

## From Truman to Roosevelt Roundtable Review



Reviewed Work:

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Reviewers: Frank Costigliola, Alonzo Hamby, Robert Jervis, Eduard Mark, David S. Painter, Chester Pach.

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## ROUNDTABLE *Review*

**Wilson D. Miscamble.** *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima, and the Cold War.* Cambridge, England and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

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*Published on 10 September 2007; Painter review revised on 12 September 2007 to include missing footnotes.*

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**Introduction by Thomas Maddux, California State University, Northridge**

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If you enter “Harry S. Truman” as a subject entry on Amazon.com , you will get 396 authors on some aspect of President Truman. If you visit the H-Diplo website and check out [the roundtable page](#), you will note eight roundtables that deal with some aspect of Truman’s foreign policies, most recently Tsuyoshi Hasegawa’s *Racing the Enemy: Stalin, Truman, and the Surrender of Japan*, Arnold Offner’s *Another Such Victory: President Truman and the Cold War, 1945-1953*, and Robert Beisner’s *Dean Acheson; A Life in the Cold War*. The primary sources on Truman and his Cold War policies take up over ten pages in Wilson Miscamble’s bibliography but many of the manuscript collections and Department of State records have been worked over by other historians.

After an introductory chapter on the nature of Truman’s views on foreign policy before 1945 and a chapter on “Franklin Roosevelt’s Uncertain Legacy” to Truman in terms of strategy toward the Soviet Union and the agreements from the Tehran and Yalta Conferences, Wilson Miscamble explores Truman’s direction of policy toward Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union in five compact chapters and a concluding chapter. Miscamble focuses on Truman and his interaction with Secretaries of State Edward Stettinius, James Brynes, Secretary of War Henry Stimson, informal advisors like Harry Hopkins and Joseph Davies, and British leaders during the period of April through December 1945.

Do historians need another study of Truman in this period? Miscamble’s answer is yes and the author offers an approach that is significantly different than other popular “life and times” studies, studies that integrate domestic and foreign policy issues, studies that explore the interaction of Washington with major allies and adversaries in the origins of the Cold War, or studies that examine the international and domestic factors shaping Washington’s Cold War policies. Starting with Chapter III Miscamble looks very closely at Truman, almost day by day at the start as Truman struggled to cope with the enormous responsibilities and challenges that he faced in replacing FDR in the aftermath of Yalta and as both fronts in WWII came to a conclusion. Miscamble captures better than previous studies Truman’s effort to bring his limited experience in foreign policy and his limited skills in evaluating international relation problems and strategies to a scrambling effort to find out from the Yalta documents and from Roosevelt’s advisors what Roosevelt was trying to accomplish with Stalin. Truman attempted to do this as doubts and debate swirled around him on the “Yalta accords, the potentially explosive Polish issue, the disputes over the composition of other Eastern European governments, the differences over German matters ....,” and the strategy to force Japan to surrender and end the Pacific war. Just as Robert Beisner’s study of Dean Acheson provides a revealing perspective on Truman’s ultimate Secretary of State and their relationship, Miscamble offers a revealing window into Truman’s “learning on the job” and his relationships with his advisers on relations with the Soviet Union.

The commentators have all made extensive and important contributions to the study of the Cold War and raise in their assessments a number of pertinent issues for discussion. Their

observations on the book and Cold War issues are insightful and suggest areas of future exploration as we acquire access to more primary sources and perspectives from all sides of the Cold War.

1.) Miscamble's central objective is to address the issue of whether Truman attempted to implement FDR's policies toward the Soviet Union and when and why he ultimately moved away from FDR's approach. Most, if not all, of the commentators seem to agree that Miscamble has succeeded in this quest. Closely tracking Truman's efforts to find out FDR's policies, Miscamble argues that Truman, by giving extensive attention to advisers such as Hopkins and Davies, by rejecting Winston Churchill's increasingly alarmist requests to abandon agreements recently made with Stalin that the British leader himself had initiated, and by supporting Hopkins' and Brynes' efforts to negotiate deals with Stalin on Poland, Eastern Europe, and Germany, clearly thought he was following in the footsteps of his predecessor.

2.) The commentators primarily question Miscamble on his assessment of FDR's policies and attitudes towards Stalin. Miscamble is quite critical of FDR in Chapter II. The author suggests that FDR has a benign view of Stalin and his policies, was too conciliatory towards Stalin at Yalta, and held back on economic assistance to the Soviet Union and the sharing of information on atomic power in order to coax Stalin to cooperate rather than to pressure the Soviet leader to accept U.S. views on the Yalta agreements. Some of the reviewers, however, see more calculation in FDR, more of Warren Kimball's "The Juggler", as well as more sensitivity to the enormous benefits of Soviet resistance to Hitler and the important of affirming Soviet participation in the final defeat of Japan. Miscamble recognizes FDR's and Truman's strategic calculations but he would have preferred a more quid pro quo approach favored by American Soviet specialists such as George Kennan as well as a more restrained stance based on recognition of the nature of Stalin and his regime.

3.) Miscamble devotes a chapter to Truman's handling of the use of the atomic bombs on Japan, the "atomic diplomacy" thesis of Gar Alperovitz, the dispute over the impact of the atomic bombs on Japan's decision to surrender, and the morality issue. Miscamble engages Hasegawa's study with respect to the author's depiction of Japan's decision-making on ending the war and Stalin's maneuvering to maximize his gains versus Japan. Miscamble, however, rejects Hasegawa's suggestion that Truman had alternatives to using the atomic bombs as he believes that Truman correctly chose the lesser of two evils in this situation.

4.) Another objective of the author is to challenge the larger evolving revisionist effort to shift major responsibility for the origins of the Cold War from Stalin to Truman and U.S. policymakers. Miscamble forthrightly rejects this from his preface to his conclusion, in which he quotes Tony Judt to the effect that "Revisionism, the wishful search for evidence that the U.S. bore primary responsibility for the origin and pursuit of the Cold War, is now a dead duck." The commentators in different ways and to different degrees question this conclusion.

5.) Miscamble's assessment of Stalin and Soviet policy attracts considerable discussion from the reviewers as Miscamble repeatedly makes it very clear that there was no opportunity for an accommodation with Stalin and that the sooner Truman broke with FDR's approach the better. Without disagreeing with Miscamble's view on Stalin's character and repressive record, the reviewers point to the importance of considering the larger interaction that took place between the U.S. and the Soviet Union as the war came to an end and in its aftermath. U.S. policy involved more than Truman and the Secretary of State, as American diplomats and military officials expressed more critical views than Truman on Soviet policy and encouraged actions with respect to issues like Germany and reparations and the Soviet sphere in Eastern Europe that had an impact on Stalin. For example, there is disagreement over whether or not Truman and Brynes wrote off Eastern Europe as much as Miscamble suggests.

6.) Post-revisionists in the 1970s emphasized the interaction that took place between the U.S. and the Soviet Union and examined the impact of actions, suspicions, and miscalculations affecting both sides and transforming the inevitable disagreements in the aftermath of WWII into the Cold War. A number of the commentators suggest that Miscamble's does not given sufficient attention to this interaction, especially the impact of U.S. actions and inactions on Stalin in areas such as the control of atomic energy, U.S. complaints about the Soviet sphere in Eastern Europe, and issues involving Germany. On the other hand, several reviewers suggest that the interaction really had the most impact in changing Truman's views on Stalin and the possibility of cooperation than on Stalin's objectives.

7.) Miscamble is not reluctant to bring up moral issues in his study not only on the atomic bombing of Japan but also in general on Truman and the Cold War. Although critical of Truman's effort to implement FDR's approach toward Stalin, Miscamble praises the effort "to meet the aggressive designs of the Soviet Union. Men like Truman, Marshall, and Acheson ... deserve praise and gratitude from all those who value democratic ideals today ... [and] it is essential that historians of today appreciate that Truman's administration navigated through 'puzzling and perilous' times to establish eventually a foreign policy whose main elements were appropriate and which protected American security and defended some good measure of democratic freedom in the world."

8.) How does Miscamble evaluate Truman overall as a foreign policy leader? The author advances a mixed view on Truman that at times emphasizes his limitations more than his strengths. Truman did not exhibit much conceptual understanding or recognize the complexity of many international issues. He relied extensively on advisers, followed their advice, never developed a strategy to deal with the transformation precipitated by WWII, and tended to move from one ad hoc policy decision to the next. Truman was far too slow to recognize the dangers of trying to conciliate and cooperate with Stalin. On the other hand, Miscamble does praise Truman for learning about the Soviet Union, and for relying on perceptive policy makers like George Marshall and Dean Acheson.

