BROWN FASCISM AND RED FASCISM:
ANALOGIES, SCHEMAS, AND THE TRANSFER OF THE NAZI IMAGE
ONTO THE SOVIET UNION, 1940-1946

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ABSTRACT

Focusing on the years 1940 - early 1946, this thesis argues that American policy makers used rhetorical figures such as the Munich analogy, the totalitarianism schema, and Nazi-Soviet comparison to see the USSR through a cognitive filter which supported an ever more assertive policy toward the wartime ally. During the war, events—mainly the wartime alliance and the bold Soviet effort to defeat Nazism—worked against these rhetorical figures. After the war events and the Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe supported the figures and thereby nurtured the growing American suspicion against the USSR. This constellation helped to shape what would later become known as Containment as the Cold War developed.

The 'lesson' that Americans seemed to have learned from Munich was that 'aggression unchecked is aggression unleashed.' All three rhetorical figures brought the USSR and Nazi Germany in relation and thereby served to transfer the image of Nazi aggressive expansionism onto the USSR. This finding is supported by several studies in cognitive science which analyze how we use analogies and schemas.

Before and during the Hitler-Stalin pact the Nazi-Soviet comparison was used frequently in the public press and among policy makers. After Hitler's invasion of the USSR and later in the war, when the USA was in an alliance with the USSR to defeat Nazi Germany, the Munich analogy, totalitarianism schema, and Nazi-Soviet comparison almost disappeared from public discussion of the Communist ally. Only some (mostly Christian) conservatives and isolationists used the figures to argue against cooperation with the
Soviets. After the war, these rhetorical figures strongly reemerged and helped to identify
the USSR as similar to the Nazi threat which had just been defeated. At the same time the
lesson implicit in the Munich analogy began to shape the American policy toward the
USSR. By early 1946 Americans were quite comfortable with seeing the USSR as similar
to Nazi Germany and used this argument to justify a 'tough stand' against the former ally.
Thus analogy, schema, and comparison helped Americans to categorize the events of the
postwar world and act according to what they thought to have learned from history.
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FIELDS OF STUDY

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"My mindset is Munich!"
--Madeleine Albright

INTRODUCTION

Recent scholarship in the rise and history of the Cold War provides intriguing insights into the inner workings of the Soviet side of post-World War II developments. Scholars such as Vladimir Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, Norman Naimark, and Vojtech Mastny were able to build their studies predominantly upon documents now available in the former Soviet archives. We have learned from their publications that the threat of an aggressive post-war Soviet expansionism and a Soviet master plan for the sovietization of Europe was largely a perceived threat on the part of the western world. Provided this is true, we have to ask how and why western political decision makers and opinion leaders came to perceive such a threat. The answer to this question will help us better to understand the rise of the Cold War as well as the assumptions upon which both sides based their actions. This thesis seeks to contribute to this approach.

After World War II the Truman administration searched for a policy toward the Soviet Union. Many recent studies on the rise of the Cold War elaborate on that topic. What these studies find is that from the beginning of 1946 the administration seemed more and more inclined to take a stand on the side of what would later become the containment policy, a policy toward the Soviet Union that emphasized American national security needs in a broadly defined field. What made policy makers take the decisive

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steps in this shift is still somewhat obscure. To answer this question several authors have argued that American policy makers viewed the Soviet Union as similar to Nazi Germany and wanted to avoid the rise of another totalitarian war monger. These studies reveal how shibboleths such as ‘totalitarianism’, ‘appeasement’, the Nazi-Soviet comparison and the ‘Munich analogy’ were used in regard to the Soviet Union. They all more or less successfully establish a link between the use of language that implies certain meanings (analogies or schemas), mostly a similarity between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, and the rise of the Cold War. However, none of these studies analyzes these rhetorical structures from a strict chronological perspective. This lack of chronology prevents them from coming up with a clear understanding of when the use of analogies and schemas was cogent and when they were not. Most agree that especially during World War II the Munich analogy was frequently used, while at the same time the American policy toward the Soviet Union was one of cooperation under the Grand Alliance. Only some (undefined)


time after the war, according to these studies, did analogies help to convince policy makers to take a “tough stand” against the Soviet Union. This thesis will address the question why this was so and present a chronological frame to show when and how analogies and schemas were used and how they tied into the flow of events.

During the war the analogies and schemas, even though they appeared frequently in public debates and among policy makers, did not influence the American policy of cooperation with the Soviet Union. From the end of the war to early 1946, a time when the administration searched for a policy toward the Soviet Union, analogies such as Munich still failed to influence top level policy makers in Washington even though they were used more heavily than during the war. I shall argue that the administration’s search for a policy and the inefficiency of analogies and schemas are interconnected. In other words, the failure of analogies to convince policy makers in this initial stage can be attributed to the search for a policy guideline, which took shape in a lingering hope of accord with the Soviet Union.

Only when American policy toward the Soviet Union began to develop toward what would become the Cold War policy of containment—in the early months of 1946—did analogies become convincing tools in the hands of the Truman administration to rally support for this new policy. Analogies needed to be reinforced by actual events that provided examples of what the analogies argued in theory: with this condition fulfilled they functioned as a catalyst. They helped to categorize events that otherwise could have been interpreted either in different ways or less boldly. Only occasionally—and scarcely ever among top political decision makers—was the Munich analogy, the totalitarianism

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While an analogy has a concrete object (e.g. Munich), a schema is an abstract “coded phrase” which evokes certain connotations in the minds of those who use it or hear it (e.g. totalitarianism, evoking Nazism). Mostly there is only an undefined silent consensus about these connotations. See Yuen Foong Khong, Analogies at War: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam Decisions of 1965, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992, pp. 25-32; 220-23.
schema, and the Nazi-Soviet comparison used only to analyze a situation. Thus I shall show that analogical reasoning often indicated the mind-set of the person who employed it. That is to say that analogies were mainly selected according to whether they were convenient to make a strong argument and could convince others of the probity of this argument and not whether they represented reality in the best possible way. In the final analysis analogies proved to be capable rhetorical tools.

In the first chapter I shall show why we use analogies and schemas, when we use them most, and under what conditions and restraints we have to understand their usage. This chapter will draw on literature on cognitive science to serve as a background against which I shall then analyze when and how analogies were used in the American discussion of relations with the Soviet Union between 1940 and early 1946.

The second chapter will then lead us to the actual application of analogies and schemas and trace their use through the war years. I shall argue that from the American entrance into the war the use of the Munich analogy, the totalitarianism schema, and the Nazi-Soviet comparison played almost no role at all. The reason for this, as I shall show, was that the ultimate goal of the Roosevelt administration was to defeat Nazi Germany. Therefore any opposition against the ‘partner-out-of-necessity’ (necessary partner) in the Grand Alliance, i.e. the Soviet Union, had to be subordinated to this goal. It did not matter that some Americans objected to most aspects of the Soviet system. However, the vast majority of Americans joined their President in his acceptance of the Soviet Union as a war partner and even in lauding Soviet virtues. Only a minority still declared the alliance an unholy one. The ups and downs of the Grand Alliance therefore played only a minor role if any at all in the frequency and quality of the use of analogies and schemas which linked the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany.
In the third chapter I shall show that in the second half of 1945 the continued mistrust of the Soviets among the foreign policy establishment and some conservative public media led to an increasing comparison of Nazis and Soviets by means of analogies and schemas. However, as the administration had not committed itself to a policy toward the Soviet Union yet, it remained hesitant to use itself the analogies that were commonly used among American diplomats in Eastern Europe as well as in the American press.

Only by the beginning of 1946, as I shall argue in chapter four, had the administration showed signs of committing itself to a consistent foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. This new position would be informed by the idea that was underlying the Munich analogy and the totalitarianism schema, namely that any attempt at aggressiveness had to be stopped at the roots in order to avoid the rise of another war monger as the Nazis had been. This argument would then take on a leading position in informing the American public about the necessity of a tougher American stand against the Soviet Union. Once the discourse about Soviet intentions was shaped in terms of the Munich analogy, the totalitarianism schema and the Nazi-Soviet comparison, the same three rhetorical devices would serve as a catalyst through which all further developments could be interpreted.

In addition to printed U.S. government documents I shall rely on the analysis of magazines, newspapers and other public media sources.6 Since the general knowledge among Americans during and after the war about the Soviet Union was shockingly low, any information about the wartime ally can be expected to have had great impact upon this uneducated public; it is generally more difficult to influence an educated population with cunning arguments than it is to influence a public that has a very low level of prior

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6 I am aware of the problems that the selection of sources available in the FRUS-series and other printed document collections presents to the researcher, which is that they are selections. Nevertheless, given the scope of research that could reasonably be done for this paper as well as my limited financial sources I decided to rely on published documents available in FRUS and other sources. More independent primary research will undoubtedly be necessary to confirm the findings as they are presented here.
knowledge about a given subject. Therefore the rhetoric of public media is also a more relevant criterion in assessing the development of what would later be called the Cold War consensus during and immediately after WW II than it might be in other cases.

This thesis is clearly not meant to function as a stand-alone explanation of the rise of the Cold War. Rather, I shall track down one important factor that had an impact on the rise of the Cold War. My approach, then, is meant to enhance our understanding of the multiple factors that contributed to the rise of the Cold War.

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7 Warren B. Walsh, “What the American People Think of Russia,” Public Opinion Quarterly, vol. 8, Winter, 1944/45, pp. 513-22. Walsh argued that a) education correlated positive with a more pro-Soviet attitude - religion, class, or political preference were rather irrelevant; b) one out of three Americans distrusted Russia and was persistent in this attitude; c) given the distrust Americans still recognized the need to get along well with the Soviet Union, Ibid. *passim*. 
Chapter 1:

Trauma Munich—The Why and How of Analogies and Schemas

What sounds quite complicated as “analogical reasoning” is actually something we use on a daily basis: we explain a new situation (target, B) by using examples from a past situation (basis, A) that we consider comparable. These examples can either be used in the form of a schema (C [an element, which played a role in understanding basis A] applies also to target B), of a comparison (target B is like basis A), or as an analogy (target B is another basis A). The schema is a very subtle way of linking two events. It usually does not refer back directly to the base event and therefore often leaves unexplored the connection between the base and the target that is to be explained. The comparison, by bringing the two events into a direct relation, is still a somewhat open and challengable approach to explain the target by linking it to the basis. The comparison is less subtle than the schema, and it establishes a likeness of the two events but not their sameness. The analogy, finally, makes equal the two events in a definitive statement. It is the least equivocal of the three methods of using past knowledge to explain the present or anticipated future.

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9 For the sake of brevity I shall only talk of events here because this brings us closer to the subject - the linking of two historical events. However, we should keep in mind that we could also substitute things or abstract terms for events.
In all three cases our previous experience helps us to comprehend new situations by categorizing and reducing them to a more abstract level. For this purpose we concentrate on selected features, which we hold to be characteristic, and compare them in both events. In the sciences this process is known as setting up a model or framework, an attempt to reduce a new phenomenon to its most characteristic traits in order to be able to compare it to other phenomena and to explain it. This is generally called a “top-down” or theory driven approach of information processing.¹⁰

The difference in function between analogies and schemas is marginal. They mainly differ in the way in which they suggest likeness of two events. While the schema represents a more indirect way of suggesting similarity, the analogy is much more blatant. Consider the following two examples, the first a schema, the second an analogy, both of which link the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany: “The Soviet program is the establishment of totalitarianism” and “Nazism is brown Fascism; communism is Red Fascism.”¹¹ The difference in suggestive power is clearly perceptible—the totalitarianism schema is a much weaker and more indirect reference to the Nazi parallel than the Fascism analogy. Yuen Foong Khong observes that “analogies perform essentially the same tasks as schemas.”¹² They help us to gain approved guidelines along which we can better understand new information that otherwise seems confused. To illustrate how extensively we rely on


this pattern of information processing the following passage may serve as an example for the use of a schema:

The procedure is actually very simple. First, you arrange things into different groups. Of course, one pile may be sufficient depending on how much there is to do. If you have to go somewhere else due to lack of facilities, that is the next step, otherwise you are pretty well set. It is important not to overdo things. That is, it is better to do too few things at once than too many. ... After the procedure is completed, one arranges the materials into different groups again. They can then be put into their appropriate places. Eventually they will be used once more and the whole cycle will then have to be repeated. However, that is part of life. \(^{13}\)

Without any further remarks it is almost impossible to extract any meaning from this passage. However, given the information—the schema—that the paragraph is about washing clothes, the text becomes meaningful, as a second reading will prove. This example shows how important schemas are to categorize and to order incoming information and to make sense of it. It also shows that the mere facts, lacking the schema (called “bottom-up” or data-driven information processing), are almost meaningless unless we come up with an explanatory theory, the schema of doing laundry. If seen in this light, the lessons of the past, which were the basis for analogies and schemas in the case of policy makers after World War II, become much more intelligible as cognitive devices which we actually use on a regular basis. A better understanding of how and when these rhetorical devices were used will help us better to understand the dynamics in the rise of the Cold War consensus. \(^{14}\)

All three approaches—schema, comparison, and analogy—have in common a tendency to downplay the relevance of details in the events to be related to each other. We usually conduct the comparison of two events along some selected features or traits which we expect to be characteristic of both events. Only when we simplify the complexity of the


\(^{14}\) The fundamental importance of analogical reasoning is explained in Keane, Analogical Problem Solving, p. 102f.
two events are we able to connect the common features of the two events and establish their similarity. This allows us to conduct something like a mental leap in which we transfer elements from the basis to the target in the pursuit to understand the unexplained target. Once we have established the similarity or comparability of the two events we are usually unlikely to let go of the ‘knowledge’ we have achieved, even in the face of evidence to the contrary. This is called the “perseverance effect” or “persistency.”

While history provides several significant events which would have made for good analogies during and after World War II there are some compelling reasons why American policy makers favored Munich as the predominant lesson which would help to make sense of the post-war world. First, Munich was a very shallow concept, the lesson drawn from it was quite simple: aggressive powers have to be kept within their limits or else they might bring war over the peace-loving nations of the world.

