# 2

# The Soviet Union and World Revolution: The American View, 1941-1944

Before Roosevelt's plan for postwar cooperation with the Soviet Union could go into effect, however, Americans would have to come to terms with a perplexing anomaly of the wartime situation: the fact that the United States was fighting alongside an ally officially committed to a hostile ideology. Nothing had done more to poison Soviet-American relations prior to World War II than the Kremlin's self-proclaimed ambition to work, through the Communist International, for the violent overthrow of capitalism throughout the world. As late as 1939, public opinion polls showed that most citizens of the United States, if forced to choose between communism and fascism, would have preferred the latter.[1]

[1] Warren B. Walsh, "What the American People Think of Russia," *Public Opinion Quarterly,* VIII (Winter, 1944–45), 515. One contemporary study suggested that Americans sympathized more with the basic principles of communism than with those of fascism, but that they opposed communist teachings on the single subject of property rights so intensely that, confronted with a choice, most would have chosen fascism. (Daniel Katz and Hadley Cantril, "An Analysis of Attitudes Toward Fascism and Communism," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology,* XXXV [1940], 362–65.)



Yet by the end of 1941, the United States had entered the war on the side of the world's leading communist state. Through a curious kind of illogic the Russians' vigorously successful resistance to Hitler purified them ideologically in the eyes of Americans. Surely, the argument ran, any nation which was fighting so valiantly against a common enemy could not espouse so repugnant a doctrine as communism. Reassessing recent events in this light, many informed observers came to believe that Stalin had fundamentally altered the ideological orientation of his own regime; that the Soviet Union was in the process of abandoning communism in fact, if not in name.

Evidence did exist to support this argument. No Comintern congress had been held since 1935, and the activities of that organization in the years preceding the outbreak of war had been inconspicuous. Stalin had launched a campaign within the USSR to rehabilitate the heroes of prerevolutionary Russia, and had even demonstrated a cautious tolerance of the Russian Orthodox Church. The leader of the international communist movement appeared surprisingly unsympathetic to the efforts of left-wing organizations outside the Soviet Union, and in the summer of 1943 went so far as to order abolition of the Comintern.[2] In retrospect, these seem to have been tactical maneuvers on Stalin's part to generate maximum support, both inside and outside the Soviet Union, for the struggle against Germany. But at the time many Americans interpreted them as signs that the Russians were developing a democratic system of government, in which traditional communist ideology would have no place.

Americans at no point abandoned their antipathy toward that philosophy, as bipartisan denunciations of the Communist Party of the United States during the 1944 presidential campaign showed. But the communist movement no longer appeared to be a monolithic organization directed from Moscow. By disclaiming the goal of international revolution, Stalin seemed to have removed the chief impediment to postwar cooperation with the capitalist world, thus greatly facilitating implementation of President Roosevelt's "grand design."

[2] Alexander Werth, *Russia at War,* pp. 247–49, 429–38; McNeill, *America, Britain, and Russia,* p. 316.

# I

Cooperation with the United States and Great Britain in the war against Hitler greatly improved the Soviet Union's image in the American mass media. In the interests of Allied unity, articulate observers generally did what they could to gloss over the less savory aspects of Stalin's regime when reporting on the Soviet war effort. In the process, many of them came to believe that profound changes had actually taken place inside Russia. Stressing Stalin's apparent commitment to "socialism in one country," they argued that Moscow was no longer interested in world revolution and speculated that, in time, the Soviet and American systems of government might become very much alike. Distasteful episodes in recent Russian history—the purges of the mid-1930s, the Nazi-Soviet Pact, the seizure of the Baltic States, the partition of Poland, the Russo-Finnish War—could be explained, if not justified, as measures to protect the Soviet Union against future German attack. Perceiving no significant conflicts of interest between Washington and Moscow, these observers predicted that the two nations would have no difficulty in building a peaceful relationship after the war.

The most vocal exponent of this point of view was Joseph E. Davies, a wealthy Wisconsin lawyer who had served as American ambassador to the Soviet Union from January, 1937, through June, 1938. Davies owed his appointment more to friendship with Roosevelt and generous campaign contributions than to knowledge of Russia. Foreign Service officers attached to the Moscow Embassy resented his selection as a replacement for William C. Bullitt, whom they respected, and for a time considered resigning in protest. The new ambassador's willingness to condone the Moscow purge trials produced paroxysms of rage among trained Embassy experts like the young George F. Kennan, who recalled being sent regularly "to fetch the ambassador his sandwiches, while he exchanged sententious judgments with the gentlemen of the press concerning the guilt of the victims." [3]

[3] "Joseph E. Davies," *Current Biography, 1942,* pp. 177–80; Richard H. Ullman, "The Davies Mission and United States-Soviet Relations, 1937–1941," *World Politics,* IX (January, 1957), 222–27; George F. Kennan, *Memoirs,* pp. 82–83.



Nevertheless, Davies proved to be more accurate than the professional diplomats in predicting the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939. In 1941, almost alone he maintained that the Soviet Union would withstand Hitler's invasion. Though Davies later admitted privately that his predictions had merely been lucky guesses, they won him considerable influence with the American public and the Roosevelt Administration as an expert on Russian affairs. Davies used his position to work for closer ties between the United States and the Soviet Union and, despite poor health, brought to this task energy, enthusiasm, and a shrewd sense of publicity. Following the German attack on Russia, he spoke frequently in support of extending lend-lease to the Soviet Union. He also obtained from the State Department an unusual grant of permission to publish records of his Russian experiences in a book, *Mission to Moscow,* which appeared late in 1941.[4]

*Mission to Moscow* was an astonishing mixture of the ephemeral and the significant. It contained confidential reports from Davies to the State Department and the President, excerpts from Davies' personal journal, and records of private conversations with high government officials, interspersed with tediously detailed descriptions of the Batum Botanical Gardens and the Crimean wine-making industry. Despite its unevenness, *Mission to Moscow* offered a titillating glimpse into State Department files on an issue of great current interest. It became an immediate best-seller and met with a highly favorable initial reaction. The *Cincinnati Post* called it "tingling history." The *New York Herald Tribune* said that the book placed Davies firmly in the tradition of such other American shirtsleeve diplomats as Benjamin Franklin and Will Rogers. The *Houston Post* found it "perhaps the most valuable book to be published on the subject of Russia in the past decade." On the inside front cover of his personal copy, Franklin D. Roosevelt wrote: "This book will last." [5]

[4] Elbridge Durbrow memorandum of conversation with Davies, February 3, 1943, *FR: 1943,* III, 504; Joseph E. Davies, *Mission to Moscow.* Davies' predictions were not always accurate. In June, 1942, he wrote: "A surprise Japanese attack upon Russia seems almost certain sometime this summer." ("Russia Will Hold This Summer," *Saturday Evening Post,* CCXIV [June 20, 1942], 89.) Despite this, Arthur Krock could still write in January, 1943: "Mr. Davies has proved himself a better expert on Russian military capacity than most of the professional soldiers on whose judgment the United States Government relied for at least the first year of the Soviet-German war." (*New York Times,* January 14, 1943.)

[5] Reviews quoted on book jacket, *Mission to Moscow;* Ullman, "The Davies Mis-

In this volume and in a series of articles written between 1941 and 1943, Davies gave the American people a new view of the Soviet Union. At the end of *Mission to Moscow,* he proclaimed that "the Russia of Lenin and Trotsky—the Russia of the Bolshevik Revolution—no longer exists." Communism had proved itself to be an inefficient system of production. Through a long and occasionally cruel process, the Soviet government had evolved into "a system of state socialism operating on capitalistic principles [which is] steadily and irresistibly swinging to the right." The Russians did not seek to revolutionize the world, but rather to create an egalitarian society in which all men would be governed according to ethical principles. Even if some form of communism did survive inside Russia, Davies argued, it would prove less of a threat to American institutions than fascism. Communism was based, "after all, on the same principle of the 'brotherhood of man' which Jesus preached." [6]

Stalin himself was no bloody-handed tyrant: "A child would like to sit in his lap and a dog would sidle up to him." Davies explained the unpleasant aspects of the Russian dictator's regime by asserting that since the mid-1930s the Soviet Union had been preparing for war with Germany. Stalin had used the purges not to eliminate potential rivals but to eradicate German spies. Fifth columnists did not exist in Russia, Davies pointed out, for the simple reason that the Russians had shot them all. The Nazi-Soviet Pact came only after Britain and France had demonstrated at Munich that they would not oppose German aggression. Russia had seized territory from Poland, the Baltic States, and Finland in 1939 and 1940, but solely for the purpose of gaining additional territory in which to resist the expected German invasion. Hitler's attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 had come as no surprise; the Russians had been getting ready for it for years.[7]

Victory over Germany, Davies asserted, clearly would depend upon

sion," p. 220. See also the summary of reviews in *Book Review Digest, 1942,* pp. 187–88.