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9.) Finally, these questions, issues, and perspective lead to the historiographical issue of where Miscamble stands in the evolving schools of interpretation on the Cold War, regardless of how limiting and misleading the labels may be. Miscamble identifies the most with the post-revisionist perspective. However, he is far more critical of FDR's handling of Soviet relations than the post-revisionists and he gives much less importance to miscalculation and misunderstanding than the post-revisionists. He tends to prefer more traditional critics of FDR, Truman, and Stalin. Thus, if students ask for a post-Cold War traditionalist perspective Miscamble may be the best source.

*--Tom Maddux*

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Review by Frank Costigliola, University of Connecticut

Wilson Miscamble has written an intriguing book, not least because he tells two stories, or rather one story on two levels. On one level Miscamble displays his talents as an astute scholar. He offers a detailed, thoughtful contribution to enduring historiographical issues: What foreign policy legacy did Franklin D. Roosevelt bequeath to Harry S Truman? Was there a sharp break between Roosevelt and Truman that helped bring on the Cold War? Was there a reasonable chance to sustain at least rough cooperation with the Soviets in the postwar period? Miscamble argues that Roosevelt left Truman a nebulous policy based on unrealistic hopes of postwar cooperation with the Soviets. He suggests that Truman tried hard to continue Roosevelt's policies, but was hampered by deficiencies in FDR's design and by Joseph Stalin's unwillingness to cooperate. Stalin made a Cold War nearly inevitable. Though this thesis can be challenged (and supported) in many particulars, I will focus largely on the second, moralized level of the story. On this level, Stalin appears as a monster, the Soviet Union is unrelievedly "vile," the United States and its allies invariably good, and even Nazi Germany escapes without too much condemnation. (51, 82, *passim*).

**Frank Costigliola** is Professor of History at the University of Connecticut. He earned his B.A. from Hamilton College in 1968 and his Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1973. He has written *Awkward Dominion: American Political, Economic, and Cultural Relations with Europe, 1919-33* (1984) and *France and the United States: The Cold Alliance since World War II* (1992). He has published a wide variety of essays, including "'Unceasing Pressure for Penetration': Gender, Pathology, and Emotion in George Kennan's Formation of the Cold War," *The Journal of American History* (1997); "Reading for Meaning: Theory, Language, and Metaphor" in Michael J. Hogan and Thomas G. Paterson (ed.), *Explaining the History of American Foreign Relations* (2004); and "'Like Animals or Worse': Narratives of Culture and Emotion by U.S. and British POWs and Airmen behind Soviet Lines, 1944-45," *Diplomatic History* (2004). He has received fellowships from the Guggenheim Foundation, the NEH, the American Philosophical Society, the Norwegian Nobel Institute, and NATO. He is finishing a book entitled *Emotional Alliances: Americans, British, and Soviets in World War II and the Early Cold War*.

I restrict my review to Miscamble's interpretation of Roosevelt and Roosevelt's policies because they constitute the standard against which the author measures Truman and his policies. Authors deserve to write the books they want with the perspectives and values they hold dear. I still wish, however, that Miscamble's treatment of Roosevelt had done more to fulfill his stated aim of "avoid[ing] simply reading history backwards and writing of Truman's foreign policy in light of subsequent Cold War events." (xiii) In this review I will examine three ways in which Miscamble actually does read the history of Roosevelt's "foreign policy in light of subsequent Cold War events." First, he interprets Roosevelt's policies and aspirations regarding the Soviet Union through an interpretive lens that views as essential the Manichean ideological conflict that began in 1917 and intensified in the Cold War. A part of this view is an unrelenting condemnation of the Soviet Union. Second, despite Miscamble's admirable archival research, he relies too much and too uncritically on

impressionistic, Cold-War era sources. Third, the author, with a degree of intentionality impossible to discern, represents Roosevelt in ways that revive early Cold War polemics about U.S. leaders lacking the masculine toughness necessary to deal with Joseph Stalin.

Miscamble is correct and justified in condemning Stalin's "ruthless violence and ferocious internal repression." (49) Yet his lengthy, repeated iterations of Soviet iniquities, give parts of the book the feel of an early 1950s tract. To put it another way, the author, like many State Department officials of the 1930s-50s, seems to have accepted the Riga axioms as a given. Miscamble's condemnation of the Soviets is especially striking because it is not matched by similar criticism of the Nazi Germany wartime enemy. Consider, for instance, the explanation of Truman's "rather flippant comment" in June 1941 that "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." (17) Miscamble is convincing in downplaying the significance of Truman's remark because the senator still supported Lend-Lease and the subsequent alliance with Moscow. What is telling, however, is that the author utilizes Truman's comment as the opportunity for a half-page description of "the tragic consequences of Stalin's horrendous rule." Truman figures only incidentally in sentences that go on about "the horrors of collectivization nor of the terrors and the purges . . . . [Truman] never developed any woolly-headed and morally obtuse sympathy for the Soviet experiment – if that is the terms for that sad tyranny." (18) The Soviet tyranny *was* sad and horrible. Yet Miscamble does not balance his criticism of the Soviets with parallel, emotionally laden criticism of the Nazi system. In 1941-45, it was the horrors and the aggressiveness of the Nazi system that stood forefront in FDR's mind – and in Truman's, for that matter. Instead of describing the wartime enemy, the author utilizes William Langer and Everett Gleason's Cold-War era formulation of "the totalitarian threat" of the "two hated dictatorships." (18) A reader might question why the U.S. fought Germany instead of the Soviet Union.

Miscamble merits applause for his extensive archival research. He looked at a huge variety of sources from the Roosevelt and Truman libraries, the U.S. National Archives, Library of Congress, Public Record Office, and various other archives. It is puzzling, therefore, why he relies so heavily on testimony from Cold-War era observers writing about 1941-46. Surely the position and Cold-War perspective of these writers influenced their judgments. Though these opinions may have utility, they need to be appraised in terms of the writers' experiences, agendas, and access to primary source documents.

Quoting from questionable sources is especially a problem as Miscamble recycles the old charge that Roosevelt naively and inappropriately trusted Stalin. For instance, he cites a supposed recollection of William Bullitt in 1948. In a *LIFE* article, Bullitt claimed that FDR had told him in August 1943: "I think that if I give [Stalin] everything I possibly can and ask nothing in return, noblesse oblige, he won't try to annex anything and will work with me for a world of democracy and peace." (52). According to Bullitt, FDR was irresponsibly giving "everything I possibly can" in return for the dictator's unlikely commitment to

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democracy and peace. But where is the evidence that FDR actually said this? Bullitt habitually wrote or dictated a memorandum of conversation following every talk he had with the President. There is, however, no evidence in either Bullitt's published or unpublished papers that this conversation, and especially these words, were ever uttered.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, by August 1943 FDR was bent on tormenting Bullitt. The erstwhile ambassador to Moscow had forced the firing of FDR's chief aide in the state department, Sumner Welles, by spreading throughout Washington the true story that Welles had a history of soliciting sex from African American train porters. For the rest of his life, Bullitt resented FDR for having ostracized him and side-tracked his career. Bullitt crafted the title of his 1948 *LIFE* article to point up both his Cold-War credentials and FDR's failures: "How We Won the War and Lost the Peace." (52) Bullitt's lesson and, by extension, Miscamble's is clear: FDR's supposed naiveté helped squander victory.