When in 1938 Adolf Hitler occupied Austria and Czechoslovakia the public reaction was mixed: while some argued that Munich was necessary to secure peace, others concluded that it was a despicable case of appeasement of an aggressor. The reaction of the United States at that time was in accord to its policy of isolationism. Only in hindsight would Munich become the broadly accepted epitome of appeasement, would most American policy makers conclude that they must never again let an aggressive power go unchecked. Interestingly enough, as the following chapters will show, the understanding of the Munich lesson among those who used it did not go any further. Munich was a very superficial

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16 The definition of appeasement according to the *Encyclopedia Britannica* is “to buy off (an aggressor) by concessions, usually at the sacrifice of principles.” Another definition, especially interesting for the purpose of this paper, is that appeasement is “defined as any substantive diplomatic exchange with a totalitarian power.” Christopher Layne, “The Munich Myth and American Foreign Policy,” in Kenneth M. Jensen & David Wurmsr, eds., *The Meaning of Munich Fifty Years Later*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1990, p. 18.
lesson with a small but powerful common denominator for those who used it: ‘aggression unchecked is aggression unleashed.’ This is where the commonly shared understanding of the ‘lesson’ of Munich ended. Some policy makers may have held further-reaching interpretations of the meaning of Munich, but these interpretations did not surface in the debate over American postwar relations with Soviet Russia. Therefore Munich lent itself perfectly to use in a broad range of situations and for different purposes. As a matter of fact, this is one of the characteristics of analogies—in order to be universally applicable they mostly remain on a very general level. It was also not important that America had not been a party of the Munich accord. The set of lessons of Munich were nevertheless to become a leitmotiv in American foreign policy after the war. The experience of the rise to power of Hitler’s Nazi Germany nevertheless influenced American officials profoundly, almost to the verge of traumatization.¹⁷

Second, Munich had had a severe impact and lasting consequences. The Munich Conference can be seen as the final act which established Hitler as an aggressive and totalitarian dictator who was bent on world domination. While before Munich there was still a faint hope that a war with Germany could be avoided, after Munich Hitler’s aggressive intentions were beyond doubt. The lesson that obviously many policy makers in the United States and elsewhere drew in the wake of the event was that the British and French submission to Hitler caused the war instead of keeping peace, as it was intended to.¹₈ In this light Hitler’s rise to power in the 1930’s can be expected to have left a lasting impression especially on policy makers who had started their political careers shortly before Hitler’s rise to power in Germany. Indeed, many American policy makers who


¹₈ To what degree Americans, who had not been a party to the Munich Conference, were more inclined to “learn the lesson of Munich” than, say, the British or even the Soviets, will not be touched upon in this thesis.
held important positions after the war were either relatively young in the 1930’s—roughly between the ages of 30 and 45—or had begun their political careers later in life. For both categories the rise of Nazism proved to be a formative experience in the earlier part of their political careers.\(^\text{19}\)

The third decisive criterion for the choice of Munich as analogy is the so-called “availability heuristic,” which is closely connected to the impact Munich had upon policy makers. In other words, this is the question of how far in the past was the event that provided the analogy? In 1945, the legacy of Munich was only seven years old and the Nazi experience as well as the totalitarianism schema were even less remote. After the war many people had some recollections about Munich and an interpretation of the lessons to be inferred from it, while virtually nobody needed to be reminded of Nazism or totalitarianism.\(^\text{20}\)

A fourth factor that influenced the choice of Munich as the main analogy for the postwar period was what cognitive theorists call the “representativeness heuristic,” the question whether Munich was representative of the perceived Soviet expansionism. At the time most American policy makers seemed to think so, for a good reason: the central role of ideology, one-party system, paramilitary secret police, repressive domestic behavior, and a declared expansionism superficially likened the Soviet Union to Nazi Germany.

\(^{19}\) In the year of the Munich Conference (1938) Joseph Alsop was 28, George F. Kennan was 34, Maynard Barnes and Mark Ethridge were 41, Arthur Bliss Lane was 44, Dean Acheson was 45, Averell Harriman and James F. Forrestal were 46, Senator Arthur Vandenberg was 54 (first political office as U.S. Senator in 1928), Harry S. Truman was 54 (first political office as U.S. Senator in 1935). The notable exception was James F. Byrnes, who was 59 and had begun his political career already in 1910. See David Robertson, *Sly and Able: A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes*, New York: Norton, 1994, p. 32. All individuals named here will be introduced later in the text. For a theoretical elaboration see Robert Jervis, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, pp. 249-57.

\(^{20}\) On availability Khong, *Analogies at War*, 212-15. See also Daniel Kahneman, Paul Slovic, Amos Tversky, *Judgment Under Uncertainty: Heuristics and Biases*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982, pp. 163-78. This can also explain for the missing of Versailles as an analogy: it had less recency and it was not representative of the growing tensions with the Soviet Union but rather of the situation of post-war Germany.
Today, with the benefit of hindsight we can more critically distinguish Nazi aggression from Communist expansion. Here again it becomes evident that “people pick analogies on the basis of superficial similarities between the prospective analogue and the situation it is supposed to illuminate.”\textsuperscript{21} Psychological experiments support these empirical findings. They indicate that analogies are generally selected on the basis of “surface commonalities” rather than a thorough analysis of the basis-target relation. In other words, the number of attributes shared between analogical basis (here Munich) and target (here Soviet expansionism) can be expected to be small. Furthermore, preconceived notions or “plans and goals of the reasoner” are likely to play a role in selecting and applying analogies. This theoretical finding is corroborated by the fact that the Munich analogy, totalitarianism schema, and Nazi-Soviet comparison were mainly used by those who argued for a tougher American policy toward the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{22}

Before we turn to the actual analysis of post-war events to study the use of analogies and how and when they contributed to the formation of the Cold War consensus, it is important to point to the role which the analogies and schemas played on the cognitive level. Their sole purpose was to convey a message, an implicit meaning—to serve as cognitive devices or links between a new situation in the present and a known situation in the past, bringing to the fore what had been learned from prior experience. In other words, they were only the\textit{ carrier} of messages, while the messages themselves were the interpretations of analogies and schemas by those who used them. These interpretations were ill defined and rested more on a common-sense understanding of history than on historical analyses. Since we should not shoot the messenger if we do not like the message it would be mistaken to attribute too significant a role in the forming of the Cold

\textsuperscript{21} Khong, \textit{Analogies at War}, p. 217.
War consensus to the analogies and schemas themselves. Rather, we must look to the ideas behind analogies and schemas to understand why and to what degree they functioned as they did. However, this is not the objective of this thesis. Here I will only show how and when analogies and schemas were used and how they functioned. This will serve to establish that analogies and schemas played any role at all in the formation of the Cold War consensus. To study the power of the ideas behind analogies and schemas, and thus the degree of their impact on the formation of the Cold War consensus is still open for further research.
CHAPTER 2:  
WAR-TORN YEARS AND WAR-TORN MINDS--GRAND ALLIANCE, NAZI IMAGE, AND AMERICAN ANTICOMMUNISM DURING THE WAR 

Before World War II pro- and anticommunist attitudes in American public debate competed without restriction. An official administrative position toward the Soviet Union was not readily discernible. One reason for this was the prevalent American isolationism. With the coming of war this would change as the United States espoused a position of interventionism. Common US and Soviet war aims--mainly the defeat of Nazi Germany--demanded a wartime Alliance that left little room for mutual ideological bickering and criticism. Even though this alliance would experience serious downturns, the general attitude in the United States consistently remained more favorable toward cooperation with the Soviets than with the Nazis. While the administration had set the official course it could not, however, prevent that groups with diverse attitudes toward the Soviet Union continued to confront each other in public. Already at this early time the Munich analogy, the totalitarianism schema, and the Nazi comparison were prominent in the arguments against cooperation with the Soviet Union. Many of those who condemned Soviet-American cooperation, especially the American diplomatic corps in Eastern Europe, saw their positions informed by what they had witnessed in 1938—that an aggressor, if unchecked, would become a world bully. However strong the analogically informed arguments were against cooperation with the Soviet Union during the war, they never reached sufficient strength to defeat the President’s call to fight the common enemy together with the Soviets.
During the war years the Munich analogy and the totalitarianism schema were mainly employed to advocate an anticommunist position and only rarely to analyze the political situation.

In the late 1930s groups such as the Jewish Federation to Combat Communism and Fascism and the liberal Committee for Cultural Freedom went to great lengths to make clear that they not only vigorously opposed Communism, but also saw striking similarities between Communism and Fascism. The Stalinist purges in the 1930s made the argument seem natural. In American society the left therefore found itself on an isolated position. On the one hand it had to meet the almost traditional American anticommunist or anti-Marxist arguments. On the other hand, American Communists were forced to engage in an uphill struggle to distance themselves from Fascists. References to the Soviet Union as a totalitarian power were quite common, as was the comparison between Nazism and Communism as ideologies that restrained most of the liberties that Americans held dear. Hence, it took only a minor effort in mental acrobatics to merge and reject both. As early as May 1939 the newly founded liberal but anticommunist American Committee for Cultural Freedom (CCF) issued a Declaration of Principles, in which it warned:

The tide of totalitarianism is rising throughout the world. ... Under varying labels and colors, but with an unvarying hatred for the free mind, the totalitarian idea is already enthroned in Germany, Italy, Russia, Japan, and Spain. ... Triumphant in a large sector of the world, the totalitarian idea is winning too dangerous an influence in many other countries. ... These are immediate and pervasive realities. Unless totalitarianism is combated wherever and in whatever form it manifests itself, it will spread in America.
Here the CCF compared Communism to Nazism or Fascism in general by using the *totalitarianism* schema. Outright analogies, especially the Munich analogy, were hardly ever used. It would need some time for the consequences of Munich to become apparent and for the lesson of Munich to be formulated.

Communists in the United States found themselves in a dilemma: on the one hand they saw the Soviet Union as the quintessential antifascist power, on the other hand they had to avoid being compared to Fascists. For liberals on the moderate left, however, Nazism and Communism were only different shades of grey. Liberals indeed also accused Communists of supporting a Fascist Soviet system. The result was a split in the left and a preference for the political right. When between 1937 and 1939 Americans were confronted with the hypothetical choice between Communism and Fascism, a majority preferred the latter over the former. Nevertheless, a remarkable number of American intellectuals and of the American left continued to sympathize more or less moderately with the Soviet Union and denied these accusations in the face of “an atmosphere of doubt about the viability of American democracy.”

The Hitler-Stalin Pact of August 24, 1939, eventually did away with the credibility of the argument that the Communists in the Soviet Union and elsewhere led the battle against Fascism. Most Americans interpreted the pact as a clear sign that Hitler and Stalin were similar in kind, both dictators, both leaders of totalitarian systems who did not care about the rights of individuals. This gave new credibility to the arguments of American anticommunists who for the last decade had been sounding alarm bells about the hypocrisy inherent in the professed antifascism of Communists. Again, the totalitarianism schema helped to link Nazism and Communism.

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After June 22, 1941, the day Hitler invaded the Soviet Union, the situation changed rapidly. The Nazis had broken a treaty--however despicable--and forced the Soviet Union to engage in a struggle against Fascism which found full support in the United States. Supporting the Soviet Union became almost immediately a matter of honor. Suddenly, American Communists became one of the most outspoken antifascist and thus interventionist groups in American society. Yet liberal and conservative anticommunists still had a significant isolationist clientele which urged caution and restraint in supporting the Soviet Union. They were a small minority, however, and their anticommunism would subject them to criticism from across the board, including accusations that they were insufficiently antifascist at best and overtly Fascist at worst. Practically overnight anticommunists had turned from Paulus to Saulus. Communism, in turn, rose from an ideology suspected of subverting the tenets of American society to the foremost ideology against totalitarian and Fascist Nazi Germany. This trend continued through the war years. So much so, that it would become “almost un-American to attack the Soviet Union, ... almost unpatriotic to attack the Soviet Union’s American comrades.”

The notion of the Soviet Union as an important power to secure world peace was nothing new. As early as in the Spanish civil war (1936-39) the Soviet Union had become a bastion against Fascism. This perception, held mainly by leftist Americans in the late 1930s, came to life again after Hitler had invaded the Soviet Union. A *Fortune* Survey in June 1943 found that more than 80 per cent of the Americans favored equal cooperation with the Soviet Union during and after the war, and 56.8 per cent expected the Soviets to stay in the war until Hitler’s final defeat and thus contradicted the fear of a separate German-Soviet peace.

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28 On Soviets’ reviving image see Ehrman, *Neoconservatism*, p. 4. Survey in *Fortune*, June 1943, pp. 26-28, “The Hand is Out To Russia.” Also Melvin Small, “How We Learned to Love the Russians:
Yet, the administration first had to convince a hesitant though antifascist population of the moral soundness of material support for Stalin in the war effort. To secure public approval for supporting the Soviets, to be sure, did not take long as the American people seemed quite willing to accept and follow the policy advocated by their administration. The degree to which Americans accepted the partnership is illustrated by the American Lend-lease program to the Soviet Union, which began on November 7, 1941. Put under the control of Harry Hopkins and thereby very high on Roosevelt’s priority list, it nevertheless remained a contested issue in Congress, among diplomats, military commanders and the American public throughout the war.29

It was in Roosevelt’s interest to stake out the limits of the Soviet-American wartime cooperation. Acting Secretary of State Sumner Wells, speaking for President Roosevelt and thus for the administration, clarified two days after Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union in the New York Times that “Hitler’s armies are today the chief danger of the Americas.” But it was also clear that “the United States maintained the principle of freedom of worship as undeniable, whereas that same right has been denied their peoples by the Soviet and German governments.” Criticism of cooperation with the Soviet Union came from, among others, Senator Harry S. Truman (D/Missouri), who felt that the United States should help whichever side seemed to be losing: “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 let them kill as many as possible, although I don’t want to see Hitler victorious

under any circumstances.” Another Missouri Democrat, Senator Bennett C. Clark, called it “a case of dog eat dog,” thus implying that neither of the two sides was better than the other.30

Parallel to the transformation of Communism from suspiciousness to supportworthiness the totalitarianism schema, used in connection with the Soviet Union, almost completely disappeared from public debates and in communications among American policy makers. This reflected the general intention not to alienate the new ally in Moscow. Acheson’s biographer noted for example that in “1939 and 1940 he [Acheson] made no distinction between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. After Russia became an ally, Acheson followed the prudent policy of saying nothing if one had nothing good to say.”31

It was obvious that especially after Hitler’s invasion of the Soviet Union nobody in Washington wanted to see Stalin’s Soviet Union linked with Hitler’s Nazi Germany. On March 22, 1942, FDR had ordered that “all materials promised under the [Lend-lease] protocol be released for shipment at the earliest possible date regardless of the effect of these shipments on any other part of our war program,” thereby giving help for the USSR top priority.32 To bolster support for the wartime alliance with the Soviet Union Roosevelt clarified in April 1942, that the war “must not be impeded by a few bogus patriots who use the sacred freedom of the press to echo the sentiments of the propagandists in Tokyo and Berlin.” This was meant as a shot across the bow of the Hearst and McCormick papers, whose antimunism ran high. The same point was made by Texas Representative Luther Johnson in mid 1943 when he said that it would be “unwise, when we are engaged in war, to make faces at our allies.”33

32 Herring, Aid to Russia, p. 60.
Only those who did not mind alienating the Soviet ally continued to call it a totalitarian state and to compare it to Nazi Germany. Among these critics were the Catholic Church leadership, some labor unions, conservative newspaper publishers (mainly Hearst, McCormick, Patterson), some isolationists and moderate liberal anticommunists, and some who had first-hand exposure to the atrocities committed during the Stalinist purges or the obstructionist behavior of Soviet troops and officials in Eastern European countries.34

Among the latter group who criticized the Soviet Union were diplomats stationed in Eastern European embassies and missions. While on the one hand they saw a pointed similarity between Nazis and Soviets, on the other hand Roosevelt believed that the “Nazi-Soviet Pact was inherently unstable” and that he should not close the door on the Soviets too early by brandishing the Soviet Union as equal to Nazi Germany. This careful American pro-Soviet course irritated some diplomats abroad, especially in the days when the Hitler-Stalin Pact was still honored by the Nazis. “Is the Government of the United States” asked Assistant Chief of the Division of European Affairs in the State Department, Loy Henderson, in a memorandum on July 15, 1940, “to apply certain standards of judgement and conduct to aggression by Germany and Japan which it will not apply to aggression by the Soviet Union?” Ambassador to the Soviet Union Laurence A. Steinhardt wrote to Henderson from Czechoslovakia only three months later that “[a]s you know from our own experiences, the moment these people here [in the Soviet Union] get it into

33 FDR in Samuel I. Rosenman, ed., The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt, vol. 11, New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950, p. 234. Luther Johnson in Paul Willen, ‘Who ‘Collaborated’ With Russia?’ in The Antioch Review, vol. XIV, No. 3, Sept. 1954, p. 274. This article is a very interesting account regarding both content and date of publication of how favorable the general public attitude was toward the Soviet Union during the war alliance. It shows that even the conservative Reader’s Digest and the more centrist Life joined in with the general pro-Soviet praise in the context of the wartime alliance until mid 1944, when both “recovered a portion of their balance with regard to the Soviet Union.” p. 267.

their heads that we are ‘appeasing them, making up to them or need them,’ they immediately stop being cooperative.” Appeasement clearly indicated how close Steinhardt saw Communism in connection with Nazism. It was an unequivocal reference to Munich made under the impression of the Hitler-Stalin Pact and thus a reminder to eliminate the double standard employed by Roosevelt.