[6] Davies, *Mission to Moscow,* pp. 34, 511, 551–52. See also Davies, "How Russia Blasted Hitler's Spy Machine," *American Magazine,* CXXXII (December, 1941), 110; "What We Didn't Know about Russia," *Reader's Digest,* XL (March, 1942), 46; "The Soviets and the Post-War," *Life,* XIV (March 29, 1943), 49; and a statement prepared for the American Library Association, January 30, 1944, Davies MSS, Box 14.

[7] Davies, *Mission to Moscow,* p. 357. See also the Davies articles previously cited.



cooperation with Moscow. The fact that the Soviet Union had a communist government was of no concern: "If I have a man fighting with me, I am not inquiring about his religion or what church he goes to, or what party he votes with, while he is helping me to save my wife and children and liberties from possible enslavement or destruction. I am going to give him the benefit of the doubt." Americans who criticized the Soviet form of government only helped Hitler: "The way in which they live and conduct their government . . . is exclusively their own business." Davies felt that there was no reason why the United States and the USSR could not coexist peacefully after the war. Russia's chief preoccupation would be security from future attack; its main goal would be internal industrial development. The "riddle" of how to deal with the Russians was no riddle at all: the United States should adopt "the simple approach of assuming that what they say, they mean; that they are honest in their beliefs, speak the truth and keep their promises." [8]

Subsequent events made Davies' views seem naïve, even foolish, but they did not appear so at the time. Many prominent Americans allowed their hopes for cooperation with the USSR to push them into similar outbursts of wishful thinking. General Douglas MacArthur, for example, cabled from his besieged headquarters on Corregidor in February, 1942, that "the hopes of civilization rest on the worthy banners of the courageous Red Army." Vice-President Henry A. Wallace told a Soviet-American friendship rally late in 1942 that overemphasis on political democracy in the United States had produced extremes of rugged individualism, states' rights, and even anarchy, while overemphasis on economic democracy in the Soviet Union had created an oppressive bureaucracy. Somewhere there had to be "a practical balance" between the two. Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, later a vigorous critic of Wallace and the USSR, took a similar position early in 1943:

> Ideally, collaboration between the Communist and the democratic world might lead to a wholesome exchange of political experience. . . . We have, on the whole, more liberty and less equality than Russia has. Russia has less liberty and more equality. Whether democracy should be defined primarily in terms of liberty or of equality is a source of unending debate.

[8] Davies speech to the Community War Fund Rally, Jacksonville, Florida, November 17, 1943, Davies MSS, Box 14; speech to the Governors' Conference, Columbus, Ohio, June 21, 1943, *Vital Speeches,* IX (August 1, 1943), 638–40; "The Soviets and the Post-War," p. 49.

The Soviet Union was a dictatorship, Niebuhr admitted, but it shared with the United States a belief in justice "which transcends the interests of any one particular race or nation." [9]

During the early years of the war, the most popular American periodicals repeatedly ran articles describing the Soviet Union in uncritical terms. *Life* outdid all its competitors with a special issue on Russia in March, 1943, which proclaimed, among other things, that Lenin was "perhaps the greatest man of modern times," that the Russians were "one hell of a people . . . [who] to a remarkable degree . . . look like Americans, dress like Americans and think like Americans," that the NKVD was "a national police similar to the FBI," and that Americans should "not get too excited" about the fact that the Russians lived "under a system of tight, state-controlled information. . . . If the Soviet leaders tell us that the control of information was necessary to get the job done, we can afford to take their word for it." The normally cautious *New York Times* proclaimed in an April, 1944, editorial: "It is not misrepresenting the situation to say that Marxian thinking in Soviet Russia is out. The capitalist system, better described as the competitive system, is back." [10]

Even presumably dispassionate scholars succumbed to the new mood. Sir Bernard Pares, a distinguished British historian of Russia, told an American radio audience in June, 1943, that "whatever else she is, Russia is not at the present time Communistic, and no one there pretends she is." Professor Ralph Barton Perry of Harvard called attention to "the steady swerving of Soviet policy away from a strict and narrow Marxian

[9] MacArthur message quoted in Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, p. 497; Wallace speech of November 8, 1942, printed in the *New Republic*, CVII (November 23, 1942), 667; Niebuhr, "Russia and the West," *Nation*, CLVI (January 16, 1943), 83; "Russia as an Ally in War and Peace," *University of Chicago Round Table*, February 21, 1943, p. 5. See also Edward L. and Frederick H. Schapsmeier, *Prophet in Politics: Henry A. Wallace and the War Years, 1940–1965*, p. 34. Paul Willen, "Who 'Collaborated' with Russia?" *Antioch Review*, XIV (September, 1954), 259–83; Lawrence S. Wittner, *Rebels Against War*, pp. 115–18; and Richard R. Lingeman, *Don't You Know There's a War On?* pp. 207–8, 222, 225–27, successfully recapture the euphoric mood with which many Americans viewed Russia during the early stages of the war.

[10] *Life*, XIV (March 29, 1943), *passim; New York Times*, April 4, 1944. For a brief survey of American periodical treatment of Russia during the war, see Willen, "Who 'Collaborated' with Russia?" pp. 262–67.



ideology in the direction of ideas that we can call, in very broad terms, democratic." Foster Rhea Dulles, of Ohio State University, published an elaborate history of Russian-American relations from Catherine the Great to the Teheran Conference to demonstrate the absence of conflict between the two nations. Yale historian George Vernadsky, defending Stalin's 1939-40 seizures of territory as protective measures against Germany, argued that in wartime "it is often necessary to re-examine our interpretations of the past, making whatever revisions in it seem to be required by the march of the news." [11]

Wendell Willkie, the Republican Party's unsuccessful 1940 presidential candidate, expressed as well as anyone the new view of Russia which the events of World War II had produced. Willkie visited the Soviet Union during a 1942 round-the-world tour arranged with the cooperation of President Roosevelt. Never a man to cloak his intentions, the Indiana Republican frankly told his Russian hosts that he had come to obtain information which would improve the Soviet Union's image in the United States. If he saw anything in Russia which might create an unfavorable impression among Americans, Willkie continued, he would remain silent about it.[12]

Willkie described his trip to Russia in *One World,* a brief, simply written plea for international cooperation which had sold three million copies by the time of his death in October, 1944. Acknowledging that brutal methods had been used to put the Bolsheviks in power, Willkie

[11] "Death of the Comintern," *University of Chicago Round Table*, June 6, 1943, p. 16; "Russia's Foreign Policy," *ibid.*, September 12, 1943, pp. 2–3; Dulles, *The Road to Teheran;* Vernadsky, "A Review of Russian Policy," *Yale Review*, XXXI (March, 1942), 514, 525–29. For evidence that China scholars demonstrated a similar susceptibility to wishful thinking during the war, see Tang Tsou, *America's Failure in China*, I, 227–30. Kenneth S. Davis, a journalist, carried the revisionist approach to an extreme by arguing that Stalin had signed the Nazi-Soviet Pact to buy time for war preparations and, when ready, had deliberately provoked the German attack: "It is entirely possible that when the final history of this great world crisis is written, Stalin will stand out as the man who saved the civilized world in spite of itself through one of the most profoundly brilliant pieces of strategy that has ever been employed by a national leader during an international conflict." ("Have We Been Wrong about Stalin?" *Current History*, I [September, 1941], 11.)