Miscamble also relies on sources that are neither primary nor expert. For instance, he finds "astute" Max Lerner's retrospective judgment that FDR sought to "trust the Russians and win their trust in return." (48) Yet what were Lerner's credentials for arriving at this judgment? Though Lerner had a distinguished career as *PM* and *New York Post* columnist and as author of fifteen books including *America as a Civilization*, he never studied close-up either FDR or Soviet-Americans wartime relations. Lerner lacked the credentials necessary, as either a scholar or an insider, to discern what the Rooseveltian "sphinx" intended toward the Russians. Rather than Lerner, who observed from afar, or Bullitt, who grew furious at Roosevelt, we might seek the appraisal of an insider, Walter Lippmann. For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Lippmann enjoyed unique access to the White House, the executive departments, Congress, the high court, the military brass, and foreign embassies. He saw FDR close up, and criticized him, for more than a dozen years. In Lippmann's judgment, "Roosevelt was a cynical man. What he thought he could do was outwit Stalin."<sup>2</sup> Outwitting Stalin did not, of course, preclude trusting him to a degree and leading him toward a broader understanding of Soviet and Allied interests. An insider of a different sort was FDR's distant relative and companion, Margaret "Daisy" Suckley. In the last eighteen months of his life, an often-lonely Roosevelt confided to Suckley his thoughts about the postwar world. Years later she remembered FDR's stressing two things about Stalin, first that Roosevelt "'had to get-at'" the dictator. The second matter related to trust. "Do you think you could trust him?" she asked. According to Suckley, Roosevelt responded with a laugh, "'Oh, no. If I did something Stalin did not approve of, he'd stab me in the back.'"<sup>3</sup> Roosevelt remained a realist – and a visionary. Roosevelt did suffer some wishful

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1. Orville H. Bullitt (ed.), *For the President Personal and Secret* (Boston, 1972). Bullitt's August 1943 memorandum to FDR warning about Stalin's designs is on 595-99. There is no indication of any reply or conversation. Bullitt's memoranda of conversations with the President are in Yale University, Sterling library, William C. Bullitt papers, box 73. For Bullitt and Welles, see Irwin Gellman, *Secret Affairs* (New York: Enigma Books, 2002).

2. Walter Lippmann oral history, Columbia University, Butler library, 217.

3. Joseph Lash interview with Margaret Suckley, May 1969, Franklin D. Roosevelt library, Joseph Lash papers, box 44.

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thinking. Yet his experience had also taught him that if he kept persevering toward his goal, he might well end up nearby.

A prime example of the two levels in this book centers on how FDR's qualities as a leader affected his treatment of the Soviets. On one level, Miscamble deftly analyzes the complex ambiguity in FDR's attitudes and policies. Yet he is also intent on telling a simpler tale, more disturbing in several ways.

Many authors, mostly recently Mary E. Glantz in 2005, have described the divergent opinions held by Roosevelt and Harry Hopkins, on the one hand, and by the U.S. representatives in Moscow, on the other hand.<sup>4</sup> The representatives in Moscow included ambassadors Laurence Steinhardt and W. Averell Harriman and military attaches Ivan Yeaton and Joseph Michela. Miscamble is distinctive among recent scholars in implying that the divergent opinions stemmed from not merely differences in policy, but also from Roosevelt's deficiencies in masculinity and morality. He lauds Steinhardt and Yeaton as "tough-minded critics" of the Soviet Union. Steinhardt "had realist blood in his veins." (49-50). Unfortunately, however, Steinhardt's "realist blood" did not suffice to keep him calm and steady at his difficult post. He complained that working in the Moscow embassy amounted to "solitary confinement under unspeakable living conditions." It was "enough to get on anyone's nerves."<sup>5</sup> His nerves grew worse after Barbarossa. Beginning four days after the German onslaught, Steinhardt repeatedly pressed Washington, his British colleagues, and the Soviet government to plan for evacuation of the U.S. embassy. Meanwhile, Yeaton's "genuine and tough-minded expertise," remained based, according to other attaches, on his total reliance on German radio reports. (50-51) Even after Steinhardt himself realized that the Soviets would resist, Yeaton's reports to Washington continued to predict imminent Soviet collapse.<sup>6</sup> Miscamble lauds Steinhardt and Yeaton for urging Washington to aid Moscow only on a "reciprocity approach." (51, 50) According to the warped "reciprocity" thesis, the fact that Red Army soldiers were dying by the millions in fighting the *Wehrmacht* did not add up to sufficient payment for generous Lend Lease aid.

In emotionally evocative language, Miscamble represents Roosevelt as lacking the perceptiveness, restraint, and judgment needed in a leader manly enough to stand up to Stalin. Though Miscamble's authorial intent remains impossible to discern, his rhetorical strategy speaks for itself. In his book, published in 2007, Miscamble cites a 1961 essay by George F. Kennan and a 1971 book by Adam Ulam to establish that Stalin's policies in 1939-41 amounted to "craven actions" – while ignoring archivally-based work by Gabriel

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4. Mary E. Glantz, *FDR and the Soviet Union: The President's Battles over Foreign Policy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2005).

5. Laurence Steinhardt to Loy W. Henderson, 16 March 1940, Library of Congress, Laurence Steinhardt papers, box 79.

6. For Steinhardt and Yeaton, see Glantz, *FDR and the Soviet Union*, 48-70.

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Gorodetsky (1999), Michael Carley (2000), Constantine Pleshakov (2005), and David Murphy (2005).<sup>7</sup> Then, in a fusillade of descriptors, Miscamble depicts Roosevelt as taking “a benign interpretation” of the Soviets. He goes on: Stalin’s “perfidy” never “registered fully with him. He never gauged . . .” Roosevelt lacked not only perception but also the rationality and restraint necessary in a manly leader: “An unsentimental appreciation of [Stalin’s] craven actions never served as a break on or even a cautionary guide for American policy as he set about to work with Stalin.” (49) FDR failed to see Stalin’s domestic brutality as “cause for restraint.” (49) Miscamble suggests that lack of restraint could lead to dangerous, inappropriate relationships. In a fascinating sentence, richer in innuendo than in evidence, he writes: “It must surely be said that [Roosevelt] flirted at least with something of the romance of many Western intellectuals regarding the Soviet experiment.” (49) Letting go essential barriers, “the president even proved quite relaxed in the face of warnings of Soviet espionage efforts to penetrate his administration.” (49) Unable to protect the nation himself, FDR aggravated matters by holding “tough-minded critics of the Soviet Union largely at arm’s length.” [sic] (49)

In another purple paragraph, Miscamble first asserts that “in reality, of course, Hitler had left Stalin few options but to fight to the death.” (53) In 1941-44, this “reality” would have come as welcome news to the wide range of U.S. and British diplomats and leaders who had reason to fear a separate Soviet-German peace. Miscamble’s readers again see Roosevelt as inappropriately eager to get along with Stalin and as unseeing. FDR was “unstinting in his efforts,” “expended his energies,” and he gave “soothing reassurances.” (53) He also “downplayed or simply failed to appreciate the ideological chasm”; he “largely ignored”; “he refrained.” All this “complaisance . . . rested upon the tragic misperception that he could build a bond of friendship with his Soviet opposite.” (53)

The author goes on in this vein. He depicts Roosevelt at the Teheran Conference as teasing Churchill “with all the good sense of an immature male trying to impress a member of the opposite sex” – in this case, Stalin. (55). Roosevelt appears in this book as the President with an “enduring commitment to a supine cooperation with the Soviet Union.” (68).

So what? So what if Miscamble uses colorful prose and at times takes a moralistic approach? As I acknowledged at the beginning of this review, every author has the right to write his or her book as he or she likes. But it is also the responsibility of reviewers to point up how the metaphors and other rhetorical strategies of a book can convey a message apart from, or less scholarly than, the author’s principal thesis. In terms of the usual discourse of book reviews, there is much in this book that I agree with and much that I would dispute. One can always disagree with the interpretation of this event or of that

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7. Gabriel Gorodetsky, *Grand Delusion: Stalin and the German Invasion of Russia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Michael Jabara Carley, *1939: The Alliance that Never Was and the Coming of World War II* (London: House of Stratus, 2000); Constantine Pleshakov, *Stalin’s Folly: The Tragic First Days of World War II on the Eastern Front* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2005); David E. Murphy, *What Stalin Knew: The Enigma of Barbarossa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

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document. What I have tried to do, however, in this brief review is to address less often considered issues of tone or register. In this in many ways admirable book, Miscamble aims to redress the “overly simplified view of Truman” and to present “a clear grasp of the legacy that FDR bequeathed to Truman.” (xiv) These worthy aims are, however, undercut by his overly simplified view of Roosevelt. Finally, in this post-Cold War era it seems like unfortunate reversion to use emotional language and innuendo to revive, whether intentionally or not, early Cold-War imputations that insufficiently manly U.S. leaders behaved disgracefully in their dealings with Stalin.

**Review by Alonzo L. Hamby, Ohio University**

## **Two Presidents, One Enigmatic Dictator, and the Origins of the Cold War**

Wilson Miscamble's impressive and welcome new book is far more than top-down, president-centric diplomatic history. Nevertheless, Presidents Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman loom large in this book, simply because only they could make the decisions and establish the atmospherics that brought the United States into first a triumphant alliance, then a cold war, with the Soviet Union. Hovering over all their actions, moreover, was the effort to establish a relationship in the name of peace and freedom with one of the twentieth century's most ruthless despots.