Other examples of Nazi-Soviet comparisons appeared mainly in special contexts, such as the Baltic question in 1942, when Moscow made it clear that it intended to annex the Baltic Republics as soon as they were liberated from Nazi troops. In response Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle wrote to the Acting Secretary of State, Sumner Wells, that if this would be tolerated by the United States “we shall be accused of having negotiated a Baltic ‘Munich,’” although he cautioned that “the accusation [of a Munich] would not be just.” Wells stated in his reply that because the American reaction to this affair would not constitute any responsibility, he could see no basis for the Munich accusation at all and therefore rejected to consider Munich as an argument for American action against a Soviet annexation of the Baltic Republics.36

After the Soviets gained the upper hand in the battle for Stalingrad in late November 1942, Americans seemed even more willing to dismiss the striking similarities between Hitler’s Germany and Stalin’s Soviet Union for the duration of the war. As historian Melvin Small observed, “[b]y 1943, the nature of the alliance had changed. . . . [R]elations between the two great powers seemed to warm to a point where many Americans, perhaps a majority, claimed to respect and even to admire the Soviet Union.” But at the same time this respect was constrained “only to wartime exigencies.”37 Washington Post

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co-editor Barnet Nover warned in an editorial on March 11, 1943: "it would be folly of
the worst kind to allow minor bickerings … to stand in the way of basic agreement
between us. A world order without Russia is bound to be a world order without stability."
This perspective was increasingly espoused by the American public. "Between October
and December, 1943," Warren B. Walsh finds, "the number of Americans who thought
Russia could be trusted to co-operate shot upward. The trust figure reached the all-time
high of 51% and the distrust dropped to 27%." 38

Even though the Grand Alliance was far from being free of internal tensions in 1944,
with Germany increasingly on the defensive, the Roosevelt administration still underlined
its almost unconditional support for Russia. In January 1944, for example, the Soviet
Union had indicated that it intended to redraw its border with Poland approximately
according to the Curzon line of 1919, which would have resulted in territorial gains for
Ukrainian and White Russian Soviet Republics totalling more than 70,000 square miles.
In exchange Poland should be compensated by obtaining East Prussia, part of Pomerania,
and most of Upper Silesia (along the Oder-Neisse line), which had been seized by
Germany but which originally had been Polish. Not only would redrawing the borders
have violated the "basic policy laid down by this [American] Government of not reaching
final settlements on frontier questions until after the termination of hostilities." It would
also have resulted in a territorial loss for Poland of almost 42,500 square miles and would
have been a violation of the Atlantic Charter. 39 On February 9, 1944, Secretary of State

38 Nover in Washington Post, March 11, 1943, p. 10, "Realism is Needed." Walsh, "What the American
People Think of Russia," p. 519. The numbers would not change significantly until November 1944,
ibid., p. 520.

39 For correspondence on American interests in redrawing the Polish borders see FRUS, 1944, vol. 3, pp.
1216ff. Calculation of territorial transfer ibid., pp. 1222ff., quotation by Elbridge Durbrow, January 11,
1944, ibid., p. 1222. On Atlantic Charter see Douglas Brinkley & David R. Facey-Crowther, ed., The
Cordell Hull informed the American Ambassador in Moscow, Averell Harriman, about his concerns over Soviet unilateral intentions regarding the final drawing of the Soviet-Polish border.

The American people will be unable to reconcile the contradictions between the two [continued collaboration on an international basis versus unilateral action extending into the postwar world] and will not be disposed to favor American participation in a scheme of world organization which will merely be regarded as a cover for another great power to pursue a course of unilateral action in the international sphere based on superior force. We share your view that it is of the utmost importance that the principle of consultation and cooperation with the Soviet Union be kept alive at all costs, but some measure of cooperation in relation to world public opinion must be forthcoming from the Soviet Government.  

While Hull emphasized the maxim of strong Soviet-American cooperation, he also pointed out that some form of mutuality would have to be maintained, a position that would slowly gain in popularity during the next two years. Barely four weeks later president Roosevelt wrote a cable to Churchill, that, although never sent, offers an insight into his thinking regarding relations with the Soviet Union. He would be willing to leave the question of Poland’s borders and government open until Soviet and American troops would have met in Poland, that is, until the end of hostilities. Roosevelt made unmistakably clear that he would not insist on the London Polish government to be installed. He certainly wanted to avoid “any Polish opposition to the Russian armies.... It is entirely possible that as the Russians advance they may recognize some other organization as more representative of the people of Poland.”  

In other words, he decided to give precedence to the Soviet territorial and governmental demands over Polish requests for reinstatement of their original borders. His motive for this decision was most likely to keep the Soviet Union willing to fight the Germans with everything they had to relieve the pressure on American troops.

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40 Hull to Harriman, FRUS, 1944, vol. 4, February 9, p. 826, emphasis added.
At the same time, however, critical remarks over the American alliance with the Soviet Union could be heard increasingly. A policy memorandum, *Current Problems in Relations With the Soviet Union*, prepared in the Division of European Affairs of the State Department in March 1944, warned that even though cooperation with the Soviet Union was important for the purpose of winning the war, “[i]t must be constantly borne in mind in attempting to evaluate the methods and procedures of Soviet policy that the Soviet Union is a dictatorship.” To better understand this warning we have to remember that from late 1944 until early 1946 State Department officials harbored the most suspicions regarding the Soviet Union within the American government. Hence the memorandum rather should be seen as foreboding the anticommunist consensus in the American government than as reflective of an actual current of thinking in the administration.\(^42\)

The suspicion displayed by the State Department was further nourished by the Soviet decision not to support the Polish underground fighters, who rose against the German occupants of Warsaw on August 1, 1944. Ambassador Averell Harriman in Moscow alerted the State Department only one month later, on September 10, 1944, that “[n]ow that the end of the war is in sight our relations with the Soviets have taken a startling turn evident during the last 2 [sic] months.” He recommended that the United States should not continue to support the Soviet Union unconditionally, be it in the case of Lend-lease or the territorial reorganization after the war.

When it comes to the question of what we should do in dealing with the situation I am not going to propose any drastic action but a firm but friendly *quid pro quo* attitude. In some cases where it has been possible for us to show a firm hand we have been making definite progress.\(^43\)

In response, Secretary of State Cordeli Hull, mulled “whether Stalin and the Kremlin have determined to reverse their policy of cooperation with their Western Allies apparently

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\(^{43}\) *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 4, September 10, pp. 988-990, emphasis in the original. For the cables on the Soviets’ refusal to support the Polish insurgents see *FRUS*, 1944, vol. 3, August 6 - September 30, pp. 1372-98.
decided upon in Moscow and Teheran and to pursue a contrary course.” Harriman replied he did not think so, but added that “[w]hat frightens me however is that when a country begins to extend its influence by strong arm methods beyond its borders under the guise of security it is difficult to see how a line can be drawn.” In accord with his cable of September 10, he advised promising economic aid as a lever to gain concessions from the Soviets. Even though Harriman used neither the Munich analogy nor the totalitarianism schema explicitly, the expression “by strong arm methods” might well have invoked images of the Nazi expansion. The idea behind his statement is fully consonant with the lesson of Munich: aggressive expansion, even under the guise of security interests, had to be stopped from its very beginning. However, this exchange between Hull and Harriman was not yet representative of a general change of direction, neither in administration policy nor public opinion. From hindsight, though, it is tempting to interpret it as foreshadowing the future American policy toward the Soviet Union.

A similar point was made by the liberal protestant Walter Lippmann. In his analysis of the war Alliance Lippmann wrote in 1944 in his *U.S. War Aims* that “[i]f war [between the United States and the Soviet Union] is to be prevented, aggression must be checked long before the aggressor crosses a frontier and commits what is known as an overt act.” In fact, in the same book he identified the Soviet Union as a totalitarian power by arguing that a stable postwar “world order cannot be half democratic and half totalitarian.”

Although administrative policy enjoyed wide public support, various parties continued to criticize it. Many critics pointed to the similarities between Nazism and Stalinism by using the Munich analogy or referred to the Soviet Union by using schemas such as *appeasement* or *totalitarianism*. However, the administration won the argument for the


time being by pointing both to the differences between the Soviets and the Nazis—after all the Soviets were fighting the Nazis, who were clearly the worse evil—and to the common goal of the Soviets and the Americans—defeating Nazism. As Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson and his co-author McGeorge Bundy noted later, “[n]ot once during the war was this decision [of close wartime cooperation with the Soviet Union] questioned or any modification of it seriously considered by Stimson or by any man whose views he knew among the leaders of the administration.”

In 1944, with the tide of war changing to the benefit of the Allied Powers, the majority of the American public still viewed the Soviet Union favorably (see also footnote 38 on page 23). Even the Soviet neglect to support the Poles in their efforts to regain control over Warsaw resulted only in mild criticism from the general public. However, the Roman Catholic Church in the United States strongly protested the Soviet inaction in the case of Warsaw. The Catholic Church leadership and Catholic opinion makers had remained one of the most outspoken anticommunist groups in American society despite being exposed to severe criticism of being isolationist and even pro-fascist. *Our Sunday Visitor* of Indiana had complained already in March 1944 that “‘Daily propaganda in behalf of friendship for Stalin’ had created an artificial difference between the two ideologies [Nazism and Communism].” On September 14, 1944, with the Polish struggle for Warsaw in full force, the *Michigan Catholic* called Communism “Fascism of the Left which sometimes brings on Fascism of the Right.” One month later the *Brooklyn Tablet* reported: “Nazism is brown Fascism; communism is Red Fascism. Both destroy liberty, peace and religion.”

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The Catholic Church wanted to secure an agreeable post-war settlement for its Polish (and other Catholic Eastern European) brethren. Most Catholics interpreted Yalta as a “sellout, a victory for Stalin, and a violation of the Atlantic Charter,” and they also feared the anti-religious creed of a Communist Europe. Senator Vandenberg (R/Michigan), backed by a large Polish-American Catholic constituency, had second thoughts about Yalta. While he greeted the restoration of the “ideals of the Atlantic Charter … to good standing (on paper),” he found the recognition of the pro-communist Polish Lublin government “unjustified” and the “plebiscite … unsatisfactory.” There were also other strong voices that pointed to the sour spots in the upcoming Yalta conference. As Secretary of State Stettinius prepared for the Yalta meeting, Under Secretary of State Grew reported the beliefs of Washington Star columnist Constantine Brown, who spoke Grew’s mind: “Brown said that the revolt against the administration now developing in the Senate [fearing that FDR would engage in a give-away to the Soviets in Yalta] was based largely on the feeling that whereas we are fighting this war to destroy German and Japanese totalitarianism, what we are really doing is to substitute Soviet totalitarianism.” Writing from Moscow on November 20, 1944 to Under Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Elbridge Durbrow noted with a tone of concern that “[c]ertain sections of the American public have received the impression that the United States Government had adopted a policy of ‘appeasement’ toward the Soviet Union and that we have abandoned the principles enunciated in the Atlantic Charter.”


49 Grew cited in Lifka, The Concept “Totalitarianism,” pp. 310f. Durbrow in FRUS, 1944, vol. 4, p. 935. Another source of constant criticism of Roosevelt’s World War II Alliance with the Soviet Union had been the conservative newspapers of the McCormick-Hearst-Patterson chains. See Sirgiovanni, An Un-
The use of the word *appeasement* was a very clear sign. Appeasement and Munich were inseparable, hence Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union had to be seen in conjunction. Durbrow's note is a good example for how drawing the Nazi-Soviet parallel was used to analyze a situation and not only to advocate a preconceived policy. His argument was that the public interpreted United States foreign policy in terms of 'appeasement' and this, he implied, could not be wanted by Washington. Implicitly, the charge of appeasement also offered a policy solution. What had happened the last time an ambitious power had been 'appeased' was known to everybody: since the last appeasement had led to a World War, this time there must be no more appeasement. The United States must take a strong and assertive stand against the Soviet Union. It was a highly suggestive formulation, but for those who wanted to see it Yalta looked like another give-away of an innocent nation to a totalitarian power, much as Munich had been a give-away of Czechoslovakia to the Nazis.

At about the same time, in the early months of 1945, there came a new series of alarming reports from missions and embassies in Eastern Europe. From Sofia, American Representative Maynard Barnes wrote on April 20, 1945 that Bulgaria was going through "what began to happen in Russia in November 1917; ... Here we are in full revolution. ... This time the Communists are, or think they are, in charge, and they propose to sink deep foundations." One month later, on May 19, he wrote that "our experience with [the Russian Allies] to date in Bulgaria proves they do carry around brickbats, brass knuckles and all the other paraphernalia of the gas house gang." On April 4, Ambassador to Moscow W. Averell Harriman sent to the State department a very sharp analysis of the relief situation in the occupied zones in Eastern Europe:

We must clearly recognize that the Soviet program is the establishment of totalitarianism, ending personal liberty and democracy as we know and respect it. In addition the Soviet Government is attempting to penetrate through the Communist parties supported by it the countries of western Europe with the hope of expanding Soviet influence in the internal and external affairs of these countries.\textsuperscript{50}

Harriman suggested that economic help would be the best solution to this problem since “[l]ack of sufficient food and employment are fertile grounds for the subtle false promises of Communist agents.” Regarding Czechoslovakia, Winston Churchill advised the White House that

the liberation of Prague and as much as possible of the territory of western Czechoslovakia by your forces might make the whole difference to the post-war situation in Czechoslovakia, and might well influence that in nearby countries. On the other hand, if the western Allies play no significant part in Czechoslovakian liberation, that country will go the way of Yugoslavia.

Churchill suggested that Czechoslovakia might end up being under another totalitarian rule of Communist ideology, much like Yugoslavia under Tito, unless the United States would take the military lead.\textsuperscript{51}

While not all these reports used the outright comparison between Soviets and Nazis, they nonetheless appealed to the fantasy and fears of their readers in one way or another. Indeed, at the same time we find a conspicuous concentration of Munich-analogies mainly in private communications among Washington officials and in diary entries. While it is difficult to prove the respective origins of the arguments it is still worth noting here the contemporary appearance of the reports from Eastern Europe and the private use of the Munich analogy and totalitarianism schema in Washington and London.