[12] Undated report by Ambassador William H. Standley on Willkie's visit, *FR: 1942*, III, 645–47. See also the accounts in William H. Standley and Arthur A. Ageton, *Admiral Ambassador to Russia*, pp. 274–77; and Werth, *Russia at War*, pp. 481–86.

asserted that the Soviet government had nonetheless significantly improved the life of the Russian people. He did not try to excuse the Nazi-Soviet Pact, but pointed out that the democracies had little to be proud of either, having acquiesced in the Munich agreement and the sale of scrap iron to Japan. Willkie saw little reason to fear the Soviet Union in the future: "Russia is neither going to eat us or seduce us." In an article written shortly after his return to the United States, he said: "I believe it is possible for Russia and America, perhaps the two most powerful countries in the world, to work together for the economic freedom and the peace of the world. At least . . . there is nothing I ever wanted more to believe." [13]

To its credit, the Roosevelt Administration generally avoided attempts to picture the Soviet Union as a budding democracy or to defend past actions of Stalin's regime, preferring instead to justify collaboration with Russia in terms of military necessity. The one significant exception to this pattern occurred before American entry into the war, when President Roosevelt became worried that powerful religious organizations might oppose lend-lease shipments to Russia because of that country's restrictions on freedom of worship. In August, 1941, the White House arranged on two days' notice to fly Dr. Daniel A. Poling, president of the International Christian Endeavor, to London in a bomber to defend aid to the Soviet Union before a meeting of his organization. On September 3, F.D.R. pointedly advised Pope Pius XII that "leaders of all churches in the United States . . . should not . . . by their present attitude on this question directly assist Germany in her present objectives." [14] Since the Pope presumably had little influence over American Protestant denominations, it may be assumed that Roosevelt had potential Catholic opposition chiefly in mind.

"If Moscow could get some publicity back to this country regarding the freedom of religion [in Russia]," Roosevelt told Soviet Ambassador Constantine Oumansky on September 11, "it might have a very fine educational effect before the next lease-lend bill comes up in Congress." As if to jog the Russians' memory, the President some days later read to a press conference Article 124 of the largely unimplemented 1936 Soviet Constitution, which contained guarantees of religious freedom. Roosevelt regarded this question as one of "outstanding importance . . . from the standpoint of public opinion in the United States," Secretary of State Hull cabled Ambassador Laurence A. Steinhardt in Moscow. "It is desired that you make every endeavor to see that some statement of this kind is made by the Soviet authorities at the earliest possible moment." The Russians dutifully complied on October 4, 1941, publicly proclaiming that freedom of worship was allowed in the Soviet Union so long as it did not challenge the authority of the state.[15]

Like Davies and Wallace, Roosevelt saw some possibility that the Soviet and American systems of government might, through evolution, become similar. The President once explained to Sumner Welles that since 1917 the USSR had advanced "from the original form of Soviet Communism . . . toward a modified form of state socialism," while at the same time the United States had progressed "toward the ideal of true political and social justice":

> He believed that American democracy and Soviet Communism could never meet. But he told me that he did believe that if one took the figure 100 as representing the difference between American democracy and Soviet Communism in 1917, with the United States at 100 and the Soviet Union at 0, American democracy might eventually reach the figure 60 and the Soviet system might reach the figure of 40.

As long as this trend toward convergence continued, Roosevelt saw no reason to regard conflict between the communist and capitalist worlds as inevitable.[16] Unlike many prominent figures during the war, however, the President refrained from publicly encouraging the belief that time would erase ideological differences between the two nations.

After Pearl Harbor, the Roosevelt Administration felt little need to polish the Soviet Union's image in the United States. For most Ameri-

[13] Wendell Willkie, *One World*, pp. 85–86; "We Must Work with Russia," *New York Times Magazine*, January 17, 1943, pp. 5 ff. Sales figures for *One World* are given in Ellsworth Barnard, *Wendell Willkie*, p. 412.

[14] Long Diary, August 29, 1941, Israel, ed., *Long Diary*, p. 213; Roosevelt to Pope Pius XII, September 3, 1941, *FDR: Personal Letters*, II, 1204–5. See also Roosevelt to Myron C. Taylor, September 1, 1941, Roosevelt MSS, PSF: "Italy"; Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, pp. 372–73; and Range, *Roosevelt's World Order*, pp. 130–31.

[15] Roosevelt-Oumansky conversation, September 11, 1941, *FR: 1941*, I, 832; Hull to Steinhardt, October 2, 1941, *ibid.*, pp. 1000–1; Steinhardt to Hull, October 6, 1941, *ibid.*, pp. 1002–3. See also Ciechanowski, *Defeat in Victory*, pp. 54–55.

[16] Welles, *Where Are We Heading?* pp. 37–38. See also a memorandum by Archbishop Francis Spellman of a conversation with Roosevelt on September 3, 1943, printed in Gannon, *The Cardinal Spellman Story*, pp. 223–24.

cans, the simple fact that the Russians were fighting Hitler was reason enough to accept them as allies without worrying too much about ideological conflicts. As one Georgia newspaper editor put it: "I'd be willing to fight alongside the Devil himself to win this war." [17] The uncritical descriptions of Russia which became so prevalent in the mass media during World War II reflected the desire of those Americans sophisticated enough to concern themselves with contradictions in international affairs to find complete ideological consistency in the war aims of the anti-Axis coalition. This well-intentioned but misguided effort generated a false sense of euphoria which led to disillusionment and recrimination later on, when it became apparent that, aside from common interest in defeating their enemies, the Soviet Union and the United States had radically different concepts of what the postwar world should be like.

## II

Not all Americans accepted the view that the fires of war had purified the Stalinist dictatorship. A small but diverse group of observers argued that the Soviet Union still had a totalitarian form of government, and doubtless would continue to have one after the war. They acknowledged Stalin's apparent abandonment of the goal of world revolution, but refused to exclude the possibility that the Kremlin might still use the world communist movement to promote its policies. These observers protested attempts to excuse events of the past decade in Russia as farsighted measures to prepare for war with Germany, and anticipated some postwar conflicts with the Soviet Union. Still, none of them opposed the alliance with Stalin against Hitler, arguing only that it should be based firmly on considerations of national interest, not on fruitless and occasionally ludicrous efforts to whitewash the Moscow regime.

William Henry Chamberlin, former Moscow correspondent for the *Christian Science Monitor* and author of several books and articles on Russia, typified this point of view. The Stalin who had proved to be such a "courageous, clear-sighted, astute, tenacious leader of his armies and his people," Chamberlin observed, was the same man who had slaugh-

[17] S. C. Heindel to Senator Elbert Thomas, June 14, 1943, Thomas MSS, Box 56, "Davies" file.



tered his own associates and signed the pact with Hitler. The Soviet regime which had inspired millions of Russians to give their lives in its defense was the same one which had "starved its recalcitrant peasants and decimated its pre-revolutionary intelligentsia." These paradoxes constituted an "enigma," to be sure, but in Chamberlin's view hiding them would gain nothing.

Chamberlin strongly deprecated efforts "to prettify Stalin, whose internal homicide record is even longer than Hitler's," or to falsify the recent history of the USSR. Aid to Russia should be based "squarely on considerations of American national interests in defeating Hitler." Such frankness would not, as many feared, impair relations with Moscow—the Russians based their alliance with the United States on their own national interests, not on the attitudes of the American public. Failure to be frank, however, would inevitably bring disillusionment after the war. Peaceful postwar association with Russia was possible, Chamberlin believed, provided the Russians really had given up their ambition to foment world revolution. American economic assistance in Soviet reconstruction efforts could serve as an especially useful device to cement good relations. But such a relationship would not get very far unless Americans gave up their peculiar habit of regarding moral excellence as a prerequisite for wartime collaboration.[18]

A small group of articulate observers, many of them like Chamberlin disillusioned former admirers of the Soviet regime, supported his call for a more realistic attitude toward Russia. Eugene Lyons, Louis Fischer, Max Eastman, and John Dewey all vigorously criticized wartime efforts to obscure distasteful facts about the Soviet Union. William C. Bullitt warned President Roosevelt in 1943 that simply because the Red Army had fought well, Americans should not leap to the conclusion that Stalin had embraced the Four Freedoms: "Since this thesis implies a conversion of Stalin as striking as the conversion of Saul on the road to Damascus,

[18] The following articles are representative of Chamberlin's point of view during the war: "Russia: An American Problem," *Atlantic Monthly*, CLXIX (February, 1942), 148–56; "The Russian Enigma: An Interpretation," *Harper's*, CLXXXV (August, 1942), 225–34; "Russia as a Partner in War and Peace," *Saturday Evening Post*, CCXV (November 14, 1942), 124; "Information, *Please*, about Russia," *Harper's*, CLXXXVIII (April, 1944), 405–12; "W. L. White and His Critics," *American Mercury*, LX (May, 1945), 625–31; "Can We Do Business with Stalin?" *ibid.*, LXI (August, 1945), 194–201.