**Alonzo L. Hamby** is Distinguished Professor of History at Ohio University. A graduate of the University of Missouri, Professor Hamby specializes in 20th century U.S. history, especially politics and culture. His books include: *Beyond the New Deal: Harry S. Truman and American Liberalism* (1973); *The Imperial Years: The United States since 1939* (1976); *Liberalism and Its Challengers: F.D.R. to Reagan* (2d ed., 1992); *Man of the People: A Life of Harry S. Truman* (1995), and *For the Survival of Democracy: Franklin Roosevelt and the World Crisis of the 1930s* (2004).

In today's world, Josef Stalin may seem to all but a handful of remaining true believers a one-dimensional tyrant of outsized proportions. In the world of global war and its aftermath, many saw him as the leader of a heroic people who made unimaginable sacrifices in the struggle against Nazism. To Roosevelt and Truman he was an enigma, a puzzle that had to be solved. A comfortable relationship with the USSR rested on a convincing answer to the question: "What does Stalin want?" Miscamble's work vividly displays the difficulties American statesmen had with that question. In the process, it diminishes the reputation of both his presidents, while displaying Stalin as a model of totalitarian consistency.

**Roosevelt.** Miscamble's convincing dissection of Roosevelt's foreign policy is perhaps his major contribution. Much of it will be familiar to students of World War II diplomacy -- and to historians of American liberalism. What is noteworthy is the sustained nature of his indictment. Here one finds not failures balanced against achievements, but rather a consistent lack of vision and reliance on wishful thinking instead of a clear-headed grasp of international realities.

Few presidents have been more prepared than Roosevelt to manage a nation's international relations. Born into an old and cosmopolitan establishment, he had traveled widely, received an elite education, and since boyhood known numerous individuals who represented the United States to the wider world. An avid reader of Alfred Thayer Mahan in his teens, Assistant Secretary of the Navy at the age of thirty-one, he was a genuine expert on naval strategy and capabilities. A keen observer and deep admirer of Theodore Roosevelt's diplomacy, he could legitimately feel that he was carrying on a family tradition. Leader of a World War I delegation to Britain and France in 1918, he had met with high-

level statesmen in both nations. In 1919, he had observed the Versailles Conference close-up for six weeks.

Why then was he unable to transfer this wealth of experience to the great world crisis of the 1940s?

Miscamble's Roosevelt is a diplomatic leader who fundamentally disliked and distrusted his democratic allies, thought "Europe" had been a source of conflict in the world, saw European imperialism as an intolerable threat to future peace, and placed his hopes for world stability in a close relationship with the Soviet Union. Apparently never gauging the potential for conflict between American and Soviet interests, he seems to have believed that profuse demonstrations of good will and a personal relationship with Josef Stalin would be sufficient to resolve any disputes that might arise between their nations. In the first Big Three meeting at Tehran he attempted to ingratiate himself with Stalin by needling Churchill at every opportunity. He gave the Soviet Union *carte blanche* in its requests for Lend-Lease aid; Britain by contrast had to present detailed justification and engage in complex negotiations.

Publicly pursuing a rhetoric of idealism that Woodrow Wilson would have admired, Roosevelt privately considered himself a practitioner of realistic power politics. Yet he was feckless enough to assume that China would be one of the "Four Policemen" that would run the world behind the façade of the United Nations organization. It is easy to consider him a dilettante with a grossly misplaced confidence in his own capabilities and a lack of interest in using the large body of expertise housed in the Department of State and the Foreign Service. The president's closest aide in foreign relations (so long as his health held out) was Harry Hopkins, a social worker and Depression relief impresario. On Soviet affairs, he was more swayed by amateur diplomat Joseph Davies than by such Soviet specialists as George Kennan and Charles Bohlen.

Roosevelt viewed the Grand Alliance of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union not as a transitory amalgam of nations with a common interest in the defeat of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, but as the lasting foundation for a new democratic world order freed from the evils of European imperialism. Britain and perhaps China would be junior partners, the United States and the USSR the senior managers. As nearly as one can tell, Roosevelt had no concern that Soviet imperialism might be worse than French, British, or Dutch imperialism and considerably less constrained by a sense of limits.

There were legitimate explanations for some of these attitudes; perhaps Miscamble should give them more credence than he does. First and foremost, it was imperative to keep the Soviet Union in the war. Until the end of 1943, the specter of a separate peace between the USSR and Germany haunted American and British foreign policy. And once the alliance was solid, few Americans wanted a hostile relationship with the USSR after the Axis had been put down. When the war ended, there was little point in attempting to push back the Soviet sphere of dominance established by the Red Army in central and eastern Europe.

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Roosevelt's reduction of foreign relations to personal relations was hardly unique. It was, and is, a common fallacy of Western democratic statesmanship, practiced in one fashion or another by most of his successors, encouraged by a superficial press and clueless public. (Harry Truman, for example, would not be above thinking from time to time that if he could just get through to Stalin, the problems between their nations would be quickly solved. Recall the aborted "Vinson mission" of 1948.)

Finally, Roosevelt was in many respects an excellent war leader. He turned over military operations to the professionals and never interfered with them. His radio addresses and speeches, justifying the conflict in terms of the highest American ideals, were inspirational. It is hard to imagine that any other possible chief executive could have been so effective in rallying the American people.

All this said, Miscamble's criticisms are valid. They are not new, but they are brought together with impressive comprehensiveness and restraint. Most importantly, they are not personal in the mode of so much of the criticism leveled at Roosevelt over the years. The FDR that emerges from this book is not malign, simply misguided in a fashion common for his time:

Apparently he shared the sympathy of certain left-wing and progressive members of his New Deal coalition for the Soviets once they moved into the antifascist camp. It must surely be said that he flirted at least with something of the romance of many Western intellectuals regarding the Soviet experiment. That dire reality was judged not so much on what it was but rather on what it might become . . . . As the war progressed, the president even proved quite relaxed in the face of warnings of Soviet espionage . . . . Roosevelt held tough-minded critics of the Soviet Union largely at arm's length throughout the war. He preferred the counsel of those like former ambassador Davies and, most importantly, Harry Hopkins. (49)

Miscamble, in fact, sees Roosevelt not as a non-ideological opportunist, but as a rather dogmatic Popular Front liberal, persuaded that the USSR, for all its faults, was a progressive force in history, that Stalin was qualitatively different from Hitler, and that the Nazi-Soviet alliance of 1939-41 had been an aberration. The attitude was common in the liberal press during the war; read any issue of the *New Republic* or the *Nation*. Vice-president Henry Wallace in his notable 1942 speech, "The Price of Free World Victory," declared that the USSR had surpassed the U.S. in most measures of democracy. Many members of the administration shared his perspective, which perfectly expressed the dominant mood of the left. In that sense, Roosevelt was a man of his time. He was also profoundly mistaken. Whether, like most of the liberal movement, he would have come to realize that mistake and commit to the containment of Soviet power can never be known. One puts down this book thinking it doubtful.

**Truman.** Roosevelt's successor would go through his own period of floundering. Harry S. Truman came to the presidency with none of Roosevelt's prior experience in foreign

relations, although, as Miscamble shows, he did take a keen interest in the topic and stake out positions during the war. Miscamble is somewhat more critical of Truman than I. Where he sees lack of direction and even befuddlement, I see sound instincts and about as rapid a reorientation of policy toward the Soviet Union as possible in the flux of postwar events.

Truman came to office sincerely committed to following Roosevelt's policies, but with different attitudes about their implementation. He had no illusions about the USSR, which he had long considered a totalitarian state. He understood the importance of power in international relations. He saw negotiation, whether in domestic politics or in diplomacy, as a process of give-and-take, not unilateral concession. At the same time, he had no interest in a hostile relationship. When he met Stalin at Potsdam, he came away thinking he had encountered the Russian version of a tough, no-nonsense American political boss, who could be trusted to keep his word. He was unavoidably dependent in the beginning on Roosevelt's trusted enablers, Davies and Hopkins. His appointment of James Byrnes as Secretary of State, while popular in Washington, provided no sense of direction to American foreign policy. Byrnes was a tactician, a deal-maker, not a strategist with a considered grasp of international affairs.

Where Roosevelt had followed a policy of postponement whenever disagreement came up, Truman wanted agreements that would stand. By the end of 1945, he was becoming increasingly doubtful. The Kennan long telegram of February 1946, the subsequent Soviet rejection of the Baruch Plan for international control of atomic energy, crises in Greece, Turkey, and Iran -- all turned him toward confrontation. The conversion of Dean Acheson, genuinely soft toward the USSR as an Assistant Secretary of State, was critical also. The real beginning of the Cold War was in the spring of 1946, about a year after Truman took office. It is hard to see how it could have started sooner.