\textsuperscript{50} For examples on Bulgaria see FRUS, 1945, vol. 5, pp. 191-92 and 219. Harriman in ibid., p. 819. From Hungary Alexander Kirk (Political Advisor to the Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theater) wrote on March 27, referring to the efforts of General Key to “work out a satisfactory arrangement with the Russians. Anti-Soviet comment has been condemned [by Key], pro-Russian gestures approved ... The temptation to report the flood of anti-Russian stories has been resisted even upon confirmation.” FRUS, 1945, vol. 4, p. 811. Nevertheless, the following pages in ibid. are full of reports on “obstructionism of Russians.” Ibid., p. 816.

In the first months of 1945 a change of mind in the higher echelons of the foreign policy elite in Great Britain and the United States seemed to occur. As early as February 23, 1945, Churchill, who always had supported a stronger line against the Soviet Union than Roosevelt, mused into his diary: “Poor Neville Chamberlain believed he could trust Hitler. He was wrong. But I don’t think I’m wrong about Stalin.” Some days later and with only six more weeks to live, president Roosevelt indicated his changing attitude toward the Soviets while speaking to Senator Vandenberg regarding the upcoming United Nations conference in San Francisco: “I am coming to know the Russians better.” On April 2, Vandenberg himself noted regarding the possible United States rejection of Stalin’s demand that the Soviet Union should get three votes in the San Francisco conference that “[t]here is a general disposition [in the U.S. Delegation and also with FDR] to stop this Stalin appeasement. It has to stop sometime. Every new surrender makes it more difficult.” While appeasement in this context is likely to mean more something like satisfying, it is still a telling note that the Senator had scribbled into his diary. Vandenberg was only too aware of the connection of the Munich-analogy and appeasement. He wrote on the same matter only three weeks later:

I don’t know whether this is Frisco or Munich. ... We should demand that the issue of three votes for the USSR be not precipitated until the whole pattern (including a settlement of the Polish problem) is in hand; otherwise, we shall be allowing Stalin to pick us off piece-meal (just as Hitler used to do). ... The decision is one of judgement—At what point is it wisest to stop appeasing Stalin? Otherwise a new ‘Munich’ will be followed by comparable tragedies.32

Regarding Soviet obstructions to the establishment of an Embassy in Poland, to which Vandenberg had referred in the above quotation, Ambassador to Poland Arthur Bliss Lane wrote on April 5 that “[a]ppeasement or apparent appeasement can be as dangerous to the United States interests in 1945 as it actually was in 1940 and 1941.”

After Roosevelt’s death Ambassador Harriman, who strongly supported a more assertive American foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, hurried from Moscow to Washington to brief the new president, Harry S. Truman, on Eastern European affairs. In one briefing on April 19, he said “the outward thrust of Communism was not dead and that we might well have to face an ideological warfare as vigorous and dangerous as Fascism or Nazism.” Truman seemed inclined to take this advice, for on the next day he assured Harriman twice that “he intended to be firm with the Russians and make no concessions from American principles or traditions for the fact of winning their [the Russians’] favor.” On May 12, Secretary of War Henry Stimson noted that the President “seems to have reached the conclusion that Tito’s attempt at power is getting a little too much like Hitler’s and will require a sharp rap over the knuckles.” The most outspoken analysis, however, came from Acting Secretary of State Grew on May 19. He wrote in his diary (and communicated to Averell Harriman and Charles Bohlen) that World War II had resulted in “the transfer of totalitarian dictatorship and power from Germany and Japan to Soviet Russia which will constitute in future as grave a danger to us as did the Axis.” Grew had developed a preference for working closely with career experts from the State Departments whenever Secretary of State Stettinius was away. Thereby he had strengthened the relative weight

53 Vandenberg in Vandenberg, Private Papers, pp. 161, 176f, April 25, 1945, emphasis in the original.
54 Lane in Arthur Bliss Lane, I Saw Poland Betrayed: An American Ambassador Reports to the American People, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1948, p. 87. As it is not clear which cases of American appeasement Lane meant when he referred to 1940 and 1941 I have to suspect that he meant 1938 and 1939, when the United States did neither intervene in the Munich Conference nor with the fourth partition of Poland.
and influence of career officers as opposed to the office of the secretary. At the same time the anticommunist influence of the State Department advisors had moved him much closer to a position of American strength against the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{56}

The purpose of these statements, especially those by Harriman, Stimson, and Grew was primarily to analyze the new political situation. As a side effect the explicit Nazi-Soviet comparisons also implied a policy solution that Truman readily understood from Harriman’s report, while Stimson and Grew added them to their use of the comparison. That the messages which arrived at the State Department from Eastern Europe did not fail to achieve their purpose in Washington is evident in a statement made by Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius before the House Ways and Means Committee. Arguing on behalf of the renewal of the Trade Agreements Act which would bolster the several Eastern European economies he made exactly the same point as Harriman, Stimson, and Grew by using the totalitarianism schema.

No country can safely ignore the decline of liberty and the emergence of totalitarian government in a neighboring country. Bitter experience has taught us that totalitarianism is too often associated with sudden armed aggression. When freedom is buried it is too late to take preventive measures.\textsuperscript{57}

Stettinius made a clear link between totalitarianism and Nazism and at the same time proposed a solution. Totalitarianism had to be stopped early on or else it would spread out as had Nazism.

In a top secret memorandum to the President on international Communism the State Department wrote in June 1945:


\textsuperscript{57} Stettinius in \textit{Department of State Bulletin} vol. XII, No. 304, April 22, 1945, p. 751.
[A] communist party was in fact a fifth column as much as any Bund group, except that the latter were crude and ineffective in comparison with Communists. ... Communists have the same attitude as Goebbels did—that the civil liberties of the democracies are convenient instruments for Communists to facilitate their tearing down the structure of the state and thereafter abolishing all civil rights.  

It is worth noting that in the same memorandum there is also talk of Soviet “satellite states,” a terminology that had been used so far only in connection with Nazi Germany, but which would become standard vocabulary regarding the Communist periphery.

Merely calling the Soviet Union a totalitarian state only drew attention to the parallels between totalitarian Nazism and totalitarian Communism. The outspoken comparison between Stalin and Hitler, the use of the Munich analogy or appeasement bore an implicit message for Americans: just as the United States had had to fight Nazism in a war because Nazism’s expansion had not been halted at Munich by the British and the French, now Communism needed to be checked to avoid World War III. The United States must not make the same mistakes as had been made by the British and the French in 1938 at Munich. After the war-induced emphasis on the similarity between the Allies—they had fought the same enemy—it had become important again to concentrate on the many differences between the Soviet Union and the United States. These differences would help to categorize, and categories helped to make sense of a tumultuous post-war world. This turn of mind would spell the end of the wartime alliance.

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58 State Department in FRUS, 1945, Conference of Berlin (Potsdam), vol. 1, pp. 272, 274.
59 Satellite states in FRUS, 1945, Conference of Berlin (Potsdam), vol. 1, pp. 269, see also Adler & Paterson, “Red Fascism,” p. 1056 and FRUS, 1945, vol. 5, p. 843. Another example of how Nazi satellite states became Soviet satellite states within one paragraph of a memorandum, including the use of totalitarianism, can be found in FRUS, 1945, vol. 2, p. 102.
60 For the need to “check the Soviet Union” see Harriman to Byrnes, April 6, 1945, FRUS, 1945, vol. 5, pp. 821-24 and Harriman to Truman, April 21, ibid., p. 846. The findings of this chapter are boldly supported by a study on how the New York Times reported on Soviet News between 1918 and 1946: “News that places the Soviet Union in an unfavorable light receives more attention than news that is sympathetic. But where Russian interests parallel American interests, more attention is given to the news favorable to the Soviets because it is in accord with American interests as well. Commendable characteristics attributed to the Soviet Union are presented as favorable only in the context used; undesirable characteristics are imputed to be inherent in the character of the Soviet Government. There is a tendency for unwarranted headlines, loaded words and questionable sources of information, when occurring in the Times reports, to
While before the war schemas such as totalitarianism referring to the Soviet Union were widely used, they barely had the analytical dimension they would have from the last months of the war and thereafter, especially after early 1946. These words mainly established parallels between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany without any further implications regarding what to do about the similarity. In 1939 and 1940 the United States had not even known what to do about Nazi Germany, much less been able to decide upon a policy toward the Soviet Union (given that both were totalitarian systems). The lesson of Munich would unfold only later in the war, and then always under the constraint of the wartime Alliance. Analogy and Alliance were counteracting forces, the latter of which prevailed.

During the war, as the administration had made clear, the United States had only one aim--defeating Nazi Germany. For this purpose not only was cooperation with the Soviet Union necessary, but any criticism of the hermetic Soviet system had to be restrained. It became important to concentrate more on the similarity in the war goals than on the differences between the two systems. Beginning again in mid 1944, the comparison between Stalin’s Soviet Union and Hitler’s Germany reappeared. The main sources on the domestic level were Catholics and, at that time, conservatives. Liberals would join in again in late 1946.61 The majority of the American public, however, remained overwhelmingly pro-Soviet during the war, at least within the limits of wartime cooperation. On the international level, the sharpest analyses came from Eastern European embassies and missions. The implicit message in all these warnings was that, just as in the 1930’s, there was a danger of the rise to power of another totalitarian state. The Truman Administration

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continued the foreign policy line of its predecessor so far as it was discernible. Still, the Truman Administration voiced stronger criticism of the Soviet Union in its first months than the Roosevelt administration had done. Secretary of State Stettinius was to remain in office only until June 3, when James F. Byrnes replaced him. There were no indications of a change in the American position toward Moscow or toward the situation in Eastern Europe. Byrnes would continue the course Stettinius had taken before him, even though Truman was openly critical of the fact that he had to get along well with the Soviets.
CHAPTER 3:

FROM FRIEND TO FOE—THE DETERIORATION OF SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS
AFTER THE WAR

After the Allies had won the war Americans increasingly referred to the Soviet Union by comparing it to Nazi Germany, by using the Munich analogy and by calling the Soviet system totalitarian. Reports abounded from Eastern Europe about the volatile political situation between the Western forces and the Soviet Union. A remarkably high number of telegrams and memoranda coming out of Eastern Europe in the second half of 1945 included complaints about Soviet misbehavior, infringement of liberties, or other deplorable actions deemed undemocratic by Western standards. The Munich analogy, the totalitarianism and appeasement schemas and the Nazi-Soviet comparison were mentioned repeatedly in these messages. Yet policy makers in Washington, namely President Harry S. Truman and Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, were much more careful in their public wording than during their first months in office and hardly ever used the analogies that were repeated in the State Department. In fact, public utterances from members of the administration, with rare exceptions, show a conspicuous absence of analogical reasoning in the second half of 1945. It seems as if the administration, uncertain about its foreign policy, did not want to alienate any of its potential future partners. Lower level policy
makers did not seem to have the same doubts. Especially diplomats in Eastern Europe, on the lower level of State Department, non-governmental individuals, in some cases even Congresspersons, increasingly espoused a policy that would later become known under the term containment. For all of 1945 the same commitment to a foreign policy toward the Soviet Union was absent among policy makers on the highest level—Truman and Byrnes. However, as we shall see in the debate on the international control of atomic energy, the growing Cold War consensus was beginning to emerge.  

In one respect Truman and Byrnes were a perfect match during the first months after the war. Truman knew that he had to concentrate on domestic affairs to manage the delicate post-war readjustment without getting the nation out of balance. He needed someone to take care of foreign policy. while he was working on domestic issues. Byrnes was only too willing to provide the president with room to maneuver. Taking more responsibility in foreign policy meant that he, Byrnes, could act more independently too. That he was inclined to use this independence became apparent at the London and Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conferences with Bevin and Molotov in September and December 1945, respectively. He preferred to work with a small personal staff and sometimes even tried to run foreign policy without sufficiently reconciling his plans with Truman. He spent the better half of the post-war months of 1945 abroad, often leaving Dean Acheson in charge of affairs in Washington. While he was away the analogies kept pouring in at the State Department. Yet Byrnes did not respond to the policy recommendations and warning Munich analogies, totalitarianism schemas, and Nazi-Soviet comparisons

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63 An account of the necessity of providing an economic basis for the purpose of preventing the rise of another form of totalitarianism in Europe, can be found in Robert E. Sherwood, Roosevelt and Hopkins: An Intimate History, New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948, p. 924. See also Lijfta, The Concept "Totalitarianism," p. 352.
the American representatives sent him from abroad. He did not believe that the reports contained the unbiased truth.\textsuperscript{64}

It was not that the reports from Eastern Europe were equivocal or ambiguous. Byrnes considered them too emphatic in their anticomunism to be treated without a healthy dose of skepticism. It was no secret in Washington that those who wrote the reports were for the most part ardent anticomunists.\textsuperscript{65} Also the State Department, where the messages from Eastern Europe arrived, was known to be a stronghold of anticomunism. The basis therefore had been prepared by Byrnes himself. When on September 20, 1945 Truman informed him that the State Department should incorporate the Office of Strategic Services, Byrnes took measures to ensure that his 4,000 some new subordinates would not gain too much influence by dispersing them throughout the Department. He had good reasons for that: OSS officers were reknowned for being liberal to the verge of being "pro-Soviet, even pro-communist." Thus the influence of OSS estimates was significantly watered down and their liberal impact on foreign policy was negligible.\textsuperscript{66}

The analyses coming from Yugoslavia in the wake of the crisis in Trieste and Venezià Giulia in late May 1945 were especially strong. The Chargé in Yugoslavia, Harold Shantz, reported to the State Department on September 27, 1945 that

\begin{quote}
[...]he regime and its chief public agency, the 'National Front,' are in effect tools of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Tito is an agent of Moscow. ... There is no sadder commentary upon the situation than remarks of people who defied Nazi military might at its peak that 'perhaps Hitler was right after all.' On all sides one hears that in comparison with Ozna the Gestapo was [a] mild institution.
\end{quote}


Six weeks later in another telegram to the Department of State Shantz referred to Tito’s regime as a “totalitarian regime.”

In August and September several alarming reports came from Bulgaria. The Representative there, Maynard Barnes, warned that further inactivity on the part of the United States would be detrimental to the growth of democratic conditions in the country:

[The determination of FF [Fatherland Front] to continue with its projected Hitlerite plebiscite described by them as general elections, and failure of US and UK so far to make any open protests against this project are pointed to by FF supporters, both Bulgarians and Russians, as proof of in consequence of words as compared to acts.]

On another occasion Barnes characterized the Fatherland Front government as “a police Gov[ernmen]t of [the] type that formerly ruled their [the Bulgarian people’s] destinies, the main difference between present regime and the former one being merely that masters of today look to Moscow for guidance and inspiration instead of to Berlin.” From his official mission in Eastern Europe on November 6, the reporter Mark Ethridge speculated in a report regarding the transition from Nazi rule to a left-wing government in Bulgaria:

“It [the transition] could have been, however, much less bloody and it [Bulgaria] could have made the transition without swapping [a] Fascist dictatorship for left-wing authoritarianism.” Three weeks later, on November 26, he used even stronger language:

The position of the Western Democracies is disintegrating fast, the Russian position becoming stronger all the time, and unless we can take firm and effective actions in Rumania it will soon be too late. ... Groza and Tătărescu are the complete servants of Russia in the delivery of Rumania into the hands of a dictatorship army [which] certainly is worse by universal agreement than the German occupation. ... I am only trying now to indicate the urgency of the Rumanian situation ... that continued failure on our part to insist upon the application of our announced principles can only result in their [the Rumanians’] being driven to communism, which is repulsive to them.