. . . we have to suspect that this view is the product of the fatal vice in foreign affairs—the vice of wishful thinking." State Department experts on Russia, many of whom had served with Bullitt in Moscow, tried repeatedly to point out potential sources of conflict with the Soviet Union, but with little effect. American socialists and pacifists tended to maintain a critical attitude toward Russia throughout the war.[19]

A minor triumph of sorts for these critics came in the spring of 1943 when reviewers panned an elaborate Warner Brothers film version of *Mission to Moscow,* starring Walter Huston as Joseph Davies. The movie contained numerous historical inaccuracies: it showed Marshal M. N. Tukhachevsky admitting his guilt in a Moscow courtroom when in fact he had been shot without a public trial; it depicted Chinese victims of Japanese bombs being treated in Soviet hospitals; it implied strongly that all pre-Pearl Harbor isolationists had been Republicans. These revisions of history, together with the film's emphatic anti-British bias and reverential treatment of Roosevelt, attracted widespread criticism. James Agee, writing in the *Nation,* called the movie "a great, glad two-million-dollar bowl of canned borscht, eminently approvable by the Institute of Good Housekeeping." John Dewey, who had conducted an extensive investigation of the Moscow purge trials, charged angrily that the film "may serve the interests of Soviet propaganda. It does not serve the interests of 'truth about Russia.' " Columnist Dorothy Thompson delivered the sharpest barb: "It has been suggested that this film needs cutting. It does—indefinitely." [20]

Davies felt that these criticisms overlooked the film's utility as an attack on isolationism and as a means of establishing confidence [illegible] the

[19] Eugene Lyons, "The Purification of Stalin," *American Mercury,* LIV ([illegible]uary, 1942), 109–16; "Cooperating with Russia," *ibid.,* LVI (May, 1943), 536–4[illegible] "The Progress of Stalin-Worship," *ibid.,* LVI (June, 1943), 693–97; Max Eastm[illegible] "To Collaborate Successfully, We Must Face the Facts about Russia," *Reader's [illegible]gest,* XLIII (July, 1943), 1–14; Fischer letter to the editor, *Nation,* CLX (June 2[illegible] [illegible]45), 706–8; Dewey letter to the editor, *New York Times,* January 11, 1942; Ru[illegible]rns, "John Dewey on Russia," *Commonweal,* XXXVI (September 18, 1942), [illegible]-13; Bullitt to Roosevelt, January 29, 1943, Roosevelt MSS, PSF: "Bullitt"; Kenna[illegible] *[illegible]emoirs,* especially chapters 8–10; Wittner, *Rebels Against War,* pp. 118–19; [illegible]len, "Who 'Collaborated' with Russia?" pp. 278–79.

[20] *Time,* XLI (May 10 and 17, 1943), 23–24, 19–20; James Agee, *Agee [illegible] [illegible]ilm,* p. 37. See also Chamberlin, "Information, *Please,* about Russia," pp. 40[illegible] [illegible]nd Lyons, "Progress of Stalin-Worship," pp. 696–97.



Soviet Union as an ally. He later wrote to producer Jack Warner that "within six weeks after the first showing of 'Mission to Moscow,' all of the leaders of the Republican Party . . . made public declarations against Isolation, which the picture so eloquently preached against." When Davies returned to Moscow in May of 1943 on a special mission for President Roosevelt, he arranged a personal screening of the film for Joseph Stalin and other members of the Kremlin hierarchy.[21] But the unfavorable reception which American critics gave the film, together with the bored response of the general public, indicated that efforts to reconcile United States and Russian war aims in all respects had now begun to strain the limits of credibility.

Nevertheless, most American observers carefully refrained from criticizing the Soviet Union while the war was on. The one conspicuous exception was William L. White, son of the famous Kansas editor William Allen White, who accompanied United States Chamber of Commerce President Eric Johnston on a trip to the Soviet Union in the summer of 1944. White's account of this trip, published early in 1945, combined customary praise for the Red Army's fighting abilities with a number of mildly critical remarks concerning the low Russian standard of living, the oppressiveness of the state security apparatus, and the inefficiency of Soviet industrial techniques. White's book provoked a torrent of criticism. Johnston hastily dissociated himself from its conclusions. Several American correspondents in Moscow published a statement labeling the book "a highly biased and misleading report." The *New York Times* reviewer charged that "Mr. White fires no guns for fascism, but he rolls ammunition for it." Yet one year later, a far more hostile description of life in Russia from the *Times*'s own Russian correspondent, Brooks Atkinson, attracted generally favorable acclaim culminating in an invitation from President Truman for Atkinson to visit the White House.[22]

[21] Draft of letter from Davies to Rex Stout, March 21, 1944, Davies MSS, Box 14; Davies to Warner, August 31, 1945, *ibid.,* Box 19; Werth, *Russia at War,* p. 673; C. L. Sulzberger, *A Long Row of Candles,* p. 213.

[22] William L. White, *Report on the Russians.* A serialization of White's book which appeared in the *Reader's Digest,* XLV (December, 1944), 101–22, and XLVI (January, 1945), 106–28, did much to attract attention to it. On the reception of White's book, see [illegible] XLV (March 26, 1945), 61–62; Chamberlin, "W. L. White and His Critics," [illegible]5–31; and White, "Report on the Critics," *Saturday Review,* XXIX (Octobe[illegible] [illegible]46), 15–17. Atkinson's account appeared in the *New York*

It is difficult to say what effect these conflicting views of Russia had on public opinion as a whole. Wartime polls showed that roughly one out of five Americans firmly distrusted the Soviet Union during the war and saw little chance of good relations in the future. A somewhat larger group—approximately 35 percent of the population—anticipated no difficulties in arranging postwar cooperation with the USSR. The remaining 45 percent oscillated between optimism and pessimism according to the course of events, or expressed no opinion. But the over-all level of interest in foreign affairs during the 1940s remained surprisingly low. Estimates indicate that 30 percent of American voters paid no attention whatever to international developments. Forty-five percent of the electorate was aware of important events, but incapable of discussing them intelligently. Only about one out of four American adults consistently demonstrated any thorough knowledge of foreign affairs.[23]

Significantly, the minority of Americans who did keep up with international developments tended to rate possibilities of postwar cooperation with the Soviet Union higher than did poorly informed citizens. College graduates showed a greater willingness to trust Russia than did Americans with high school or grade school educations. Businessmen, professional leaders, and white-collar workers exhibited less suspicion of Soviet intentions than did low income groups.[24] The existence of a favorable attitude toward the USSR among well-educated and presumably prosperous Americans would seem to indicate that critics of Russia had little impact in counteracting the flood of sympathetic and often inaccurate information about the Soviet Union which appeared in the mass media during the war.

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*Times* on July 7–9, 1946, and as "Russia, 1946," in *Life,* XXI (July 22, 1946), 85–94. See also the *New York Times,* July 13, 1946, for Atkinson's reception at the White House.

[23] Gabriel A. Almond, *American People and Foreign Policy,* p. 53; Martin Kriesberg, "Dark Areas of Ignorance," in Lester Markel, ed., *Public Opinion and Foreign Policy,* pp. 51–52. Generalizations on public attitudes toward the Soviet Union are based on responses to the question, asked repeatedly in wartime opinion polls: "Do you think Russia can be trusted to cooperate with us after the war?" Data on responses are given in Hadley Cantril and Mildred Strunk, eds., *Public Opinion, 1935–1946,* pp. 370–71; and are presented in graph form in Hadley Cantril, "Opinion Trends in World War II," *Public Opinion Quarterly,* XII (Spring, 1948), 38.

[24] Cantril and Strunk, eds., *Public Opinion,* p. 371; Walsh, "What the American People Think of Russia," p. 520; Willen, "Who 'Collaborated' with Russia?" p. 281; Jerome Bruner, *Mandate from the People,* p. 113.



