of Americans' deepest fears and anxieties during the early postwar era. The different images of Soviet life were not, of course, held in all Americans' minds to the same degree. In fact some totally dismissed them, and others had their own personal reasons for their intense hostility toward the Soviets. But the images do reveal general cultural values, aspirations and traditions. For much of the American public, the dystopian images served two purposes: first, in a postwar world of bewildering complexity, it was comfortable and flattering to see the world in simple terms of good versus evil; and secondly, at a deeper level, the images provided a safety valve for the excessive frustrations and anxieties which plagued postwar industrial life.

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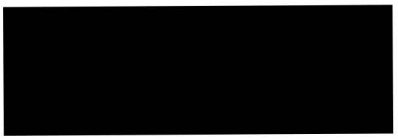
Author 

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