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68 Barnes in FRUS, 1945, vol. 4, p. 282 (Nov. 8, 1945).
69 Barnes in FRUS, 1945, vol. 4, p. 290f. (Aug. 16, 1945). Ethridge in ibid., p. 365 (Nov. 6, 1945) and pp. 627, 629, 630 (Nov. 26, 1945). Petru Groza was leader of the forcefully installed pro-communist government in Rumania, Gheorghe Tătărescu was the former Rumanian prime minister who failed to stem the Fascist tide in 1938-40. Mentioning him was also an analogy that brought back the Munich experience and the idea of aggression unchecked is aggression unleashed.
Ethridge combined in this memorandum two different functions of the Nazi-Soviet comparison: first he used it to analyze the situation (Russian occupation army is worse than German occupation army was) and then follows up with policy recommendation that is based upon this finding. Even though he did not mention Munich directly he advises the State Department not to engage in appeasing the Russian occupational forces but to “insist upon the application” of national self-determination in order to avoid a Communist takeover in Rumania.

Reporting on the upcoming elections in Bulgaria, Maynard Barnes reminded the State Department on November 14 that “Vyshinski [Assistant People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs, USSR] has for some time now made it clear to local gov[emmen]t and to Rumanian Gov[emmen]t as well that Russia will not cede one iota in the Balkans.” Finally, adding his proposal for a solution to the problem of elections in Bulgaria, but also on a more general level, Barnes wrote on December 13: “My experience with Russians in the field … leads me to believe that Russian authorities object far less to strong determined support of a positive course of action than to detailed and reasoned statements of what is wrong with a given situation.”

Reporting from Warsaw on November 13, 1945, Arthur Bliss Lane advised regarding the possible extension of credit to Poland: “If we should now relax in our resistance to the spread of totalitarian measures (as an extension of credit would be interpreted), we would not succeed in fulfilling our publicly expressed policy—maintenance of a strong, free and independent Poland.” His argument, in his memoirs under the headline of “Financial Appeasement,” supported the *quid pro quo* approach that found increasingly more support

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70 Barnes on Vyshinski in *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 4, p. 379, the characteristic “iota”-formulation would reappear in a telegram by George Kennan to the State Department on February 8, 1946, see *FRUS*, 1946, vol. 6, p. 694. Barnes on how to handle Soviet authorities on December 13, in *FRUS*, 1945, vol. 4, pp. 411f.
71 Lane in Lane, *I Saw Poland Betrayed*, p. 229.
in Washington. According to this approach concessions to the Soviets should be made only on a mutual basis so as not to engage in a one-sided agreement with a totalitarian power (Soviet Union)—much like the British and French had allowed this to happen in Munich.

The diplomats in Eastern Europe warned that, as they estimated the developments there on the basis of their first-hand observations, the new governments looked much like those formerly under Nazi rule. Herefore they used analogy, schema, and comparison to analyze the situation. Their analyses left no doubt that the Soviet Union was the driving force behind recent developments. When they made a specific policy recommendation in combination with analogy, schema, or comparison they always arrived at one conclusion. Only a strong and moralistic stand, backed up by political and military force, would be recognized by the new Communist rulers. Only by a display of strength could the United States gain acceptance of its demands for more democracy. Economic aid was to be used as a lever, much as Byrnes had tried (unsuccessfully) to use the atomic bomb during the September meetings 1945 in London to make the Soviets yield on Eastern Europe. There must be no second appeasement as in Munich in 1938.

A significant number of the reports coming out of Eastern Europe, especially those from the Soviet Union, dealt with repressive domestic measures by Soviet occupiers and agitators that were considered similar to the Nazi experience by diplomats who reported to Washington. This was conform with how the Nazi-Soviet parallels during the 1930’s had been discussed. However, the lessons drawn from those reports were on a different level: they expressed concern over the totalitarian foreign policy attitude of the Soviet Union. Here the link to Nazi Germany is illuminating for it provides the model for this sort of conclusion. Hitler’s totalitarian behavior in domestic affairs had been accompanied

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by a totalitarian and aggressively expansionist foreign policy. This pattern was translated into the post-war relations between the United States and the Soviet Union. While the Soviets' totalitarian domestic policy served as a real identification mark that allowed for the use of the analogy, the foreign policy conclusion was inferred from the model—Nazi Germany. Only to a very limited degree were higher level Washington officials concerned about the infringement of personal liberties in Eastern Europe. They were too far removed from the scene—in terms of distance and experience. Yet, their main concern was the Soviet Union’s aggressive expansionist thrust that would overturn the balance of power in Europe and also on a world-wide scale. In a speech delivered before the Herald Tribune Forum in New York on October 31, 1945, Secretary Byrnes explained his understanding of this problem:

We have learned by bitter experience in the past ten years that Nazi and Fascist plans for external aggression started with aggression at home which were falsely defended as matters of purely local concern. We have learned that tyranny anywhere must be watched, for it may come to threaten the security of neighboring nations and soon become the concern of all nations.

To understand the attitude behind this statement we have to keep in mind the disappointing experience Byrnes had had in London at the Council of Foreign Ministers meeting one month earlier. He had gone there bent on using the atomic bomb as a lever in the talks to make the Soviets more manageable in the question of the final peace treaties in Eastern Europe and the resulting scheduling of free and unfettered elections there. However, he discovered that the Soviet delegation in London, headed by Molotov (“Sledge

73 This kind of inferred conclusions in the context of analogical reasoning is best explained in the abstract formula: $AX \leftrightarrow BX \leftrightarrow FY$. In an example, appeasement in Munich (A) occurred as a result of Western indolence (X). Appeasement after World War II (B) is also occurring as a result of Western indolence (X). Appeasement in Munich (A) resulted in war (F). Therefore appeasement after World War II (B) will also result in a world war (F). The unknown consequences of appeasement after World War II (B)15) are inferred through the analogy to Munich. This passage is modified from an example given in Khong, Analogies at War, p. 7. Also ibid, pp. 217ff. For a typical case of inferral in a pertinent setting see Gilovich, “Seeing the Past in the Present,” p. 805f.

Hammer”), would not yield. In combination with his later experience at the meeting in Moscow in late December, this experience was to alter seriously his outlook on the American negotiating position. At the time of this speech though, he was still a supporter of what historian Daniel Yergin called the Riga axiom.75

In the meantime the administration continued to search for a policy toward the Soviet Union. Truman had not made a commitment either for or against cooperation with Moscow. Yet, on several occasions he had expressed his apprehension about Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe and at the conference table. In the debate over the international control of atomic energy in late 1945, for example, Truman took a firm position that displayed his suspicions of the Soviet Union. As early as October 8, 1945, he declared that he was not willing to share the alleged secret of the bomb with the Soviets, hence agreeing to an approach supported by Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, Byrnes, and General Leslie Groves. Truman based his approach of non-cooperation on the idea that no agreement at all was better than a compromising agreement. Here again the Munich analogy informed policy makers’ decision. At Munich, according to this interpretation, Chamberlain and Daladier had given in to get peace and had ended up getting war. Hence it would be better not to engage in bartering with the Soviets since, as all the messages from Eastern Europe clearly showed, Soviet Communism closely resembled Nazi Fascism. Instead the United States would be well advised to make very clear to Moscow that the rules for any negotiations would be set by Washington.76

75 For Byrnes’ intention on using the bomb to get concessions from the Soviets see Gregg Herken, The Winning Weapon: The Atomic Bomb in the Cold War, 1945-1950, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1980, p. 47ff. After London Byrnes remarked that the Russians are “stubborn, obstinate, and they don’t scare.” Ibid, p. 53. Riga axiom in Yergin, Shattered Peace, p. 11. Yergin argues that the Riga axiom, represented by the American representatives in Riga who supported an assertive course against the Soviets, was opposing the Yalta axiom. The latter was represented first and foremost by Roosevelt and incorporated the view that cooperative agreements like that of Yalta would be the harbinger of post-war peace.

Given Byrnes’ own preference for a strong stand against the demands of the Soviet Union in late 1945, he should have been expected to jump on the bandwagon of those who issued warnings from Eastern Europe. He could have made good use of their arguments against alleged ‘ appeasers’ such as Henry Stimson or Henry Wallace. Also Truman’s new course, indicated by the statement on atomic energy, should have suited him well. But the disappointing results of the London Foreign Ministers’ Council began to influence him by late November into trying a different, more accommodating approach. Noticing this change in Byrnes’ approach to the Soviets, Vandenberg jotted in his diary in November 1945: “Jimmy (who helped surrender at Yalta) comes back in! ... Now we lose him [Stettnius with his tough stand]--and get back Byrnes and Yalta! Oh, well .”

Byrnes’ new approach toward the Soviet Union was based on the idea that if he could not scare the Soviets by using the atomic bomb as a threat, he should try to use it as a promise in the negotiations. The idea was to cut a deal with the Soviets, barter, make concessions and offer positive motivation--the carrot instead of the stick. This was almost a complete revision of the no-more-Munich argument, for Byrnes was now willing to make concessions. Inspired by this idea he arranged for an almost extemporaneous Foreign Ministers Conference in Moscow for late December 1945. While Truman tended toward what would become known as the “hawkish” position, Byrnes seemed to take the opposite stance toward a more “dovish” position.

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78 Byrnes on his new approach and the idea of the Moscow CFM conference in Byrnes, Speaking Frankly, pp. 107, 109. Also Kennan, Memoirs, pp. 287f. The negotiating style in Moscow was indeed reminiscent of the war times: one-on-one meetings that resembled the Rooseveltian Grand Design of Soviet-American cooperation, see Robert Murphy, Diplomat Among Warriors, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1964, p. 301.
The idea of the Munich analogy as applicable to the situation with the Soviet Union was also fairly alive in public discussions in the second half of 1945. In the August 2, 1945 *Town Meeting of the Air*, a popular weekly Radio talk show sponsored and reprinted by conservative *Reader’s Digest*, the topic was “How can Russia and America Live in Peace.” The Moderator, Hans V. Kaltenborn, remarked in the beginning that “if we appease too much, we may stir others into aggression.” One of the guests on the show, William Lindsay White, author of *Report on the Russians* (1945), reminded the audience that “we should remember that, carried beyond a certain point, concessions can bring war instead of peace. I hope the world learned that at Munich.” In another *Town Meeting* on October 18, on a similar subject Kaltenborn cited the Soviets’ insistence on “a news black-out and a totalitarian Europe” as reasons for the American mistrust of the Soviets. “Russia has insisted on setting up totalitarian governments in liberated Europe.” One question that came from the audience during this broadcast was: “Do you think that . . . the United States should continue to compromise our fundamental principles and appease Soviet totalitarianism?” The immediate response by Kaltenborn was that “[w]hen you mention appeasement you bring back very unhappy memories of Munich.” This exchange suggests the presence of the Munich experience and a the link between appeasement and Munich in the minds of the people.79

The *New York Times*, which had grown increasingly sceptical of the Soviet system since early 1944, also did not hesitate to report on criticism of Soviet totalitarianism. First in October and again in late December 1945, the *New York Times* ran front page leaders on the official Roman Catholic position toward the Soviet Union as voiced by Pope Pius XII. Under the headline “Pope Urges Women to Vote and Scorn ‘Totalitarian’ Lure” the

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79 *Town Meeting Bulletin*, vol. 11, No. 14, August 2, 1945, pp. 3, 8. *Town Meeting Bulletin*, vol. 11, No. 25, October 18, 1945, pp. 4, 5, 19. The tone of this question may sound scripted at first, however, upon reading through several issues of the *Bulletin* it is apparent that it is representative of the general phrasing on this forum.
Times wrote: “the Pope warned that ... some totalitarian systems dangled marvelous promises before her [the woman’s] eyes, including equal rights with men.” Quoting the Pope literally the article went on: “In the concessions made to women one can easily see not respect for her dignity or her mission but an attempt to foster the economic and military power of the totalitarian state.” The allusion to the Soviet Union, where women had a right to a paying job, could not be missed. Reporting on the Pope’s annual Christmas allocution the Times quoted Pius XII on December 25, 1945: “the fabric of peace ... would rest on a tottering and ever-threatening base if an end were not put to such totalitarianism.” Again, in the context of the speech it becomes clear that the Pope was talking about Communism.80

On the Protestant side Reinhold Niebuhr wrote in 1945 in Discerning the Signs of the Time, published in 1946, that “there have been many wielders of power ... who have been better than the Nazi tyrants and yet have not been just enough to grant real justice to the weak.” He drew attention to the “totalitarian aspects of the Russian régime,” that “obscure[d] the genuine achievements of Russian egalitarianism.”81 Niebuhr was obviously less critical of the Soviet Communists than the Pope, drawing attention to the “genuine” and thereby positive “achievements” made in the Soviet Union regarding social justice. Still he could not abstain to identify the Soviet system as being totalitarian.

The similarity of Nazism and Communism was also being debated in other forms besides the public media. Repeated reference to this idea appear in the diaries of policy makers as well as in memoranda and other notes. Henry Wallace, for one, wrote in his


diary on October 25, 1945, reflecting upon a dinner with Joseph Alsop and others: “I said [to Joseph Alsop] that … we didn’t need to have the fear of Russia hanging over us like we had the fear of Nazi Germany hanging over us.” Alsop did not think this was true.82 Another revealing estimate can be found in the Forrestal diaries, where the Secretary of the Navy penned his thought about the Soviets regarding the possible dissemination of atomic knowledge on September 21, 1945:

The Russians, like the Japanese, are essentially Oriental in their thinking, and until we have a longer record of experience with them on the validity of engagements … it seems doubtful that we should endeavor their understanding and sympathy. We tried that once with Hitler. There are no returns on appeasement.83

Given Forrestal’s extreme anticommmunism it is not too astonishing to learn that as early as May 1945 he had commissioned a “research paper to show whether Stalin was, or was not, likely to be a military oppressor on the pattern of Hitler and Mussolini.”84 The researcher was to be Dr. E. F. Willett, professor of economics at Smith College and a personal friend of Forrestal.

It was a well-known fact in the State Department that the American representatives in Eastern Europe were predisposed against Communism. Therefore in late 1945 both Byrnes and Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who at that time still stood for a conciliatory approach with the Soviet Union, obviously felt they needed additional information about the situation in Eastern Europe and what was to be expected from the Soviet Union. Consequently both commissioned official studies on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. In the fall of 1945 Acheson asked Geroid T. Robinson, Chief of the USSR Division of the Interim Research and Intelligence Service to conduct a study on Soviet foreign policy, which Robinson submitted on December 10 to Charles Bohlen. Robinson argued that

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83 Forrestal in Mills, The Forrestal Diaries, pp. 95f.
there was no reason to expect the Soviet leadership to be “irrevocably committed to a policy of expansion facilitated by revolution.” The study underlined the administration’s irresolute policy, not giving clear advice toward a tougher stand against the Soviets. A more assertive course was recommended by another study, “Foreign Policy of the United States.” This study recommended that Bulgaria and Rumania not be recognized because of the “totalitarian political regimes” established there under Soviet control. Finally, the report commissioned by Byrnes and conducted by Mark Ethridge in late 1945, confirmed the reports sent earlier from Eastern Europe. In fact, the Ethridge report reinforced the point made in the earlier studies by arguing that while the United States had kept its pledges made at Yalta regarding the right for political self-determination, the Soviets had not.