## III

One key determinant of postwar relations between Russia and the West would be the extent to which traditional communist ideology still influenced the foreign policy of the USSR. If, as appeared likely to many observers during the war, the Kremlin had abandoned its old goal of world revolution, then chances for peaceful Soviet-American coexistence after Germany's defeat would be good. If, on the other hand, the Soviets continued to nurse revolutionary ambitions, lasting peace would be difficult to achieve. President Roosevelt's entire "grand design" for postwar cooperation with the Soviet Union rested on the assumption that Moscow had stopped trying to impose communism on the rest of the world.[25]

The Soviet Union's main instrument for fomenting world revolution in the past had been the Communist International, or Comintern, which it had established in 1919. This organization had not been conspicuously successful—indeed communism failed to take root permanently anywhere outside the Soviet Union during the interwar period. But as long as the Comintern remained in existence it provided evidence of the Kremlin's symbolic, if not actual, espousal of world revolution. Loy Henderson, assistant chief of the State Department's Division of European Affairs, warned Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles in April of 1942 that although little had been heard of the Comintern lately, "we have no information which would cause us to believe that it is not continuing quietly to function with headquarters in the Soviet Union." Elbridge Durbrow, another Division of European Affairs official, told Joseph Davies early in 1943 that any postwar agreements with the Soviet Union "would have to include a very concrete and definite understanding that the activities of the Comintern would have to be liquidated." Nothing would do more to improve relations between Russia and the rest of the world, Cordell Hull observed in May, than the final and definite prohibition of further Comintern activities.[26]

Under these circumstances, news from Moscow on May 22, 1943, that

[25] On this point, see Welles, *Where Are We Heading?* pp. 37–38.

[26] Henderson to Welles, April 9, 1942, *FR: 1942,* III, 436; Durbrow memorandum of conversation with Davies, February 3, 1943, *FR: 1943,* III, 503–4; Hull memorandum of conversation with Eduard Beneš, May 18, 1943, *ibid.,* pp. 529–30.

the Comintern had been dissolved made a great impression in the United States. Admiral William H. Standley, at that time American ambassador in the Soviet Union, regarded this development as an event of major importance which symbolized Russia's confidence in its allies. Hull told the press that cessation of Comintern activities would contribute greatly to wartime and postwar cooperation. Eric Johnston found the news to be the most encouraging since the battle of Stalingrad, while Wendell Willkie termed the step "a very wise move" which would do much to dissipate misunderstandings among the Allies. Assistant Secretary of State Breckinridge Long noted in his diary that dissolution of the Comintern would destroy one of Germany's main propaganda assets, Europe's fear of communization should the Russians win the war. Representative Martin Dies, chairman of the House Committee to Investigate Un-American Activities and long one of the most avid "Red-baiters" in Congress, went so far as to speculate that abolition of the Comintern might even make it possible to do away with his own committee.[27]

Joseph E. Davies, who was in Moscow when the abolition of the Comintern was announced, reported to President Roosevelt that the Russians appeared to be sincere in abandoning interference in the internal affairs of other countries. In an article written for the United Press later that summer, Davies explained that the Russians now clearly intended "to cooperate with, and not to stir up trouble for, their neighbors, with whom they are pledged to collaborate to win the war and the peace." By abolishing the Comintern, Davies said, Stalin had dealt the death blow to Trotsky's program of violent world revolution. Trotsky's widow, living in exile in Mexico, lent credence to Davies' conclusion when she proclaimed bitterly that dissolution of the Comintern constituted the final betrayal of the Bolshevik Revolution.[28]

Davies was hardly an objective observer but, as usual, he was not alone in his views. Many people who in later years would be far less sympathetic to the Soviet Union than Davies accepted his explanation of the Comintern's abolition. Senator Tom Connally of Texas, chairman of

[27] Standley to Hull, May 25, 1943, *FR: 1943,* III, 534–35; Hull press conference of May 24, 1943, quoted *ibid.,* pp. 535–36; *New York Times,* May 23, 1943; Long Diary, May 23, 1943, Israel, ed., *Long Diary,* p. 314; Dies comment in the *New York Times,* May 23, 1943.

[28] Davies to Roosevelt, May 29, 1943, Roosevelt MSS, PSF 18: "Russia"; *New York Times,* May 24 and August 1, 1943.



the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, commented that "Russians for years have been changing their economy and approaching the abandonment of communism, and the whole Western world will be gratified at the happy climax of their efforts." Despite the fact that he had little regard for Davies, Ambassador Standley agreed that Stalin had acted sincerely. From now on, Standley thought, the Russians would try to convert the world to communism not through subversive activities but simply by setting a good example. General Patrick J. Hurley, acting as a personal representative of President Roosevelt, told Chiang Kai-shek in November, 1943, that Stalin had stopped supporting communist activities outside of the Soviet Union. The Russian dictator, Hurley maintained, now realized that communism could succeed inside Russia without being forced on the rest of the world. George Messersmith, the influential American ambassador in Mexico, believed that communism in the conventional sense no longer existed within the Soviet Union, and that "the rabid communists are all found outside Russia today." Representative John W. McCormack of Massachusetts told the House of Representatives succinctly: "Dissolution of the Communist International . . . means the renunciation of world revolution." [29]

Some observers did acknowledge the possibility that communism might take root in Europe on its own, without assistance from the Soviet Union. The economic and social devastation of war had undermined the old order, and communists were rapidly winning popularity throughout Europe by leading resistance movements against the Germans. John Scott, *Time*'s correspondent in Stockholm, warned Secretary of State Hull late in 1943 that public opinion in the occupied countries was swinging away from distant governments-in-exile toward communist and other resistance groups. Vera Micheles Dean, of the Foreign Policy Association, wrote that Europe was ripe for revolution, but that such up-

[29] *New York Times,* May 23, 1943; Harold H. Burton Diary, October 19, 1943, Burton MSS, Box 138; Hurley to Roosevelt, November 20, 1943, *FR: Tehran,* pp. 102–3; Messersmith to Hull, January 4, 1944, Hull MSS, Box 53, Folder 165; *Congressional Record,* June 6, 1943, p. A2778. For Standley's opinion of Davies see Standley and Ageton, *Admiral Ambassador to Russia,* chapter 22. Standley had changed his view of the dissolution of the Comintern by 1955: "The Comintern never was dissolved; it just went underground for the duration of the war. The dissolution was reported as a measure to help allay the prejudice and suspicion of the American people." (*Ibid.,* p. 373.)

heavals as might occur would spring primarily "from maladjustments within the countries where they take place." Walter Duranty, a former *New York Times* correspondent in Moscow, told a radio audience early in 1943: "We may have anarchy in Europe. We may have all sorts of dreadful Red and Black movements, of which I am afraid. But my impression and belief is that the Russians will not foster or push such movements. On the contrary, they would rather tend to stem them." [30]

But the prospect of indigenous communist regimes in Europe aroused surprisingly little concern in the United States during the war. Believing as they did in the concept of self-determination, Americans felt that they could not consistently demand for Europeans the right to choose democratic forms of government without at the same time allowing those who wanted it to embrace communism. John McCormack told his colleagues in the House of Representatives:

> Most of us in opposing national socialism or communism, recognize the right of the people of other nations to have any kind of a government they want that does not violate the international law of decency.
>
> It was the advocacy by Soviet Russia of world revolution, violating the laws of nations, . . . that properly aroused resentment and opposition.

"We don't care whether Russia is Communist at home," the *Washington Times-Herald* editorialized, "but we didn't like Russia's efforts to promote Communist revolutions here." [31]

[30] Scott to Hull, December 23, 1943, Hull MSS, Box 53, Folder 165; Dean, "The U.S.S.R. and Post-War Europe," pp. 132–33, 138; "Russia as an Ally in War and Peace," *University of Chicago Round Table*, February 21, 1943, p. 12. On postwar Europe's susceptibility to revolution see also Demaree Bess, "Will Europe Go Communist after the War?" *Saturday Evening Post*, CCXVI (January 22, 1944), 15; Heinz H. F. Eulau, "The New Soviet Nationalism," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, CCXXXII (March, 1944), 28; and William H. Chamberlin, "Russia and Europe, 1918–1944," *Russian Review*, IV (Autumn, 1944), 9.