**Stalin.** Miscamble probes both Roosevelt and Truman insightfully and, a few qualms aside, very successfully. Stalin is a different story. We see Roosevelt and Truman reacting to him, trying to reach out to him, and, in Truman's case, finally breaking with him. We do not get as high a level of analysis of his motivation. In general, Miscamble sees him as paranoid, unscrupulous, perhaps ideologically driven, and pressing for as much expansion as the West would tolerate. In the end, the United States was not prepared to challenge his Eastern European conquests, but ready to stand fast against his ambitions in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Western Europe. It seems pretty clear that Roosevelt would have tolerated the Soviet dominance "from Stettin to Trieste" that Churchill denounced in Fulton, Missouri. So also would have Truman. Both presidents would have hoped for a loose grip akin to that established over Finland after the war. In the end, it was Stalin's rejection of the "Finlandization" of Eastern Europe and his efforts to extend Soviet power, not American diplomacy, that made the Cold War inevitable.

**The Achievement.** Until recently, the major study of this period was John Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* (1972), a literate and perceptive narrative that

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covers much the same ground as *From Roosevelt to Truman*. No doubt, Gaddis and Miscamble could find numerous specifics to argue about. Moreover, Miscamble's placement of blame for the forty-five year crisis that came out of World War II is far less ambiguous than Gaddis's. What makes this book impressive, however, is the way in which it draws on a vast array of primary and secondary sources unavailable to Gaddis and pulls them into a coherent and convincing narrative. The result is the new hegemonic work on the origins of the Cold War. Gaddis's book merited a Bancroft Prize. This one deserves similar recognition.

**Review by Robert Jervis, Columbia University**

Wilson Miscamble's fine book is traditional in approach but not in its arguments. It is traditional in focusing on what the top decision-makers were thinking, saying, and doing. Race, class, and gender do not appear, and cultural studies methods are not deployed. Old-fashioned perhaps, but since Miscamble is studying the origins and evolution of U.S. foreign policy under Truman in 1945 and 1946, not necessarily inappropriate. Indeed, it is not clear that the more currently popular approaches could address his questions.

Miscamble also sails into the prevailing winds of historical sentiment in his central argument that FDR was naive in his attitudes towards Stalin and the USSR, that Truman maintained this stance well into 1946, and that Truman was vacillating and inconsistent for much longer than many scholars believe. For Miscamble, what is striking is not that Truman abandoned FDR's policy, but that he sought to maintain it for so long in the face of such unpromising Soviet behavior. Although at several points Truman lost his patience with Stalin, he soon regained it and continued his quest for agreements and understandings, a policy he abandoned only in 1947.

In his portrait of Truman and, to a lesser extent, FDR, Miscamble breaks new ground in some areas and in several others provides more detailed evidence and careful argument in the service of claims previously noted by others. In the former category, and crucial to his general argument, Miscamble shows that in his first six months in office Truman relied heavily on the counsel of Joseph Davies, FDR's ambassador to Moscow in the 1930s and a strong -- some would say notorious -- supporter of conciliating the Soviet Union. Miscamble exaggerates only slightly when he says that Davies "has been

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treated rather like some disgraced Soviet figure airbrushed out of official photos for fear his presence might contaminate the reputation of the remaining subject” (p. 136). Although sometimes he relies a bit uncritically on Davies’s diaries to establish the influence that Davies ascribes to himself (pp. 137-38), he establishes beyond a reasonable doubt that Truman valued Davies’s counsel and often followed it and that Davies in turn approved of what the president did, at least until the end of 1946. Since the photographs of Potsdam have not been literally airbrushed, one can see that Davies was one of the four people Truman brought to the table. This provides crucial support for Miscamble’s central argument that Truman did not quickly adopt a “hard line,” as both Truman and many of his revisionist critics would have us believe.

In an area as heavily researched as the start of the Cold War it is neither surprising nor alarming that on many other questions Miscamble finds forerunners. But the depth of his documentation and care of his arguments means that he does far more than repeat what others have said. In this category I would put his claim that FDR was not in the process of abandoning his conciliatory policy when he died. Of course it is notoriously difficult to fathom Roosevelt’s plans and expectations, but I think Miscamble has put the ball back into the court of those who would argue for a fundamental shift. Miscamble also shows Truman’s ad hoc, confused, and often desultory style of foreign-policy making. (Nevertheless, I do not think it is only reading today’s newspapers that leads to amazement at the number of complex policies put in motion relatively smoothly and carried out relatively well. Ironically, the vast increase in the size of the foreign policy apparatus may make it much harder now to carry out an agile and consistent foreign policy.) Quite contrary to the image he wanted to project at the time and later, Truman usually was not decisive. More strikingly, he often was not present. He delegated much more to his subordinates than many presidents did, and he rarely questioned them critically. Relatedly, more than is true in some accounts, Miscamble is fully aware of the extent to which Truman was overloaded if not overwhelmed in this period and whenever possible sought to concentrate on domestic policy and politics.

More substantively, Miscamble stresses that Truman broke with James Byrnes, the Secretary of State he appointed and relied on so heavily, not because Byrnes was too “soft” on the Soviet Union, but because he showed insufficient respect for the president. This point figures heavily in the story because it means that Truman’s turn against Byrnes does not show that he was rejecting Byrnes’s policies. Indeed, Truman’s progression from conciliation to containment (the terms oversimplify, I know) was not direct and unidirectional. Instead, Miscamble adds weight to the argument previously made by Deborah Larson that at least until early 1947 Truman vacillated, sometimes offering concessions and at other times refusing to yield. Over time, the policy drifted toward the latter, but the progression was not smooth.

Miscamble gives a full chapter to the decision to use atomic bombs against Japan. Although this interrupts the narrative a bit, the topic is so important and contested that the price is worth paying. He makes a strong defense of Truman’s actions, arguing that it is hard to

imagine FDR or indeed any American president doing otherwise. The critics slight the context of the long and bitter Pacific war and the understandable priority Truman placed on ending it as quickly as possible at the lowest possible cost of American lives. Miscamble convincingly argues that the critics also fail to understand that an earlier expression of the willingness to allow the Emperor to keep his throne would not have brought peace and that any alternative policy would have exacted a higher cost in the lives not only of Americans, but also of Chinese and Japanese. In fact, and here Miscamble builds on Tsuyoshi Hasegawa's recent book (although rejecting many of its main arguments), without a prompt surrender, Stalin would have seized northern Hokkaido (p. 240). Of course there will be no last word in these arguments, but I think Miscamble does a fine job of putting into their proper context several of the phrases and sentences found in primary sources such as Truman's diary on which some scholars place excessive weight.

Let me take up a few issues that are of particular interest to international relations (IR) scholars as well as to historians. One is the claim for the continuity between FDR and Truman. Although proof or disproof must lie in the careful analysis of U.S. policy, two points arise from a broader social science perspective. First, the very fact that Truman had little independent domestic support and followed a president of towering stature meant that it would have been difficult for him to have diverged from what people felt was FDR's policy even if he wanted to. He not only felt a moral obligation to continue his predecessor's legacy, this was a political imperative. Until he had a chance to develop his own domestic support and until memories of FDR faded a bit, he would be vulnerable to charges of moving off Roosevelt's path. Of course, Truman was not powerless here, and he could frame his actions as being consistent with FDR's even if they were not. But this would be difficult terrain. Second, just as historians debate the relative impact of individuals and the situation, so IR scholars are concerned with the "level of analysis" problem--i.e., the question of whether the main determinants of a state's foreign policy lie in the realm of the decision-making, domestic politics, or the external environment. Realists stress the latter, and so are prone to denigrate the importance of individuals. The stress on the importance of the external environment naturally goes along with the Realist claim that there is only a reduced range of choice in foreign policy, and that issues of morality do not arise. Miscamble's position straddles the IR schools of thought, as do the views of many historians. Although he stresses the continuity between FDR and Truman, he also asserts that a different leader might well have behaved differently. A more perceptive and realistic statesman would have bargained harder with the USSR; someone whose outlook and style differed from Truman's might have continued to conciliate the Soviet Union for a longer period.

Although the claim that Truman quickly abandoned FDR's policy of conciliation is associated with some scholars on the left, most notably Gar Alperovitz, it is no accident that among those who have most vehemently rejected this thesis are Marxist scholars. The reason gets back to levels of analysis: Marxism says that a state's foreign policy is deeply rooted in its domestic political system and that the U.S. had to try to push communism back and keep the world open for capitalist penetration if it was to maintain capitalism at home.