The irony in the Ethridge report lies in the fact that Byrnes had actually hoped to hear the opposite. The Secretary sensed that the diplomats reporting to him were overly prejudiced against the Soviet Union. As a matter of fact, Byrnes did not trust his own department. In order to get an undistorted picture he decided to send Ethridge to Rumania and Bulgaria. The liberal newspaperman from the Louisville Courier-Journal was to go there without having read the telegrams and memoranda from the US-representatives in Eastern Europe. His report should be wholly unbiased and should represent to Americans as well as Soviets a new attempt at getting the bilateral relations going again. However, all this backfired when the final report arrived on December 8, 1945. Byrnes decided thereupon to withhold the report from the public and even the president until after the upcoming Foreign Ministers’ Conference in Moscow. He did not want the report to

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86 “Foreign Policy of the United States” in FRUS, 1946, vol. 1, pp. 1134-36, see also comments in Millis, The Forrestal Diaries, pp. 126f.
influence any agreement in Moscow or to alienate Molotov, with whom Byrnes was hoping to cut a deal. When Truman found out about the report—Charles Bohlen had passed it on to him shortly after Byrnes’ departure for Moscow—he was furious at the insubordination of his Secretary of State. How could Byrnes dare to withhold a document so urgently needed for the formation of America’s foreign policy toward the Soviet Union? Furthermore, how could Byrnes dare to dissipate Congressional goodwill toward the president by exposing himself to criticism of being an ‘appeaser’ in Moscow? After the president’s failed initiative in October 1945 to get Universal Military Training passed it was of utmost importance for Truman to regain Congressional backing.  

Besides neglecting to inform Truman of the Ethridge report, Byrnes had literally ignored an order by the president, issued under pressure from Senators Vandenberg (R/Michigan) and Connally (D/Texas). Concerned that Byrnes was about to lean too far out of the window, the two Senators demanded a reassurance that any agreement in Moscow would be cleared by Washington beforehand. Byrnes, however, did not comply to Truman’s request to do so. Even more important, there was also a growing tension between Truman and Byrnes. The president wanted Eastern Europe and Iran to be discussed in Moscow. Especially the latter was giving him sleepless nights after the Soviets still had not given any indications to withdraw their troops as they had promised the British and the United States at the meeting in London. Also the Soviets were “stir[ring] up rebellion” in northern Iran which worked counter the nationalist government in Teheran. Yet Byrnes had applied his conciliatory approach on atomic energy and on the ground rules in the United Nations Security Council regarding the veto. Truman felt that on the atomic issue he had made his position sufficiently clear in October (see p. 44) and that

there were more important issues at the moment. When Byrnes returned to Washington
the president gave him a sharp lecture on who would set the policy on what premises.
From now on Byrnes had the irresistible feeling that someone had turned the President
against him. In the course of this dawning split between Byrnes and Truman, which is
reflective of two different approaches on the problem of how to establish a foreign policy
toward the Soviet Union, the president tended to move more to the no-concessions
coalition.89

It could well be that Byrnes was right in his feeling that his name had been blackened.
During the last months of 1945 close advisors to the President vocally supported a harder
line toward the Soviet Union. For instance Admiral William D. Leahy, who sensed
“communistically inclined advisors in [the State] Department,” urged the president to
take an assertive stand against likely Soviet expansionism and the resulting successive
communication of the world. His warning also implied that it would be wise to withdraw
some of the policy making power from Byrnes and the State Department. Secretary of the
Navy James Forrestal was also not demure in expressing to the public his view that only a
strong and morally principled policy could prevent “future Hitlers and future Tojos to
embark on paths of lunacy” and a third World War. A third source influencing the
president was White House assistant Clark Clifford, who had drafted the message in
which Truman had asked Congress for support of Universal Military Training. As Clifford’s
draft notes for this message reveal, his opinion was also informed by the Munich analogy:
“[o]ur unpreparedness had failed to prevent last two wars. Let’s not make same mistake.”90

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89 On the Moscow episode see Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, pp. 77-91, quote on p. 89. On Connally and
In an unsent letter to Byrnes dated January 6, 1946, Truman made clear his intention not to compromise
on Iran, Bulgaria & Rumania and other issues. He used this letter as a basis for his lecture to Byrnes, see
Herken, *The Winning Weapon*, p. 88. The letter itself is in Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The*
The months immediately after the end of the war were characterized by the failure of the administration to devise a clear policy toward the Soviet Union. The war alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union needed to be reconsidered, since its purpose, the defeat of Germany, no longer existed. While the American policy toward the Soviet Union had always had a suspicious element, this now seemed more and more to be the case. But nevertheless, all opportunities needed to be considered. Analogies, schemas and comparisons linking the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany were highly present in public media and in the reports that American diplomats sent from Eastern Europe to Washington.

It is obvious that the administration, unwilling or incapable to commit itself to a policy, did not pick up the analogies that had been used by the diplomats writing from Eastern Europe and in the American press. On the one hand we find sufficient reports in the public media to show that there was indeed a debate in American society about postwar relations with the Soviet Union that included analogical reasoning and schemas as we have seen. Also American diplomats were not demure in linking the Soviet Union to Nazi Germany in their reports. Yet, on the other hand, this discussion was not reflected with the same intensity on the level of top administrative policy makers. The newspapers, magazines and reports reached the administrative level (President, Secretary of State) where they seemed to have no impact.91

Toward the end of 1945, however, two important things began to influence the formation of an American policy toward the Soviet Union. First, current events left the president increasingly apprehensive about the chances for a peaceful cooperation with the Soviets. Foremost among these events were the pending crisis in Iran and the obstructionist

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91 It has to be left to further research in the private paper collections to verify this assumption. What is suggested by the documents that were available indicates that members of the administration were aware of the analogies but decided not to incorporate them into their official position. On the vague policy towards the Soviet Union see also Lifka, *The Concept “Totalitarianism,”* p. 381.
behavior of the Communists in Eastern Europe, where free elections were either bridled by Communists or if held, were not free at all and far from representative of the will of the people.

Second, Secretary of State Byrnes, who formerly was a supporter of what Henry Wallace later would call the “get-tough-with-Russia boys in the State Department,” tried a more conciliatory approach in Moscow that did not find support in Washington. Truman was alienated by what he saw as Byrnes’ insubordination and became more sensitive to the congressional pressure exerted by a group of Senators who felt that Byrnes had gone too far in Moscow. Under these circumstances the use of strong analogies, such as Munich, appeasement or totalitarianism, if used referring to the Soviet Union, had a strong impact on the president’s formation of foreign policy. After all, the lessons of Munich and appeasement were still alive and needed no interpretation. Everybody knew what the lesson of appeasement was: aggression unchecked was aggression unleashed, and this must not happen again.

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Chapter 4:

Crucial Steps in the Formation of the Cold War Consensus—From Early 1946 Onward

In early 1946, the general political climate between the two emerging powers worsened significantly and Americans saw the analogy between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany more clearly than ever before. In fact, this time can be marked as one of the high phases of the Munich analogy. In the words of Melvyn Leffler, “[i]n early 1946, U.S. officials defined the Soviet Union as the enemy.” However, Leffler missed an important nuance when he argued that “once top officials identified the Kremlin as a totalitarian foe akin to Nazi Germany” they would feel “greater incentive to launch the initiatives that were designed to thwart the growth of Soviet power.” As I have shown, top officials were always exposed to the analogies that identified the Soviet Union with Nazi Germany. Nevertheless, it took policy makers up until the early months of 1946 to decide on their policy and make it public.

It was not only the history of events that caused American policy makers to subscribe to a tougher policy toward the Soviet Union, but also how they perceived and explained these events. With the Nazi-Soviet similarity established for several months, Americans—policy makers as well as the public—had a filter seen through which political events inevitably seemed to require a firm stand against the Soviet Union. Policy makers took

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93 The Holy Bible Containing the Old and New Testaments: Translated out of the Original Tongues, and with the Former Translations Diligently Compared and Revised, New York: American Bible Society, 1873.

94 Leffler, A Preponderance of Power, p. 100, my emphasis.
this firm stand only when they realized that they had a broad backing in Congress, among advisors and aides, and within the administration. This decision, then, is reflected in the increased use of analogies, schemas and Nazi-Soviet comparisons especially among top political decision makers when referring to the Soviet Union.

To illustrate the background of the following chapter a brief look at the events of early 1946 will be helpful. The winter of 1945/46 had left large parts of Europe close to starvation, providing fertile ground for the rise of radicalism and Communist ideas. Housing was in short supply because many cities, towns, and villages had been destroyed in the course of the war. Droves of displaced persons overtaxed the surviving infrastructure. Food rations were so low that survival was barely possible for many. In February 1946 German Communists began to champion unification. In France the resignation of de Gaulle in January 1946 resulted in the Communists’ gaining six ministries. In North Africa and Egypt disquiet spread, and the Soviets influenced developments in Iran. In Southeast Asia the colonial powers were deadlocked in negotiations with nationalist forces. The situation in Eastern Europe did not change either. In literally every country between Germany and the Soviet Union Communists had tried--more or less violently--to gain strong footholds. The perceived aggressive intentions of Communists all over the world seemed to be reflected in the Canadian exposure of the Gousenko atomic spy ring.95

On top of all that came Stalin’s election address on February 9, 1946, generally interpreted in the West as an announcement of further Soviet expansionism and the inevitability of war inherent in the systemic differences between the Communist and the

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Capitalist world. Stalin predicted that the Soviet Union would surpass the West in technology shortly. The administration interpreted this as a threat to the United States’ security since it implied the end of the atomic monopoly. At the same time it allowed for a stronger interpretation of the events listed above, especially the Canadian spy affair.  

While these were burning issues for policy makers, it was nevertheless clear that the administration had to take the lead in public. President Truman gave a vivid display of his resolution to take a firm stand in his 1946 State of the Union Message: “We shall refuse to recognize any government imposed upon any nation by the force of any foreign power. In some cases it may be impossible to prevent forceful imposition of such a government. But the United States will not recognize any such government.” Public opinion, however, viewed foreign problems as relatively unimportant compared to domestic issues like rising prices, labor unrest, or the speed of demobilization. As a matter of fact, the public again needed to be convinced that the administration’s preoccupation with foreign policy was for the good of the nation. This lack of interest in foreign policy was a reflection of the general yearning in the American public to go back to normalcy after half a generation of extraordinary political circumstances, beginning with the Great Depression and ending with V-J Day. The desire for normalcy and a concentration on national issues can also partially explain the slow acceptance in public of the ideas behind the Munich analogy and the totalitarianism schema. Had Americans more willingly agreed that the Soviet Union was resembling Nazi Germany they would have implied by the same token that a further polarization in international relations would have been inevitable. This, in turn, would have blocked the way of a national return to normalcy.  

Whenever American foreign policy toward the Soviet Union was being discussed and pushed into the focus of attention the public, as opposed to opinion leaders and political decision makers, tended more favorably to interpret Moscow’s motivations. Indicative thereof is a *Town Meeting of the Air* on April 1946. The former Ambassador to Austria and Bulgaria George Earle struck a heavy note when he thundered: “We conciliated Hitler. We appeased Hitler. Then we did it again, and we all know the Holocaust that resulted. Now we have a terror, a totalitarian menace, far greater than the Nazis—a Bolshevism and Russian imperialism combined that recognizes only force or threat of force.” The result was that at the end of the meeting the moderator announced that those in the audience guilty of “unpardonable hissing and booing” would not be welcome in Town Hall again.98

The liberal leftist *New Republic* was also aware of the Nazi comparison. However, the *New Republic* did not use it in reference to the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe but rather when reporting on Colonel Peron in Argentina. In the early months of 1946 all reports in the *New Republic* on Eastern Europe and Soviet Russia emphasized the democratic and peaceful character of the Communist intentions.99 Only in its section called “The Bandwagon,” a collection of quotes from other publications that were being ridiculed, the *New

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97 Truman in *Department of State Bulletin*, January 14, 1946, p. 138. Foreign problems were considered as most vital in October 1945 by 7 per cent, in February 1946 by 23 per cent, and in June 1946 by 11 per cent. Gabriel A. Almond, *The American People and Foreign Policy*. New York: Praeger, 1963, p. 73. At the same time most people thought that it would be best for the USA if she would play an active part in world affairs (72 per cent pro, 22 per cent con). “The Quarter’s Polls,” in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 10 (Spring, 1946), p. 116. This was an almost linear continuation of the war trend, see Hadley Cantril, *Opinion Trends in World War II: Some Guides to Interpretation*, *Public Opinion Quarterly*, vol. 12, Spring, 1948, p. 39. For an attempt by the administration to influence the public see Mills, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries*, p. 129. On the public’s willingness to compromise see Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power*, p. 54. Gleason, *Totalitarianism*, p. 68.


Republic cited Westbrook Pegler’s syndicated column: “[e]xcept in detail, the record there [in the Soviet Union] matches that of Adolf Hitler” In late March the leading article even deplored that “Soviet actions have been distorted until an obscene parallel has been drawn between the Soviet government and the Nazis.”

More conservative forums such as Newsweek, Life or Christianity and Crisis also sometimes reported on criticism of the new foreign policy toward the Soviet Union, even though they increasingly supported the administration’s course. Churchill’s Fulton speech, for example, was not uniformly greeted by the American public. The March 25 edition of Newsweek shows a picture of picketers who “scorn Churchill’s call for an Anglo-American stand on Russia,” depicting a sign comparing Hitler’s rhetoric to Churchill’s. Nonetheless, in early 1946 the Munich analogy and the appeasement schema appeared frequently in Newsweek. Reporting on Byrnes’ Moscow conference in December 1945, Newsweek wrote that Byrnes’ conciliatory approach on Manchuria and Japan was “sure to provide ammunition for those who were already calling the Far Eastern concession to Russia an ‘American Munich.’” One week later Newsweek reported that Admiral William D. Leahy recommended Byrnes’ resignation in connection with the same incident, citing the “continued appeasement of Russia” and the Secretary’s insubordination as reasons. Finally, writing on the London United Nations Conference in early 1946, Newsweek


102 Newsweek, January 7, 1946, “Moscow Results Clear the Air at Cost of Concessions to Russia,” p. 32.

remarked that the Soviet Union “intend[ed] to accomplish what Adolf Hitler failed to
do--reduce Britain’s voice in European affairs to that of Portugal.”\textsuperscript{104} While the Soviet
intentions were not portrayed as being too aggressive in those quotations, the comparison
between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, the use of the appeasement schema and the
Munich analogy nevertheless established a perspective which would lay the foundation
for a Cold War interpretation of future Soviet intentions. Furthermore, the explicit use of
the Munich analogy also implied a policy which would reduce the danger of having
history repeat itself. The implicit lesson was again that the United States must not appease
the Soviet Union as the British and French had appeased the Nazis in 1938. Therefore no
concessions must be made to the Soviet Union.