[31] *Congressional Record*, June 3, 1943, p. A2778; *Washington Times-Herald* editorial, date not given, reprinted *ibid.*, November 15, 1943, p. A4861. See also Bruner, *Mandate from the People*, p. 106. Gabriel Kolko, *The Politics of War*, argues that officials of the United States government during World War II attributed the rise of the "Left" in Europe to the growing influence of the Soviet Union, and deliberately set out to counteract it. But Kolko cites as his main evidence to support this thesis the efforts of Anglo-American military authorities to disarm resistance groups in liberated countries, a development which can more logically be accounted for in terms of the need for secure communications behind the advancing armies and requirements for restoring civilian government. Kolko's interpretation ignores Roosevelt's hopes for postwar cooperation with the Soviet Union, and focuses too narrowly on economic factors as the primary domestic influence on American diplomacy. The tendency to ascribe revolutionary developments to the machinations of Moscow did become a prominent characteristic of United States foreign policy, but not until at least 1946.



In contrast to the general trend of opinion in the United States, State Department experts refused to attach much significance to the abolition of the Comintern. The Division of Far Eastern Affairs noted in August, 1943, that the Soviet Union still had "as one of its paramount political objectives the creation of well disposed and ideologically sympathetic governments in nearby areas." Ambassador W. Averell Harriman wrote President Roosevelt from Moscow in November that although the Russians had recently shown little interest in exporting communism, they might still do so "if it proves to be the only way they can get the kind of relationships they demand from their western border states." Elbridge Durbrow of the Division of Eastern European Affairs argued early in 1944 that communist parties outside the Soviet Union would continue to follow Moscow's orders, even though no formal centralized agency existed to guide them. Indeed, dissolution of the Comintern might actually strengthen the world communist movement by giving individual party organizations a semblance of independence, thus enabling them to attract greater popular support in their respective countries. Harriman agreed. "Communist form of governments [*sic*] is not a present objective of the Soviets," he wrote in April, 1944, "although full opportunity for political expression of the Communist parties [does] appear [to be] a fixed objective." [32]

Communist activities in Latin America caused particular concern to State Department officials. Charles E. Bohlen noted in May of 1943 that Mexico was the center for Comintern operations in the Western hemisphere, and that the appointment of the Soviet ambassador to that country was "more than merely a routine diplomatic assignment." Harriman early in 1944 called Hull's attention to the fact that the Soviets maintained unusually large diplomatic staffs in several Latin American coun-

[32] Division of Far Eastern Affairs memorandum, August 19, 1943, *FR: Washington and Quebec*, pp. 627–29; Harriman to Roosevelt, November 4, 1943, *FR: Tehran*, p. 154; Durbrow memorandum, "Certain Aspects of Present Soviet Policy," February 3, 1944, *FR: 1944*, IV, 813–19; Harriman to Hull, April 20, 1944, *ibid.*, p. 863. See also an unsigned memorandum prepared in the Division of European Affairs, "Current Problems in Relations with the Soviet Union," March 24, 1944, *ibid.*, pp. 839–42.

tries, although there was no evidence that these diplomats were engaging in subversive activities. Marion Parks, of the department's Office of American Republic Affairs, observed in March of 1944 that the Russians had done everything possible to increase their influence in Latin America. Communist movements there were proceeding along much the same lines as they had prior to dissolution of the Comintern, and "connections are generally believed to exist between the [Soviet diplomatic] missions and local Communist groups." [33]

But the State Department did not regard continued communist activity as evidence that the Soviet Union still sought world revolution. George F. Kennan, counselor at the American Embassy in Moscow, wrote in the summer of 1944 that "it is a matter of indifference to Moscow whether a given area is 'communistic' or not. All things being equal, Moscow might prefer to see it communized, although even that is debatable. But the main thing is that it should be amenable to Moscow influence, and if possible to Moscow authority." Elbridge Durbrow pointed out that "the Comintern has been and still is used primarily as an instrument of Soviet foreign policy." The Russians might well try to take advantage of the revolutionary conditions which were sure to exist in Europe after the war, but if they did, it would be for reasons of national interest, not because of a determination to impose communism on the rest of the world.[34]

Outside of official circles, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church constituted the most vocal center of skepticism regarding Soviet ideological intentions. A bitter heritage of distrust had long separated the Vatican from the Kremlin. The Church's traditional hostility toward communism, the Soviet Union's persecution of religion, and the violent confrontation between Catholics and communists during the Spanish Civil War all had contributed to the mutual hostility. The outbreak of World War II had done nothing to alleviate this bitterness, and as it became more and more likely that heavily-Catholic Poland would fall within a Soviet

[33] Bohlen memorandum of May 19, 1943, *FR: 1943*, III, 530–31; Harriman to Hull, January 18, 1944, *FR: 1944*, IV, 806–7; Parks memorandum on "Activities of Soviet Diplomatic Representatives in the Other American Republics," March 28, 1944, *ibid.*, pp. 843–54.

[34] Kennan memorandum, "Russia—Seven Years Later," September, 1944, *FR: 1944*, IV, 908–9; Durbrow memorandum, "Certain Aspects of Present Soviet Policy," February 3, 1944, *ibid.*, p. 817.



sphere of influence, relations between Stalin and the Pope worsened.

As early as February, 1942, the Catholic journal *America* had warned its readers that the effort to convince Americans that they need not fear communism would neither strengthen national morale nor further war aims, "since it is based upon a lie." *Catholic World* noted in the spring of 1943 that admiration for Soviet military achievements threatened to obscure the fact that Stalin still wanted world revolution. Russia's alliance with the West was merely a marriage of convenience; when Germany was defeated Stalin would resume his attempts to communize Europe.[35]

Dissolution of the Comintern failed to alter the conviction of several prominent Catholic leaders that communism posed as great a threat as fascism. Monsignor Fulton J. Sheen persistently advocated this point of view: "Communism is the Asiatic form of fascism and fascism is the European form of communism. There is no essential difference in ideology between the Nazis, the Fascists, and the Communists; all absorb the individual into the collectivity. There is as little difference between communism and fascism as there is between burglary and larceny." Early in 1944 Sheen warned a State Department official that while Russia might be willing to help the Allies eradicate Nazi Germany, this did not mean that the Kremlin would cooperate in other areas. "Irreligious atheism," Sheen observed, "is not only the internal policy of Soviet Russia, but is also to be its external policy in a Soviet Europe." Father James Gillis, the editor of *Catholic World*, described the danger of Russian communism in similar terms for his readers in the fall of 1944:

> The greatest potential menace to permanent peace is Soviet Russia. Fascism is not and never was as dangerous as Communism. Naziism, the most virulent form of Fascism, is about to be destroyed. Another evil, imperialism, British, French, Dutch, will be amended and gradually abolished. But Fascism, Naziism, Imperialism combined—if that could be—would not be so serious a threat to peace and to international cooperation as Russian Communism.

Three Catholic archbishops warned President Roosevelt in December that Stalin had been trained "in the school of revolutionaries who plotted the overthrow of all the governments of the world and the establish-

[35] "Not Untimely," *America*, LXVI (February 7, 1942), 490; C. P. Thomas, "Prelude to Invasion," *Catholic World*, CLVII (May, 1943), 149–54.

ment of a world domination of communism." The Russian leader instinctively distrusted noncommunist nations and was "seeking to establish the domination of the Soviet Union over other nations by promoting, subsidizing, and directing Communistic minority groups in other countries." [36]

Catholic critics of communism found a conspicuous spokesman in William C. Bullitt, the former American ambassador to the Soviet Union. Bullitt had gone to Moscow in 1933 an enthusiastic supporter of the Moscow regime, but in one of the abrupt shifts from admiration to hatred which characterized his life, he soon became bitterly anti-Soviet. In August of 1943 he had told Roosevelt: "Hitler's aim was to spread the power of the Nazis to the ends of the earth. Stalin's aim is to spread the power of the communists to the ends of the earth. Stalin, like Hitler, will not stop. He can only be stopped." [37] Bullitt's influence with the President waned as cooperation with Russia increased, however, and the summer of 1944 found him without an official position, free to express publicly his personal views.