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This meant not that presidents took orders from Wall Street, but that these economic and political imperatives bore down on all American presidents. To argue that Truman made a significant difference is to say that if FDR had lived the Cold War might have been avoided. It is hard to maintain this view within a Marxist framework. This is not to say that Marxists are uniquely close-minded. Theories are necessary if we are to interpret events and make sense of our world, and logic as well as psychology means that we will not discard what we think is a well established theory just because someone can propose a counterfactual that, by its very nature, cannot be fully supported by hard evidence (i.e., that FDR would have behaved very differently than Truman did).

At the risk of over-simplification (mine, not Miscamble's), I think we can draw from his narrative an account of U.S. policy moving through three stages. FDR "rather naively...relied on his hunches and intuitions and held the hope that he could civilize or domesticate the Soviet 'beast' and establish a personal connection with Stalin" (p. 323). Envisioning the great powers forming something like a concert system that would keep the U.S. in world affairs without requiring it to maintain troops in Europe, he worried as much about conflict with Great Britain as with the USSR, and he replied to William Bullitt's 1943 warning about Soviet ambitions by saying: "I have a hunch that Stalin is not that kind of man. Harry [Hopkins] says he's not and that he doesn't want anything but security for his country, and I think that if I give him everything I possibly can and ask nothing from him in return, noblesse oblige, he won't try to annex anything and will work with me for a world of democracy and peace" (p. 52). Although Truman had less faith in his ability to strike a close personal relationship with Stalin, he maintained this stance through much of 1946. But it was mixed with the approach best associated with Byrnes, whose background inclined him toward bargaining, reciprocity, and horse-trading, and who famously explained that we could and should deal with the Soviets the way Senators deal with each other: "you build a post office in their state, and they'll build a post office in our state" (p. 214). So it is not surprising that it was Byrnes who broke the deadlock at Potsdam, and did so by proposing a bargain across several issues. Confirming the analyses of Marc Trachtenberg and James McAllister, Miscamble sees Byrnes as also seeking ways to reduce conflict by eliminating the need for joint decisions when working together appeared too difficult, as on the crucial issues of reparations and the governing of Germany.

Unlike FDR, Byrnes demanded quid pro quos and bargained hard. But he still envisioned this as bargaining similar to that in domestic politics; one or two stray remarks to the contrary, he did not employ coercion or doubt the possibility of a constructive if not harmonious relationship. By the end of 1946, the deadlocks in the Council of Foreign Ministers meetings, the rejection of his proposals for German disarmament and demilitarization that Byrnes believed would provide for Soviet security, Soviet repression in East Europe, and the pressures on Turkey and Iran (discussed only in passing by Miscamble) led Byrnes and Truman to shift more toward containment, a stance that aimed at building up positions of strength, had few expectations for productive bargains, and stopped searching for solutions that were in both sides' interest. I think one could add a fourth phase, symbolized by the adoption of NSC 4a (December 1947), 10/2 (June 1948),

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and 20/4 (November 1948) that involved a more offensive posture in the belief that a long-run Cold War could not be sustained because it would lead either to a shooting war or to American collapse, and that the Soviet regime had to be undermined.

The obvious question is what caused these shifts. I think one can infer from Miscamble's account that the first one was caused less by changes in Soviet behavior than by Truman's decision to replace Edward Stettinius, who Acheson described as someone who "had gone far with comparatively modest equipment" (p. 96), with Byrnes. In doing so, Truman was calling on a smart and experienced political leader, and Miscamble reminds us that he wanted someone who had held elective office to be next in the line of succession. What is striking is that "substantive policy issues played virtually no part" (p. 96) in the decision, which means that the shift to a stance of bargaining and reciprocity came not because Truman's beliefs and preferences had changed, but because this came along with the person he selected to run his foreign policy. Although startling from the common picture of aides being chosen because they mirror the president's values and politics, in fact this is not so unusual. To take a contemporary case, the selection of L. Paul Bremer to take charge in Baghdad was highly consequential, leading to a number of choices such as disbanding the Iraqi army. But it does not appear that Bremer was chosen because he had these views.

The shift from bargaining to containment and from containment to a more offensive stance was much more driven by Truman's increasing disillusion with Stalin and the Soviet Union. One crucial question here is exactly what Soviet behavior led to the change. Unfortunately for scholars, the impact of various events is hard to disentangle. The urgings of the British and especially Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin were important, and it appears to have been the combination of Soviet activities and pressures that took such a toll. Any one of them might have been seen as the occasion for further bargaining, but together they generated the impression that Stalin could only be stopped by firmness and threats, and that bargains would not be stable unless they were backed by possible coercion.

Miscamble agrees with many other scholars that for Truman, and to a lesser extent for Byrnes, a central "test" was whether Stalin would "keep his word," to use a phrase that was common for Truman. The president had worked with many distasteful characters in his career, especially Missouri boss Tom Pendergast, and had come to believe that arrangements with them were possible as long as they kept their word, as he believed that Pendergast had. So the perceptions that Stalin was renegeing on agreements carried great weight for him. In this he was not hypocritical, or at least was not entirely so. One reason why he rebuffed Churchill's suggestion that the Allies should not withdraw from their advanced positions in Germany without gaining concessions from Stalin was the belief that doing so would break FDR's pledges (pp. 138, 166). I think this also helps explain why Truman and others were so alarmed at the tightening of Soviet control in Eastern Europe. At one level, the fear makes no sense: why should Soviet repression in Eastern Europe lead to the fear that the Soviets would seek to expand elsewhere? Part of the answer of course is that this is not all that the Soviets were doing, and the combination of their activities was alarming. Part also lies in the association of domestic repression with foreign aggression,

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an association greatly heightened by the experience of Hitler. But part also is that the Soviets were seen as breaking their word, and American (and other) observers inferred that a country that broke its word in one area could not be trusted in others.

It would help here if IR scholars could bring to bear a rich and rigorous body of scholarship dealing with threat perception. The question of the conditions that lead states to perceive threats is obviously a central one, and we find lots of cases of over-perception and under-perception of threats. But we do not have much good social science to draw on, and so rather than review the fairly small literature let me pass on to another question about East Europe. Miscamble's account confirms the view that FDR and Truman expected and accepted some sort of Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe. The Soviets, after all, did have legitimate security interests. Although Miscamble does not discuss this in detail, I think what is crucial is that they expected this sphere to be a "soft" or "open" one. The Soviets would be the leading state and would see that these countries did not adopt unacceptable foreign policies, but there would be relatively free domestic political competition. What was not expected was the hardening of the Soviet sphere (pp. 39, 67, 212-14, 255, 271, 274, 291-2). Several questions can be raised, but the one I think is particularly central is whether soft spheres were ever possible. I join Miscamble in doubting it. Anything like the free play of domestic competition in Eastern Europe would have been likely to produce governments that were anti-Communist and anti-Soviet. These countries did not have the attitudes, institutions, and discipline that would have permitted stable Finlandization. What FDR and others expected was then an illusion. Since Stalin was no fool and it is particularly hard for even a more empathetic person than he to understand other's illusions, he probably believed that when the U.S. and Britain agreed to his sphere, they knew what it would entail. Their protests and professions of shock therefore could not be sincere and instead signaled their threatening ambitions.

In Eastern Europe and elsewhere, I would have liked Miscamble to have said more about American and British intelligence, both in the analyses of the USSR and in the development of covert activities. Although the latter grew mainly in the years after Miscamble's account, Eduard Mark's important article that Miscamble uses for part of his story shows significant American activities in 1946.

This goes to a broader point. As Miscamble says, his "study unashamedly is Washington-centered and, to a significant extent, White House-centered" (p. xii). In one way, this is perfectly legitimate. No history can cover everything, and Miscamble's purpose is to explain Truman's policy. The difficulty is that Truman saw objectionable Soviet behavior as unprovoked and therefore as indicating malign intentions. Although on balance I agree with Miscamble, he fails to take account of what the U.S. was doing in the field. Anything beyond Truman's vision is excluded from Miscamble's. And a great deal was excluded from Truman's sight because, as Miscamble has shown, he delegated a great deal and did not display much curiosity. The American stance in Germany that diverged from the Potsdam understanding and American covert actions in Eastern Europe could have produced responses that Truman would see as unprovoked. If something like this occurred -- and

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obviously this picks up on central arguments about the origins of the Cold War -- then while in some sense Miscamble's account explains Truman's perceptions and policies, it jumps too soon to the conclusion that Truman's views were correct.