More popular publications like \textit{Life} often used the same rhetoric whenever foreign
policy issues were being touched upon. In its report on William Burton’s being sworn in
as Assistant Secretary of State \textit{Life} referred to the “modern totalitarianism under Mussolini,
Stalin and Hitler,” thereby making the link between the three as bold as possible.\textsuperscript{105} In its
article on the emerging American policy stand toward the Soviet Union, \textit{Life} highlighted
the “ominous analogies between Stalin’s behavior now and Hitler’s a decade ago” in
Churchill’s Iron Curtain speech (see p. 67).\textsuperscript{106} The same issue featured a long article by
former U.S. Ambassador to Great Britain, Joseph P. Kennedy (106-118), who warned:

\begin{quote}
In contrast to our apparent policy toward Russia, which seems to combine \textit{appeasement},
uncertainty, and double talk, Russia knows what she wants and does not hesitate to say
so. With her \textit{one-party dictatorship} and her military power relatively intact, she is in a
position to \textit{threaten and to act as best suits her purpose}. She is \textit{unhampered by accepted
standards of conduct}. She is prepared to seize upon every weakness or mistake of her
opponents.\textsuperscript{107}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{104} \textit{Newsweek}, February 4, 1946, “Power Block Threat Haunts UNO as Anglo-Soviet Interests Collide,” p. 34.
\textsuperscript{105} \textit{Life}, January 14, 1946, “William Benton,” p. 95. In 1946, \textit{Life} had a circulation of 3,865,241, see Ayer,
\textsuperscript{106} \textit{Life}, March 18, 1946, “‘Getting Tough’ With Russia,” p. 36.
\textsuperscript{107} Joseph P. Kennedy in \textit{Life}, March 18, 1946, “The U.S. and the World: To Prevent World War III We
Should ... Tell The Russians Exactly Where We Stand,” pp. 106-18, quote on page 115, emphasis added.
The image Kennedy drew was highly suggestive of the familiar traits of Nazi Germany: a
supporting illustration made unmistakably clear that Russian expansionism represented a
danger akin to the one formerly posed by Nazi Germany. It showed on four pictures
several cases where the Soviet Union wanted to expand her territory such as the Baltic
States, Finland, Poland, Bulgaria, Turkey, and the Kuriles. The result would be, as the
fifth picture suggested, that Soviet expansionist thrusts to the east and west would inevitably
have to meet on the American continent, evoking the fear of a Nazi invasion of the
United States during World War II.\textsuperscript{108}

On the more religious-intellectual side the magazine \textit{Christianity and Crisis}, edited by
Reinhold Niebuhr, argued in its leader on July 8, 1946 that calling the Soviets anti-fascists
was myopic, if not misleading: “Many evil features of the Soviet practice—imperialism,
repression, the fostering of revolution—have their parallels in the past and present democratic
practice; it is a matter of degree; with what right does the kettle call the pot black?”
Acknowledging the weakness of historical analogies, the article nevertheless warned that
“[a]ppeasement has been tried and found wanting.”\textsuperscript{109}

With increasing public backing for an assertive American foreign policy toward the
Soviet Union and given the distressing experience of the Moscow Council of Foreign
Ministers meeting, Truman must have realized that he could no longer afford to stay
aloof from the details of American foreign policy. Even more, he needed to watch his
Secretary of State if he wanted to retain control of foreign policy matters. To his famous
expression that he was “tired of babying the Soviets” Truman could have added “and my
Secretary of State.” At the same time, however, he knew that he had to dedicate the lion’s
share of his attention to pending domestic problems.\textsuperscript{110} Consequently Byrnes’ liberty to

\textsuperscript{108} Images in \textit{Life}, March 18, 1946, pp. 106f.
\textsuperscript{109} “Russia: The Central Issue,” in \textit{Christianity and Crisis}, vol. 6, No. 12 (July 8, 1946), pp. 1f.
\textsuperscript{110} “Tired of…” cited from Herken, \textit{The Winning Weapon}, p. 88. Gaddis, \textit{The United States and the Origins
conduct foreign policy was seriously curtailed by the president, while second-, third-, and fourth-ranking staff members in the State Department who supported an assertive course toward the Soviet Union rose in influence. On matters of foreign policy Truman began to rely increasingly on trusted advisors such as Admiral William Leahy, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, and White House aide Clark Clifford, all of whom strongly opposed Byrnes’ Moscow escapade.\textsuperscript{111}

It did not slip Byrnes’ attention that his position was eroding fast and he was seemingly eager to get back into the boat again. This in combination with Truman’s increased interest in the opinions of staunch anticommunists such as Leahy, Forrestal, and Clifford may account for the greater effectiveness that the already well-known analogies now gained in the formation of an administrative policy. Suddenly the voices were being heard that had been crying wolf for the last year or even longer. Among these voices were the American representatives in Eastern Europe as well as conservatives in the United States: Kennan, Barnes, Lane, Vandenberg, Forrestal, and Leahy, to name the most vocal ones. To be sure, the voices were getting louder, for they recognized two things: that they were being heard for the first time in the administration and that the symptoms of Soviet totalitarianism, of the similarity between Stalin’s Communism and Hitler’s Nazism, were rapidly growing.\textsuperscript{112}

One of the loudest voices from the field was again Maynard Barnes, reporting from Bulgaria. On January 13, 1946, he remarked, referring to the increasing influence that the Soviets had on the Bulgarian government: “Moscow had been quite as successful in impressing current crop of Bulgarian Ministers by mixture of flattery and display of pomp and circumstances as Hitler and his cohorts were with an earlier Bulgarian regime.”

\textsuperscript{111} On Leahy, Forrestal, and Clifford see Lifka, \textit{The Concept “Totalitarianism.”} pp. 413ff.

\textsuperscript{112} Lifka, \textit{The Concept “Totalitarianism,”} pp. 405ff.
Two days later he emphasized the sole responsibility of the Soviets for the desolate circumstances in Bulgaria, adding that “I am quite as fully convinced that further compromise on our part with respect to present day Balkan problem will prove as futile as efforts once made by Lord Runciman to solve a problem that similarly had been created by an outside influence.” He urged repeatedly that the United States needed to take a firm stand and limit the Communist influence on the local government or else the United States would make itself susceptible to allegations of appeasement.\footnote{Barnes in \textit{FRUS}, 1946, vol. 6, p. 49. Ibid., p. 54. Ibid., pp. 55-57, 62-64.} On February 2, General Crane, the American Representative on the Allied Control Commission in Bulgaria, sent a comprehensive report to Washington. In a resigned tone he recommended that the United States withdraw its representatives from the ACC if there were no improvements in Soviet-American cooperation, that is, if the Soviets would not stop their obstructionist behavior. As Crane stated: “[I] am afraid we are following policy of appeasement of late Mr. Chamberlain.” Barnes, again, seemed to be quite convinced that his earlier arguments were brilliant. On February 18 he quoted his earlier reference to the “gas house gang” (see p. 29).\footnote{Crane in \textit{FRUS}, 1946, vol. 6, p. 71. Barnes on gas house gang ibid., p. 77. Lord Runciman was sent by the British to Czechoslovakia in the summer of 1938 on a futile mission to negotiate between the Sudeten Germans and the Prague Government.} Here it becomes obvious that a shift away from the more ambiguous totalitarianism schema to the more unequivocal Munich analogy took place. Along with this went a stronger emphasis of a policy that would avert the danger of the rise to power of another expansionist power. The negative lesson of Munich—never again—was inseparably connected with the analogy and the lesson was readily understood by contemporaries.

Similar reports came from other countries. On February 8, the American Representative in Tirana Joseph E. Jacobs, reviewed the Albanian history of occupations over the last 300 years by the Turkish, Yugoslavs and Italians, followed by the Nazis. Now it would
be the “last chance to befriend the honest industrious people” that faced the “prospect [of] exploitation under fear and terror by Soviet imperialistic swashbucklers.” Writing from Hungary, Minister H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld observed on February 15: “It is increasingly evident that [the] USSR through successive and individually tentative steps bids fair to advance steadily in this area and elsewhere in Europe much as Nazi Germany advanced through the late thirties.”

One of the most eloquent writers from the East, who bridged the gap between analysis and advocacy of a policy was the Chargé in Moscow, George F. Kennan. He regularly received copies of all major telegrams sent from Eastern Europe to the State Department. From the aloof position of an observer from another century, as he would later characterize himself in his Memoirs, he authored several assessments that deserve being quoted. Concurring with Barnes that the Soviets aimed at dominating the Bulgarian government Kennan added on January 15: “In existing circumstances this means domination of Bulgarian internal affairs by a foreign-controlled minority employing totalitarian methods.” He warned on February 1, that if Washington did not intend to surrender to Soviet obstructionism in Albania and thereby to “reduce effectiveness and prestige of our Mission in Albania” prompt and firm action was imperative. It would be important to dispute “every detail of treatment which we find unacceptable and being prepared to back up our protests promptly and decisively with measures really disagreeable to Albanian regime.”

Kennan thus applied the lesson from Munich and advised Washington how to take a firm stand against the Communist intruders. On February 8, he cautioned that the Kremlin

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115 Davis in FRUS, 1946, vol. 6, p. 8.
117 Kennan, Memoirs, p. 8. This aloofness is reflected only in the style of Kennan’s depeches, not, however, in their content. Here he was very much the contemporary of his time, as he was very much involved and engaged.
would be ready to force the Soviet people and other subordinate people into accepting its concept of democracy “without relaxing one iota of its totalitarian power,” thus picking up the characteristic “iota”-formulation from Barnes (see p. 41). 119

Of course the most famous of Kennan’s messages that originated in the early months of 1946 is the so-called Long Telegram. It was a solicited statement on his interpretation of Soviet foreign policy. Here he did not stop by arguing on behalf of the similarity between Nazism and Communism. Communism was even worse than Nazism, he argued, since “Soviet power, unlike that of Hitlerite Germany, is neither schematic nor adventurous. It does not work by fixed plans.” Therefore it would be almost impossible to predict Moscow’s next move in order to counteract accordingly or, even better, to forestall Moscow’s actions. Beyond that he also rationalized what Washington officials had been taking for granted for years, maybe without even noticing: the conclusion that a totalitarian domestic conduct automatically implied a totalitarian foreign policy: “[t]he Soviet party line is not based on any objective of the situation beyond Russia’s borders; that it has, indeed, little to do with conditions outside Russia; that it arises mainly from basic inner Russian necessities which existed before recent war and exist today.” 120 His argument was that internal totalitarianism, in fact, caused the recent problems between the Soviet Union and the United States. Hence, internal and external totalitarianism were two sides of the same coin and would always come in the double pack. As we have seen before, this was no news to Washington.

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119 Kennan’s “iota” formulation in FRUS, 1946, vol. 6, p. 694.
It is worth noting that some of the assessments that included analogical reasoning, such as that by Schoenfeld on Hungary or Kennan on Bulgaria just quoted, were clearly meant to analyze the situations in the respective countries. By using analogies they meant to gain a better understanding of the dimension of the developments under way. Of course they also intended to advocate a policy that would remedy the dilemma, but unless explicitly stated that was of secondary intent. A policy was usually only recommended by implication. Mentioning Munich always implied ‘no more appeasement.’ Still, from the assessments one can not infer without doubt that the authors were aware of the different motivations—to analyze the situation and to advocate a policy—and the different uses of analogies. As a matter of fact, analysis and advocacy are so closely intertwined that it requires very close reading to separate them.

Besides the reports from the field, authored by diplomats with more or less first-hand experience of what they pondered, there was always a second source for the State Department to refer to: studies that emanated from the hands of Washington-based authors who rarely had more than a theoretical knowledge of what they were writing about. Among those studies whose authors could not draw on actual experience in Eastern Europe was a report that Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal had commissioned in May 1945 (see p. 48). The author, Dr. Willett, submitted the 43-page memorandum on January 14, 1946, entitled “Dialectical Materialism and Russian Objectives.” Willett concluded that war with the Soviet Union was inescapable and that therefore the United States needed to establish a position of strength that would make aggressive interference in its sphere of interests suicidal for any foreign power. He cautioned that

[a]n interesting parallel can be drawn between our relations with Soviet Russia and those with Nazi Germany. For many years, Americans were ignorant of the basic aims of each, and in the threats involved in those aims. When the period of ignorance ended, we showed an unwillingness to believe the stated objectives of each. We were all too ready to listen to protestations of appeasement and abandonment of hostile intent. The end of the Nazi story has been written, we hope. The end of the Communist story lies in the future. … Totalitarianism and Democracy will always be basically opposed, regardless
of the social and economic structures behind them. The existence of each is a threat to
that of the other.  

Forrestal must have been deeply impressed by Kennan’s and Willett’s conclusions
since he ordered the maxims of the Long Telegram to be incorporated into the strategic
analyses of the Navy. Together with Secretary of War Patterson, General Eisenhower,
and General Spaatz, he gave the president a briefing on “An Intelligence View of the
International Situation” on March 7. It included the views communicated in the Long
Telegram as well as those of the Willett report.

Only nine days before the briefing, on February 27, Senator Vandenberg had given a
major speech in the Senate on the London United Nations meeting, addressing current
problems of Soviet-American cooperation. He had reminded his Senate colleagues that
“[t]here is a line beyond which compromise cannot go--even if we once crossed that line
under the pressure of the exigencies of war.” His conclusion was that America needed to
take a firm and principled stand on the side of “[w]hat is right? Where is justice?” This
speech was his response to the growing attitude of getting-tough-with-the-Russians. He
supported it boldly, asking the rhetorical question of “what is Russia up to?”

One day later, Secretary of State Byrnes delivered an even stronger speech before the
Overseas Press Club in New York. He took the opportunity to revise his image as an
‘appeaser’ that had resulted from his Moscow escapade and to signal his return to what
would become the official position of the administration: “we cannot allow aggression to
be accomplished by coercion or pressure or subterfuges such as political infiltration. …

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42, 48f. Forrestal sent copies of the study to Bernard Baruch, Admiral Leahy, Walter Lippmann, James
Byrnes, Clark Clifford, Robert Patterson, and George Marshall, see Lifka, The Concept “Totalitarianism,”
p. 414. See also Davis, Postwar Defense Policy and the U.S. Navy, pp. 221f., and Millis, ed., The
Forrestal Diaries, pp. 127f.