Bullitt did so with customary vigor in a widely read article which appeared in *Life* in September. Entitled "The World from Rome," it purported to give the views of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, although Bullitt employed only the euphemism "Romans" throughout. The "Romans," Bullitt said, viewed the American decision to aid Stalin without first securing his promise not to dominate postwar Eastern Europe as "one of the biggest mistakes of the war." Events in Poland had already made the Atlantic Charter "a dead letter, a mere expression of a pious hope that will never seriously be supported by either the United States or Great Britain." Moscow's call for "friendly democratic governments" along its borders was merely a ploy to allow communist elements "to organize themselves strongly enough to destroy all democratic liberties and install a soviet totalitarian regime." Alarmingly apocalyptic in tone, the article warned: "Rome again sees approaching from the East a wave of conquerors. . . . Will the result of this war be the subjugation of Europe by Moscow?" The "Romans" and Bullitt clearly feared such a development.[38]

"The World from Rome" stirred up a hornet's nest of criticism. The exiled Italian scholar Gaetano Salvemini accused Bullitt of using the label "Romans" to project his own and the Catholic Church's point of view. *Life*'s editors observed lamely that the Russophobic tone of Bullitt's writing should not have surprised anyone, since everyone already knew that Bullitt was a Russophobe. One of *Life*'s readers commented tartly that the Church hierarchy could more effectively halt the spread of communism by raising the standard of living of its own communicants than by talking to people like Bullitt.[39]

There were others who doubted the Kremlin's sincerity in abolishing the Comintern. Former Russian correspondent Louis Fischer told a radio audience that "Stalin has only torn up a label. He loses nothing. He must be laughing at us for being so naïve as to celebrate the death of a name." Max Eastman, another prominent critic of the Stalinist regime, asked: "Why should we expect a sudden end to the World Communist conspiracy just because the bosses of the Comintern have ostentatiously burned their letterheads?" Alexander Barmine and Victor A. Kravchenko, two former Soviet officials who had defected to the United States, warned loudly of Russian duplicity. A dwindling band of isolationists like Representative Hamilton Fish of New York continued to refer ominously to "the bloody hand of Communism." [40]

[36] *Washington Times-Herald*, February 2, 1944, reprinted in the *Congressional Record*, February 2, 1944, p. A547; memorandum by unidentified State Department official of conversation with Sheen, February 18, 1944, Department of State Records, 861.404/2-1844 EG; James M. Gillis, "Getting Wise to Russia," *Catholic World*, CLX (October, 1944), 1–6; Archbishops Edward Mooney, A. Stritch, and Francis Spellman to Roosevelt, December 13, 1944, Department of State Records, 700.0011 PEACE/12-1344 Ai. Les K. Adler and Thomas G. Paterson, "Red Fascism: The Merger of Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia in the American Image of Totalitarianism, 1930's–1950's," *American Historical Review*, LXXV (April, 1970), 1046–64, deals with the tendency to equate communism with fascism both before and after World War II, but neglects Catholic efforts to do this during the war.

[37] Bullitt to Roosevelt, August 10, 1943, Roosevelt MSS, PSF: "Bullitt." Bullitt's persistent Russophobia had alienated the President by this time, as had the former ambassador's recent smear campaign against Sumner Welles, which had brought about the Undersecretary of State's forced resigna[illegible] this matter, see Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, p. 46; Israel, ed., *Long Diar*[illegible] 324–25; and Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom*, p. 350. For insight [illegible]'s personality, see Beatrice Farnsworth, *William C. Bullitt and the Sovie*[illegible]*ion, passim;* and Kennan, *Memoirs*, pp. 79–81.



[38] *Life*, XVII (September 4, 1944), 94–109.

[39] Gaetano Salvemini, "Mr. Bullitt's Romans," *New Republic*, CXI (October 2, 1944), 423–26; letters to the editor column, *Life*, XVII (September 25, 1944), 2–10. For a survey of public reaction to Bullitt's article, see Department of State, "Fortnightly Survey of American Opinion," No. 11, September 19, 1944.

[40] "Will Russia's Abolition of the Comintern Help Win the Peace?" *Town Meeting of the Air*, May 27, 1943, pp. 8–9; Eastman, "To Collaborate Successfully, We Must

But the skepticism of the State Department, the Catholic hierarchy, and others about dissolution of the Comintern did not extend to the general public. Opinion polls demonstrated that as the war progressed, more and more Americans came to believe that the Russians really had abandoned their plans for world revolution. A poll taken in August of 1944 showed that only 20 percent of a national sample expected Russia to try to spread communism to Europe after the war. Another poll sent to President Roosevelt in November concluded that a majority of the population accepted as sincere the Soviet government's contention that its main objective was to build up a strong socialist state, not to spread communism. Most Americans at this time would have agreed with Richard Lauterbach, former head of the *Time-Life* Russian bureau, who observed that "more people talk about world revolution in New York than they do in Moscow." [41]

## IV

Antipathy for communism remained strong within the United States throughout the war, but Americans directed this hostility against their own communists, not Russian ones. Harry Hopkins explained to Molotov in 1942 that the American Communist Party was made up of "disgruntled, frustrated, ineffectual, and vociferous people—including a comparatively high proportion of distinctly unsympathetic Jews." Two years later, during a trip to the Soviet Union, Eric Johnston undertook to explain to the Russians why communists were so unpopular in the United States: "Our American Communists . . . lack originality and realism. They still follow and imitate what they think is your current policy. If you take pepper they sneeze. If you have indigestion, they belch. They annoy our trade unions much more than they annoy our

Face the Facts about Russia," p. 11; Barmine, "The New Communist Conspiracy," *ibid.*, XLV (October, 1944), 27–33; *New York Times*, April 4, 1944; *Time*, XLV (January 1, 1945), 14.

[41] Almond, *American People and Foreign Policy*, pp. 93–94; Bruner, *Mandate from the People*, p. 113; Report on "Public Understanding of Russian Intentions, Policies, Performances," prepared for Roosevelt by Hadley Cantril, November 10, 1944, Roosevelt MSS, OF 857, Box 3; *New York Times*, October 21, 1944. See also Walsh, "What the American People Think of Russia," p. 514.



employers." John L. Lewis early in 1944 indignantly berated American communists for trying to "hang on to the coattails of the Red Army" by equating friendship for Russia with sympathy for communism. It was an "outrageous contention" to assert that the United States could not fight side by side with Russia while simultaneously combating communists at home. Congressman John Rankin of Mississippi went so far as to blame the Detroit race riot of 1943 on American communists, but noted that in the Soviet Union communism was so unpopular that the Russians were running it out of the country.[42]

Such slanders hurt Earl Browder, the unlikely head of the Communist Party of the United States, who was once described as looking more like a lyric poet than a revolutionary. Too many people, he complained, thought that "now that the Soviet Union is our ally . . . the Communists of the Soviet Union are okey, since they are indispensable, but that does not mean that we need tolerate them in the United States." Following the Teheran Conference, the American Communist Party made every effort to fit itself into the domestic political establishment. Browder at one point proclaimed that "if J. P. Morgan supports this coalition [of Russia and the United States] and goes down the line for it, I as a Communist am prepared to clasp his hand." When told on another occasion that he sounded like a member of the National Association of Manufacturers, Browder replied: "That's fine. I'm awfully glad to hear that." In May of 1944 the Communist Party of the United States dissolved itself, became the "nonpartisan" Communist Political Association, and proclaimed its support of Franklin D. Roosevelt for President.[43]

This latest gyration of the American Communist Party failed to appease its critics. The expansion of federal government power during the New Deal and World War II had convinced some Americans that a

[42] Hopkins-Molotov conversation, May 29, 1942, *FR: 1942*, III, 570–71; Johnston speech of June 3, 1944, *FR: 1944*, IV, 967*n*; *New York Times*, February 29, 1944; *Congressional Record*, July 1, 1943, p. A3371. Congressman Rankin attributed much of the racial tension in the United States to the activities of communists: "Many innocent, unprotected white girls . . . have been raped and murdered by vicious Negroes, who have been encouraged by those alien-minded Communists to commit such crimes." (*Ibid.*)

[43] "Earl Browder," *Current Biography, 1944*, pp. 69–73; Browder debate with George Sokolsky, March 21, 1943, on "Is Communism a Menace?" *New Masses*, April 6, 1943, p. 16; Irwin Ross, "It's Tough to Be a Communist," *Harper's*, CXCII (June, 1946), 532.

form of collectivism, possibly even communism, might develop indigenously in the United States. As the presidential election of 1944 approached, Republican orators found it convenient to play on these fears as a means of pillorying the Roosevelt Administration. The Communist Political Association's endorsement of Roosevelt made it easier for Republicans to link communism with the New Deal. Highly effective campaigning for the Democrats by Sidney Hillman's Political Action Committee of the Congress of Industrial Organizations worried many Republicans, causing them to try to discredit that organization by labeling it communist.[44] Thus communism became an issue during the 1944 presidential campaign but not, oddly enough, because of the activities of the Comintern.