Miscamble makes no bones about the fact that this is what he does believe. Stalin was inherently aggressive; FDR's policies that Truman followed at first were doomed and misguided; Byrnes's bargaining stance was an improvement, but still insufficient; and only containment if not a more offensive stance could protect Europe and American security. The difficulty is that Miscamble cannot fully establish these positions without more analysis of the possible impact of American policies. For example, Stalin did not have to be paranoid to view the Baruch Plan, and perhaps even the Acheson-Lillienthal variant out of which it grew, as unacceptable. More generally, even though I think the balance of evidence is on Miscamble's side, serious alternative views of Stalin are possible and I would dissent from his degree of certainty. Although a Washington-centered account can tell us a great deal, it cannot come to grips with questions of this sort.

As a Catholic priest who has served as Rector of Moreau Seminary at Notre Dame, Miscamble thoughtfully engages with a number of the moral issues raised by his history. They come up most centrally in the treatment of Hiroshima, but frame and set the tone for much of his discussion. His general perspective is I think quite admirable. He avoids cheap moralizing, which is unfortunately common, and empathizes with the dilemmas faced by decision-makers while still being able to step back and offer critical judgments. Like the "classical" realists such as Hans Morgenthau and Reinhold Niebuhr, Miscamble understands that politics, especially international politics, inevitably involves not only dealing with but doing evil. Even the best policy involves inflicting harm on innocents. Scholars who fail to understand this are merely harmlessly sanctimonious, but decision-makers who fool themselves on this score pursue psychological peace of mind at the cost of effective and moral policies. Miscamble then has sympathy with George Kennan's objection to the American acquiescence to Soviet domination of East Europe. When Hopkins queried him on his opposition to the arrangements in Poland, Kennan agreed that while the U.S. could not prevent this outcome, neither should it formally agree. Hopkins found this puzzling and asked Kennan, "[T]hen you think it's just sin and we should be agin it?" Kennan agreed, and Hopkins replied: "I respect your opinion but I am not at liberty to accept it" (p. 158). One can still debate who was right, but the tension is an unavoidable part of statecraft.

This perspective also sheds a somewhat different light on Miscamble's criticism of FDR and the early Truman for having naively conciliated the USSR in the face of its obvious evil and expansionism. Miscamble is right that the U.S. had alternatives: "A politician as devious and deft as Roosevelt would have been able to apply quid pro quo tactics with rare skill if he had chosen and as his ambassadors as Steinhart and Harriman regularly recommended" (p. 80). But on his penultimate page, Miscamble quotes Churchill's moving eulogy for Neville Chamberlain: "it is not given to human beings...to foresee and predict to any large extent the unfolding course of events. In one phase men seem to have been right, and in

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another they seem to have been wrong” (p. 331). Even if Miscamble is correct that Stalin could not have been conciliated and a tougher policy would have produced better results, it can be argued that this could not have been known at the time. There was good reason for Roosevelt to believe that a harsh stance would sacrifice the possibility for harmonious post-war relations, sour the American public on internationalism and the idea of the United Nations, and endanger the peace. There was a chance that his approach would work, and even if he overestimated the probability of success, it may have made sense to act as he did. In the last message that FDR personally drafted, he rejected the advice of Harriman and Churchill to vehemently protest Stalin’s charges of American bad faith in the negotiations for the surrender of German forces in northern Italy (“the Berne Incident”). When Harriman queried FDR’s use of the word “minor” to describe the incident, Roosevelt replied “I do not wish to delete the word ‘minor’ as it is my desire to consider the Berne misunderstanding a minor incident.” He similarly wrote Churchill that “I would minimize the general Soviet problem as much as possible because these problems in one form or another, seem to arise every day and most of them straighten out as in the case of the Berne meeting” (p. 78). FDR may have been wrong, but to have behaved otherwise would have been to forfeit the chance for a better world, and this gamble may have been worth taking. The policies of Roosevelt and the early Truman administration may then have been both deeply flawed and moral.

**Review by Eduard Mark, Department of the Air Force**

One of the central questions around which the controversy over the origins of the Cold War has developed is whether President Harry S. Truman and his advisers continued or reversed the policies with which Franklin D. Roosevelt had attempted to preserve the Grand Alliance. That question Wilson Miscamble has made the subject of an interesting new book. Professor Miscamble's answer, in brief, is that the Truman Administration strove in almost every way to continue Roosevelt's policies as its leading members understood them, although their efforts were certainly complicated by the failure of the deceased President to explain his plans to his Vice President or, for that matter, to anyone else. In their effort to forge a decent postwar relationship with the USSR, Professor Miscamble maintains, Truman and his advisers persevered sedulously – although not without tactical changes -- until Soviet actions forced them at length to reconsider matters. He finds the point of inflection not in the first days or weeks of Truman's succession, but in the late summer of 1946 when Soviet pressures on Turkey persuaded the President and most of his advisers that a firmer policy toward the Soviet Union was required. Even then, however, there was no clean break with the policy of attempting to find common ground with the Soviets, which lingered fitfully into 1947, when a disillusioned George C. Marshall returned from the Conference of Foreign Ministers convinced that it was Moscow's policy to allow Europe to lapse into ruin.

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Professor Miscamble, whom I am pleased to say I have long known, is a man of gentle disposition. But in the writing of this book he has engaged himself with a passion not often seen in a field of history which, more than many others, lends itself to a certain dryness. "Revisionism" – in this instance, the contention that Truman and his advisers quickly and with a will set themselves to reversing Roosevelt's policy of engagement with the Soviets – he would consign to condign oblivion in the "historiographical dustbin." (325) The passion Professor Miscamble brings to this task will impress – or nettle – readers scarcely less than the careful and scrupulous research with which he reconstructs the evolution of Truman's approach to the Soviet Union during first years in the White House.

In my view, the question of whether Professor Miscamble succeeds in his effort to demonstrate a fundamental continuity of intention between the Roosevelt and Truman Administrations admits of no simple answer. I hasten to add that, in my opinion, his

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demonstration that Truman and his inner circle fully intended to preserve the wartime cooperation with the Soviet Union, such as it was, is virtually conclusive. His conclusion might, however, have been shaded somewhat if he had looked into the activities of the military and the intelligence community. Whereas Truman, as Professor Miscamble's plausibly argues, continued to view the USSR into 1946 as troublesome ally, the Joint Staff viewed the USSR as a potential enemy by the fall of 1945, when consideration of war with the Soviet Union actively began. A similar view obtained in the War Department's interim intelligence organization, the Strategic Services Unit, by the first weeks of 1946.<sup>1</sup> It is fair to say, too, that diplomats tended to be somewhat less than sanguine when they contemplated future relations with the Soviet Union.

But, as I have said, Professor Miscamble's principal concern is Truman and his closest advisers, and the reservations of soldiers and intelligence officers had little practical effect on policy before the summer of 1946. (Those of the diplomats were another matter, but our author is not unaware of them.) The careful tracing of the evolution of the thirty-third president's stance vis-a-vis the Soviet Union on the whole tends to sustain the basic thesis of this book. Miscamble's critique, moreover, of various arguments to the effect that there was an abrupt and rather brutal abandonment of Roosevelt's policies are generally plausible. But I harbor withal reservations. These concern not so much the principal question to which the author has addressed himself as aspects of the interpretation of American and Soviet foreign policies that frame his inquiry.

I turn first to the portrayal of Franklin D. Roosevelt and his policy toward the Soviet Union. While Professor Miscamble is at pains to show that Truman conscientiously strove to continue the work of his predecessor, he is plainly of the view that this was not altogether to his credit: "Regrettably, the Truman Administration expended too much energy in 1945 and 1946 negotiating with the Soviets and, in a way, attempting to reassure and place them and to reach amicable settlements with them." (326) It is not, I think, unfair to say that Miscamble believes with Roosevelt's approach to the Soviet Union was on the whole foolish and misguided. Roosevelt, he writes,

Rather naively . . . relied on his hunches and intuitions and held the hope that he could civilize or domesticate the Soviet 'beast' and establish a personal connection with Stalin. Operating on this sad delusion, Roosevelt fashioned a strategy toward the Soviets based on personal connections and significant concessions aimed at reassuring them of his bona fides.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> These are complicated matters that I cannot pursue further here. I deal with military planning in a completed work now wending its way through the process of declassification, *"A Gloomier Peace": The Grand Strategy of the United States and the Defense of Western Europe, 1946-1954*. David Alvarez and I are in the final stages of writing a study of intelligence in the early Cold War with the working title, *"Through A Glass, Darkly: American Intelligence and the Soviet Union and the Dawn of the Cold War*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 323.