123 On the briefing see Lifka, The Concept “Totalitarianism,” p. 415. The full text of Vandenberg’s speech
can be found in the New York Times, February 28, 1946, p. 4.
We will not and we cannot stand aloof if force or the threat of force is used contrary to the purpose and principles of the [UN-] Charter.” In these words not only the memories of Nazi coercion or pressure or subterfuges were implied, but also the whole lesson of Munich, as it was understood by Byrnes and others at that time: the United States could not let another aggressive power go unchecked or else it would find itself in another World War. There was, even without explicit mentioning, hardly any doubt as to who this aggressive power would be. The allusions to Manchuria, Iran, Eastern Europe, Turkey, Greece, Korea and other countries could hardly be misunderstood by contemporaries. Senator Vandenberg vividly characterized the events since the war in a letter to John Foster Dulles in early March 1946:

F.D.R. was always ‘at Munich’ when he held these conferences [with the Soviets]. ... So-o-o-o-—Joey [Stalin] came to feel that all he had to do was to ‘stay tough’ and he could control all dotted lines. And damned if he didn’t! He has got to be ‘unlearned’ of that false lesson. We started teaching him in San Francisco. You added immensely to his knowledge in London last fall. Then Jimmy [Bynes] cancelled it all out upon the occasion of his last humiliating pilgrimage to Moscow. But we retrieved some ground at London [UN Conference] this winter—-and Jimmy valiantly recaptured more ground in New York [Overseas Press Club speech] last week.  

The speeches by Vandenberg and Byrnes were the verbal manifestations of the long-awaited American foreign policy statement. For the first time since the end of the war the Truman administration took a firm foreign policy position. The two speeches were closely followed by a speech Winston Churchill, now a private citizen, gave on March 5, 1946 in Fulton, Missouri. He publicly coined the term “Iron Curtain” in reference to the Soviet Union, thus evoking its totalitarian image. To be able to counteract the expansionist tendencies of the Soviet regime he called for an Anglo-Saxon military alliance. By accompanying Churchill the American President implicitly endorsed the principles of this

\[\text{124} \text{The full text of Byrnes' speech can be found in the } \text{New York Times, March 1, 1946, p. 10. Truman had cleared the speech in advance. Further background on the timing of the two speeches as well as on the Iron Curtain speech in Gaddis, The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, pp. 306ff.} \]

\[\text{125} \text{Cited in Lifka, The Concept "Totalitarianism," pp. 427f.}\]
speech that conformed with what the Secretary of State and the Michigan Senator had said only days earlier. Now Munich was omnipresent, the borderline between appeasement and a principled stand was staked out and the administrative policy was clear. It would be implemented for the first time, as a dress rehearsal, in the Turkish and the Iranian crises.\textsuperscript{126}

The Turkish crisis had a long history, the basic core of which was that the Soviet Union wanted to get access to the Mediterranean through the Black Sea by gaining control over the Bosporus and the Dardanelles. For the United States this was altogether unacceptable for it would have jeopardized Western control over the Eastern Mediterranean and endangered oil sources in the Middle East. The Iranian crisis had its roots in the Iranian occupation that had begun on August 25, 1941. British and Soviet troops had been stationed there to keep the rich oil sources from falling into German hands. In the Tripartite Treaty of Alliance, signed on January 29, 1942 in Teheran between the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, and Iran, the signers agreed to have the troops withdrawn from Iran no later than six months after an “armistice or peace between the Allied Powers and Germany and her associates, whichever was the earlier.”\textsuperscript{127} In the London Foreign Ministers Conference, Bevin and Molotov had renewed this commitment. However, after the war the Soviets made no move to indicate their willingness to withdraw their troops. Since November 1945 they had supported leftist insurgents in the north Iranian province of Azerbaijan and prevented Iranian nationalist troops from dealing with the rebellion.


Finally, the Soviets had set up a Communist puppet party, the Tudeh, which was rapidly gaining strength. Already in December 1945, Acting Secretary of State Acheson had advised Harriman, based on information from the Iranian Ambassador, that unless the United States took a “strong stand” in Iran “Munich would be repeated and Azerbaijan would prove to have been the first shot fired in the third world war.”²⁸ Acheson’s use of the Munich analogy was not only meant to advocate a policy he thought to be appropriate, it also had a certain analytical dimension in so far as the analogy helped to identify Iran as a case of Soviet aggression similar to the one that led to the Munich conference.

Byrnes, determined to shake off the image of “loitering around Munich,” made Iran the test case of his new audacity. He must have realized that his public standing had suffered significantly since the Moscow meeting in December. Hence he had no difficulty reverting to the get-tough-school and ending his three month attempt in conciliating the Soviets. What Vandenberg and Byrnes had said in their speeches in late February would now have to be translated into policy for the first time. Iran would not be another Munich. The president ordered the battleship USS Missouri with a task force to the Mediterranean to back up the new policy. It was a response to Iran in particular and the Mediterranean in general, meant to indicate the American readiness to act boldly as well as to support British interests in Europe and elsewhere. Officially Truman camouflaged it as a gesture to honor the deceased Turkish Ambassador to Washington, but both Soviet and American analysts were well able to read between the lines. And read they did. By early April the Soviet Union and Iran announced that the withdrawal of the Soviet troops was scheduled to be completed within the next six weeks. The new policy seemed to work. Informed by the Munich analogy Soviet expansion into Iran not only had been stopped but effectively

²⁸ FRUS, 1946, vol. 8, Dec. 21, 1945, p. 508. Newer research shows that the Soviet Union was indeed only concerned about its security, mainly regarding the rich oil sources in Baku, viewing Iran as its underbelly (the picture of an armadillo comes to mind). See Zabok & Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War, pp. 121f., On Stalin’s limited goals in Iran see ibid., p. 45.
contained, thus setting a precedent for further cases where containment would seem the adequate answer to Soviet expansionism.\footnote{129} While the president was obviously committed to his new policy toward the Soviet Union, he seemed not inclined to take position regarding this policy in the press. In virtually every news conference he gave in the early months of 1946 he either declined to give any comment at all---on “America’s unholy fear of Russia”, the Churchill Speech, and Iran---or said that America’s “relations with Russia are as cordial as they have always been. When two horse traders get to bargaining, they sometimes get very rough with each other, but they hardly ever wind up in a fist fight. They usually make a trade. That is what we propose to do with Russia.”\footnote{130} However, no documents came to my knowledge that would support that the President was at odds with Byrnes, Vandenberg, or other supporters of a strong position against the Soviets. Truman also did not protest the news coverage about American-Soviet relations, which overwhelmingly supported the administration’s tough course on the Soviet Union by March 1946. \textit{Newsweek}, for example, wrote in its March 11 edition: “[t]he many Americans the question is not why ‘appeasement of Russia’ has been dropped, but why it was adopted in the first place.”\footnote{131} So while on the one hand, as we have seen earlier, Truman was committed to a consistent foreign policy toward the Soviet Union by early 1946, on the other hand he did not want to confess to this policy in public. The conclusion can only be that Truman dodged questions about the Soviet-American relations to retain some degree of flexibility, to avoid being nailed to one policy. However,\footnote{129} “Loitering...” in Vandenberg, \textit{Private Papers}, p. 246. On Missouri see Herken, \textit{The Winning Weapon}, p. 140. \\
\footnote{131} \textit{Newsweek}, March 11, 1946, “U.S. Brings Moral Force to Bear in Sharp Turn on Russian Policy,” p. 26.}
he was well aware of the vast differences that lay between Washington and Moscow. His “cordial-relations” statement cited above, if seen in this light, seems more of a make up than reflecting reality.

An interesting reinforcement for the interpretation that the Soviet government was a totalitarian government would come later from a quite unexpected source on June 18, 1946: CBS correspondent Richard C. Hottelet had interviewed Soviet diplomat Maxim Litvinov, who had been ousted by Stalin from his post as Soviet Foreign Commissar in 1939, in Moscow. The revelations made by Litvinov were hot enough to require complete secrecy on the matter—Hottelet even declined to use the information gained in the interview so as not to endanger Litvinov. George Kennan, who reported on the interview to Washington, wrote in his cable:

Discussing question of mutual suspicion, topic of genuine security versus imperialist aggression was dwelled on. Litvinov said Hitler probably genuinely felt that his demands were justified, that he wanted Lebensraum. ... Advantages that accrue to any totalitarian government through its possibility of ignoring its public opinion were discussed. Litvinov volunteered that there was nothing one could do inside a totalitarian state to change it. 132

Litvinov, even though he “underscored that he was a private citizen speaking his own individual ideas,” referred here to his own government as a totalitarian one. Furthermore, he even agreed that Soviet demands for territorial expansion could be likened to Hitler’s quest for Lebensraum. Truman thought the minutes to be so delicate that he locked them away in his safe so only he himself had access to them. 133

As we have seen, the Munich analogy, totalitarianism schema, and Nazi-Soviet comparison not only were used to advocate a particular policy option, such as in the case of the speeches of Vandenberg and Byrnes. In some, admittedly rarer instances analogy and


133 Quote ibid., on Truman’s reaction see Zubok & Pleshakov, Inside the Kremlin’s Cold War, pp. 37f.
schemas such as accusing the Soviet Union of being a totalitarian government with expansionist intentions were also used to analyze a situation and to shape it into a more readily comprehensible form, as the example of the Willett report clearly shows.

Beginning in 1946 two images started to merge into one in the perception of American policy makers: the Fascist totalitarian state and the Communist totalitarian state. Both were considered to be vicious on domestic as well as on international issues. Therefore both were repulsive and had to be prevented by means of force. In fact, and this was a new conclusion in 1946, derived from the World War II experience, they had to be contained. In this process the imagery of Munich and totalitarianism played an important role. It provided the link between Nazism and Soviet Communism that helped to declare them equal in their intensions and effects and to interpret the Soviet actions in the light of the Nazi experience. Thus analogy, schema, and comparison helped to explain the new political situation by offering a similarity to the immediate past that would clearly pose the problem: an aggressive nation that wanted to expand and a peace-minded international community that only stood to lose from the expansion. Furthermore, the Munich analogy itself offered a solution that promised to do away with the problem of a totalitarian power. The Munich lesson clearly implied that an aggressor had to be cut down to size or else aggression would spread and could even cause another world war. Thus analogy and schemas served as cognitive devices first to study and then to advocate and justify a policy that otherwise might not have been decided upon by the administration at the same time. In order not to make the same mistake again, the solution this time had to be containment of the aggressor.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ On a more extensive discussion of the theory of analogical reasoning see for a historically adapted interpretation Khong, *Analogies at War*, pp. 19-46 and especially 209-250. For a more comprehensive source (though with a more abstract perspective) see Jervis, *Perception and Misperception*.
CHAPTER 5:

CONCLUSION

To gain a better understanding of how analogies helped to create the Cold War consensus among top American political decision makers during and after the war I have distinguished three phases: the wartime alliance (to June/July 1945), the time immediately after the war when political realignment was wanting (June/July - Nov./Dec. 1945), and the time when political realignment was taking shape (Jan. 1946 and after).

The time of the war Alliance was dominated by war thinking. The Allies’ principal aim was to defeat Nazi Germany. There was a clear definition of who was the enemy. At the same time it was also clear that the alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union was merely a war-induced alliance created to serve the war purpose only. Once this purpose had evaporated the partnership had to undergo reconsideration. President Roosevelt made that clear early in the war when he argued that while the war alliance with the Soviet Union was of highest priority this was not to be understood as a sign of an overall friendship between the Soviets and the United States. Criticism of the Communist ally was thus unlikely to come from the leading echelons of the United States government. However, those who saw the war-related atrocities committed by Soviet officers and troops in Eastern Europe felt a need to report their observations to Washington in order to warn policy makers there. The United States was involved in an alliance out of necessity with the Soviets, not an alliance stimulated by free choice of the partner. Even though this alliance underwent several ups and downs during the war years, analogical reasoning against the alliance had no particular impact on the administration’s policy since the purpose of the Alliance was stronger than the analogies leveled against it.
The immediate postwar months represented the beginning of the post-war realignment. While public criticism of a continued cooperation neither decreased nor increased significantly, the administration itself seemed to be torn between two sides: continuing the war Alliance with the Soviet Union under new terms or openly abrogating it. Given the American development toward a policy of interventionism (as opposed to isolationism of the interwar years), the necessity of some form of post-war cooperation with the Soviets in Europe was recognized in Washington at least until a stable postwar order could be established. However, since the war-time Alliance had officially lost its justification with the end of the war it needed to be reconsidered for its practicality and relevance. At the same time there was also an urgent need to organize the practical aspects of a post-war world--food supply, disarmament of Germany, social and political restructuring of the occupied territories, etc.--on the side of the victorious powers. As American political leaders reconsidered their post-war political ties to the Soviet Union in this tense situation we find among them a reduced willingness to respond to analogies, schemas and Nazi-Soviet comparisons an on the administrative level. This reflects the uncertainty of American political leaders searching for a cogent foreign policy toward the Soviet Union after the war. With progressing time, though, we find more and more analogies, schemas and comparisons made among policy makers that linked the Soviet Union to Nazi Germany, mainly for the purpose to advocate a certain policy. At the same time these rhetorical devices now were also used in a more analytical manner--in reports from embassies and missions that were meant to describe the political situation sometimes even without advocating a certain policy. On top of that the press used analogies, schemas and Nazi-Soviet comparisons now on a frequent base. These two analogical sources influenced the administration and urged a policy decision that would build a position of American strength.
Finally the early months of 1946 represented the time of the foreign policy realignment. On the public level analogies, schemas and Nazi-Soviet comparisons were increasingly used, while political advisors and diplomats in Eastern Europe also referred more frequently to the Soviet Union as a totalitarian power and evoked the lesson of Munich. At the same time a series of events of diplomatic relevance occurred that supported the validity of the Hitler-Stalin comparison, the Munich analogy, and the assessment of the Soviet Union as a totalitarian government. Also on the domestic level there were several factors that made the President more susceptible to the admonishing voices using analogies to advocate a stronger American position against the Soviet Union.

Analogies did not constitute the only incentives for policy makers to embark on the get-tough policy. In fact, they had failed to achieve this during war and until early 1946. In order for analogies to convince policy makers other factors had to come into play: external political and military events, domestic political developments in the United States and personal motives and reports from supposedly knowledgeable sources. It is in concert only that all these factors can be claimed to have animated the Cold War consensus among political decision makers in the United States. Separately, none of these factors would probably have moved the administration to commit itself to a strong policy against the Soviet Union, but together they were definitely more than the sum of their parts and had enough impact to give birth to the Cold War consensus.

However, the formulation of a foreign policy was only one step. The next one was to translate the policy into a coherent and consistent pattern of action. To develop the political means to serve the ends that had been defined in early 1946 it would take at least another year, up to the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Just as the formulation of the policy had taken its time, the process of translating into action what had been developed
over the eight months following the war would take its time. After all, these were major politico-strategic reorientations, and not tactical issues of short-term relevance.

Before the war only the totalitarianism schema was used referring to the Soviet Union. The full meaning of Munich had not yet come to light for the majority of the American people. The analogies, schemas and comparisons we find before the war did not imply any specific action to be taken against the totalitarian system. Toward the end of the war and especially after the war, with the alliance dissolved and the Munich lesson fully learned and accepted, comparing the Soviet Union to Nazi Germany (and Yalta and Moscow to Munich) implied a very clear call to action, even on the level of top political decision makers. The Soviet Union had to be stopped and contained unless the United States was willing again to embark on a course of war on the aggressor’s terms and timetable. Munich had preceded the last war, similar developments must never again be tolerated. The Munich analogy, totalitarianism schema, and Nazi-Soviet comparison can be credited with playing a significant role in moving the Truman Administration to take a stand and formulate a foreign policy that would shape international relations for almost the rest of the century.
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