Republicans went to great lengths to make it clear that opposition to domestic communism did not imply disrespect for the Soviet Union. Fundamental differences existed between Russian and American economic and social systems, Thomas E. Dewey said in April, 1944, but these dissimilarities in no way made friction between the two countries inevitable. Former President Herbert Hoover assured the Republican National Convention in June that Russia was no longer truly communist: "The Communist Internationalism of Russia has been driven out by the nationalist aspiration to free Mother Russia and expand the empire." [45]

During the campaign the Republican vice-presidential candidate, John W. Bricker, repeated with depressing monotony the charge that communists wanted Roosevelt to win the election. Bricker accused Roosevelt of having pardoned Earl Browder from prison, where he had been sent for falsifying his passport, in order to win communist support for a fourth term. The President depended for his reelection, Bricker asserted,

[44] Leon Friedman, "Election of 1944," in Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., ed., *History of American Presidential Elections, 1789–1968*, IV, 3015, 3033–35. One of the most vivid denunciations of the Political Action Committee came from a Democrat, Representative Philip J. Philbin of Massachusetts, who charged that the organization was "inspired by internal Communists, revolutionary Socialists, Syndicalists and an assorted variety of social reform crackpots, fellow travellers, brave-new-world, starry-eyed dreamers, dangerous un-American alien radicals, and other diverse subversive elements." (*Congressional Record*, June 20, 1944, p. A3179.)

[45] Dewey speech of April 28, 1944, reprinted in the *Congressional Record*, 1944 appendix, pp. A2022–A2023; Hoover speech of June 27, 1944, reprinted *ibid.*, pp. A3425–A3428.



on big city bosses and "Communist and radical elements." Merging his condemnations of the Communist Party and the Political Action Committee, Bricker charged in Dallas late in October that "the great Democratic party has become the Hillman-Browder communistic party with Franklin Roosevelt at its front." Representative Clare Boothe Luce of Connecticut made the same accusation, asserting that on orders of Moscow the American Communist Party "has gone underground, after the fashion of termites, into the Democratic party." [46]

Dewey himself used the communist issue more cautiously than Bricker and other Republicans. Speaking in Charleston, West Virginia, in October, he maintained that communists were supporting Roosevelt because the New Deal was moving toward state ownership of the nation's productive facilities. Under these circumstances, "government would tell each of us where we could work, at what, and for how much." This might be either communism or fascism, but whatever it was Dewey was against it. The Republican candidate climaxed his use of the communist issue with a speech in heavily-Catholic Boston on November 1:

> Naziism and fascism are being crushed out in the world. But the totalitarian idea is very much alive and we must not slip to its other form, communism. . . . Today that pagan philosophy is sweeping through much of the world. As we look abroad we see that in country after country its advocates are making a bid for power. We would be fools not to look for that same danger here. And we haven't far to look.

After uttering this dire warning, however, Dewey took care to ensure that his remarks would not reflect on the Soviet Union. New Dealers, he charged, were trying to convince the American people that they

> must love communism or offend our fighting ally, Russia. Not even the gullible believe that. In Russia, a Communist is a man who supports his government. In America, a Communist is a man who supports the fourth term so that our form of government may more easily be changed.

The question of communism in the United States, Dewey concluded, had nothing whatsoever to do with the Soviet Union.[47]

Republican use of the communist issue caused some concern within the Democratic camp. In a radio address early in October, Roosevelt ex-

[46] *New York Times*, September 21, 26, October 17, 26, 1944.
[47] *Ibid.*, October 8, November 2, 1944.

plicitly rejected the support of the American communists: "I have never sought and I do not welcome the support of any person or group committed to communism or fascism or any other foreign ideology which would undermine the American system of government or the American system of free competitive enterprise and private property." At the same time Roosevelt, like Dewey, felt called upon to stress that anticommunism did not mean anti-Sovietism. Repudiation of American communists should not "interfere with the firm and friendly relationship which this nation has in this war . . . with the people of the Soviet Union. The kind of economy that suits the Russian people . . . is their own affair." [48]

Roosevelt's speech failed to quiet Democratic anxieties. A Chicago party worker assured Harry Hopkins that the American public was deeply concerned about communism: "This current talk about Browder and Hillman, socialization of industry, business, education, etc., is something that people are talking about." Oscar Cox, one of Hopkins' chief assistants, drafted a speech for Foreign Economic Administrator Leo T. Crowley which asserted that

> President Roosevelt and the Administration are not only strongly opposed to the doctrines of communism for the United States, but by their progressive leadership they have prevented communism from getting a foothold and becoming a real power in this country—a foothold and a real power which communism might well have gotten if the breadlines and apple-selling of Hooverism had continued.

Senator Robert F. Wagner of New York felt it necessary to inform a Manhattan audience that "neither Franklin Roosevelt nor I are any closer to the Communists than we are to the Hottentots." [49]

Democratic sensitivity over the communist issue became so great at one point that the Administration took the unusual step of indirectly asking Stalin not to endorse Roosevelt. On two occasions in October, Samuel Rosenman, the President's speech-writer, expressed fear to Joseph Davies that any intimation from Moscow that Stalin favored Roosevelt's reelection might hurt the Democratic Party. Davies offered to send a

[48] Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*, pp. 328–29; Roosevelt radio address of October 5, 1944, *FDR: Public Papers*, XIII, 323–24.

[49] James K. Finn to Hopkins, October 29, 1944, Hopkins MSS, Box 120; Cox first draft, Crowley campaign speech, October 16, 1944, copy in Cox Diary, Cox MSS; *New York Times*, October 10, 1944.



personal message to the Soviet leader conveying this concern and asking him to have Russian newspapers "pipe down" in their commentary on American politics. Undersecretary of State Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., telephoned Davies from the White House on October 20 approving the idea, and on the same day Davies dispatched to Stalin through the Soviet Embassy in Washington the following personal note:

> I earnestly hope that the recent public statements by Governor Dewey, the Republican candidate, will not be replied to or commented on by the Soviet press for the present. They would be republished here and seized upon by hostile forces, and charged by them to be an intrusion into the private political affairs of our country by a foreign Government. It would be directed to arouse resentment among certain of our people, who other wise would be favorable.[50]

The Democrats need not have worried. Popular antipathy for communism did not translate itself into votes against the Administration's Russian policy. Nor did Republican charges of American communist support for Roosevelt significantly cut into the President's majority. Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg concluded from the results that "there is a wide difference of opinion in the country regarding Communism—and a majority of our electorate has just indicated that it does not seem very worried about it." [51] Vandenberg's conclusion was only partially correct. Americans bitterly opposed communism inside the United States, but simply found it difficult to take Earl Browder and his pitiful band of followers seriously. Should the Soviet Union resume, or appear to resume, its efforts to spread communism outside its borders, however, the threat would seem much more ominous.

Americans both inside and outside the government demonstrated a substantial lack of sophistication in assessing the relationship between ideology and Soviet foreign policy during World War II. Influenced by a domestic tradition which attached little importance to political theory, they tended to underrate the importance of ideological considerations in other countries. Prominent "experts" on Russia showed only dim awareness of the degree of tactical flexibility which Marxist-Leninist doctrine

[50] Davies Journal, October 8, 14, and 20, 1944; Davies to Stalin, October 20, 1944, Davies MSS, Box 15.

[51] Vandenberg to James V. Oxtoby, Jr., November 15, 1944, Vandenberg MSS.

allowed, and hence frequently overemphasized the significance of Stalin's attempts to sweep ideology under the rug in the interests of the war effort. Furthermore, "informed" observers failed to take into account the ability of a totalitarian regime to rally widespread public support, especially in periods of national crisis. Confronted with evidence that the Russian people were willing to fight for their government, many Americans jumped illogically to the conclusion that the Soviet Union had suddenly become a democracy.[52] These inaccurate perceptions left the United States ill-prepared for postwar developments, including Joseph Stalin's firm assurance to all concerned that reports of his conversion to the liberal democratic tradition had been highly exaggerated.

[52] Tang Tsou reaches similar conclusions regarding American perceptions of Chinese Communism in *America's Failure in China,* I, 204–5, 219–21. See also Kenneth E. Shewmaker, *Americans and Chinese Communists, 1927–1945: A Persuading Encounter.*