That these were elements of Roosevelt's policy is certainly true, but there was more. Whether FDR's agreement with Churchill that even the fact that the atomic bomb was under development should be withheld from Moscow bore any relation his Soviet policy is to the best of my knowledge uncertain, although I suspect that there was a connection at some level. But it is quite certain that he refused to discuss postwar economic aid to the Soviet Union at Yalta out of political calculation.<sup>3</sup> It would have been provocative to tell the Soviets in so many words that aid was conditional upon their behavior, but FDR's silence on the subject spoke volumes, coming as it did immediately after a Soviet request for an enormous postwar credit. And, as has often been observed, Roosevelt could hardly have been clearer at Yalta about what he expected of the postwar elections in Poland. To couple that reminder with threats would have been highly impolitic when he was still seeking so much of the Soviets, particularly their participation in the war against Japan.

Also worthy of note are the constraints under which Roosevelt labored in dealing with the Soviets. Surely the most important of these was the danger that the Soviets would conclude a separate peace with Germany. The Soviets admitted at the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers in October 1943 that the Germans had approached them, and even before then Washington knew of contacts between the Soviets and the Germans in Stockholm. In October 1943, when Ambassador William Standley returned to the United States, Roosevelt asked him straightaway, "What do you think, Bill, will he [Stalin] make a separate peace with Hitler?"<sup>4</sup> Just days before his death Roosevelt told Senator Arthur Vandenberg that throughout the war he had been under "the awful pressure of a fear that Russia would withdraw from the war and make a separate peace."<sup>5</sup> Even now, none can say that this concern was not justified.<sup>6</sup> Also important was the tenor of the military advice that Roosevelt received. Throughout the war the Joint Chiefs of Staff took the position that as the United States, even in alliance with Britain, could not win a war against the Soviets in Europe, and that concessions to Moscow were accordingly in order to obviate the possibility of such a catastrophe. These warnings the State Department placed in the

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<sup>3</sup> The Soviets having requested postwar credits, Secretary of the Treasury Morgenthau wished to take the matter up with them posthaste. Roosevelt would not hear of it, saying (as Morgenthau recalled) "Well, after all, we are not having any finance people with us and I will just tell them we can't do anything important until we get back to Washington . . . I think it's very important that we hold this back and don't give them any promises of finance until we get what we want." Morgenthau was taken aback, telling Fleet Admiral William Leahy, "that both the President and Stettinius were wrong and that if they wanted to get the Russians to do something they should . . . do it nice . . . Don't drive such a hard bargain that when you come through it does not taste good." Blum, ed., *From the Morgenthau Diaries*, 3, *Years of War*, 305

<sup>4</sup> William H. Standley and Arthur A. Ageton, *Admiral Ambassador to Russia* (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1955), 498.

<sup>5</sup> Arthur H. Vandenberg, Jr. and Joe Alex Morris, eds., *The Private Papers of Senator Vandenberg* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1952), 245.

<sup>6</sup> It is perhaps significant that at last report the relevant portions of the diary of the Soviet ambassador to Sweden, Alexandra Kollontai, remain closed in the archive of the Foreign Ministry of the Russian Federation. All my efforts to gain access to them were summarily rebuffed, even in the heyday of archival *glasnost*.

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presidential briefing books prepared for both Yalta and Potsdam.<sup>7</sup> And, in my judgment, they plainly had an effect on Roosevelt. A case in point was his concern that the United States should act as an “honest broker” between the British and the Soviets (which Professor Miscamble mocks) lest Anglo-Soviet rivalry for influence in Europe dangerously escalate derived from the warnings of his military advisers.<sup>8</sup>

Professor Miscamble does not much concern himself with such questions of *Realpolitik* because his perspective is informed by an ethical perspective rather than a concern with power and national interests. His position, if I am not mistaken, is that Stalin’s purposes were at once so obvious and so utterly malign that the concessions to Moscow were simply not in order, even consideration of them being evidence *prima facie* of delusion. I am of the view that the situation that confronted American policymakers in 1944 was rather more complicated than that. While in retrospect Stalin’s dedication to the cause of *ultimate* socialist revolution in Europe is not open to much doubt, that was not at all clear in 1945.<sup>9</sup> To many contemporaries it seemed that the contradictions between socialism, as it was commonly understood, and Soviet practice were so glaring that Stalin simply could not be a Marxist of deep conviction.<sup>10</sup> And if he was not a dedicated Marxist, then he might be

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<sup>7</sup> Memorandum JCS 838/1, Joint Secretariat to distribution, 6 May 1944, subj: “Disposition of Italian Overseas Colonies,” NARA, RG 218, Entry 421, ABC 092 Italy (27 April 1944) with handwritten corrigenda; Attachment to “American Policy Towards Spheres of Influence,” *FRUS: 1945: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta*, 106-108; Attachment to “British Plan for a Western European Bloc,” *FRUS, 1945: Conference of Berlin*, 1: 264-266.

<sup>8</sup> The wartime stress of the Joint Chiefs upon the unwinnable nature of a European war against the USSR is worth of note because it indirectly underlines the complexity of the issue of “atomic diplomacy.” Professor Miscamble, in my view, ably disposes of what might call the classical version of that hypothesis as formulated by Gar Alperovitz *et al.* But that does not end the matter. I do not think that the use of the atomic bomb against Japan had much effect on Stalin. (He knew all about the Manhattan Project, after all, and would in all likelihood have been incredulous and contemptuous had the United States failed to use so puissant a weapon.) But the question of the use of the bomb against Japan has obscured what I regard as a more fruitful line of inquiry. The wartime warnings of the JCS were premised upon a war fought with conventional weapons. Such a war the United States, even in alliance with Britain, could hardly fail to lose. The Red Army was simply too big, and the Soviet Union’s proximity to the front would confer an almost insuperable strategic advantage. But the advent of the atomic bomb changed matters fundamentally. Only a year and a few months after the Joint Chiefs had warned of the impossibility of successful war against the USSR, the Joint Staff had developed a plausible strategy for waging victorious war against the USSR, the PINCHER concept, which depended entirely on the atomic bomb. In my view, the Cold War in Europe would not have developed as it did had the United States not obtained through the atomic bomb a way of waging war against the USSR. The wartime cautions of the JCS would likely have remained in effect, with some considerable effect on policy

<sup>9</sup> I cannot recommend too strongly Erik van Ree’s *The Political Thought of Joseph Stalin* (London and New York: Routledge-Cruzon, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> A fallacious argument, to be sure, akin to saying that Torquemada could not have been a sincere Christian because of certain obvious differences between the Inquisition and the Sermon the Mount. I have explored the significance of differing perceptions of Stalinism elsewhere: “October or Thermidor: Interpretations of Stalinism and the Perception of Soviet Foreign Policy in the United States, 1927-1947,” *The American Historical Review*, 94 (October 1989), 937-962.

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enough of a conventional *Realpolitiker* that national interest had a significant place in his calculations. Even upon this reading of Stalin there were dangers. Roosevelt himself *publicly* warned that “the trend from Marxism to nationalism in Russia” might portend an expansionism “no less disquieting than attempts at world revolution.”<sup>11</sup> But there was a basis for the hope that the USSR’s obvious need for a period of recuperation and a need for foreign aid might afford the possibility of a *modus vivendi*. As John D. Hickerson later recalled,

the Russians had suffered so much. Their casualties, the devastation in their country was terrific. We thought there would be a breathing spell when they’d be trying to rebuild their country. That doesn’t mean that I felt or my colleagues felt that the Russians has been converted to Christianity and that we thought they would permanently behave, but we thought it was so *clearly* in their interest.”<sup>12</sup>

The question of whether this calculation was wide of the mark is too complicated for discussion here. Suffice it to say, however, that Stalin himself, both privately and publicly, spoke of the preservation of the Grand Alliance as being in the interest of his Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> How could this have been, some readers will wonder at this point, if he also sought a Communist Europe? The contradiction is more apparent than real because the original wartime design was that the Communist parties should seek their way to power through “bourgeois democracy” – that is, by means to which the Western Allies could make no principled objection.<sup>14</sup> To that end, there was a careful tailoring of policies, and even to many American observers the chances for success seemed fair or better.

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<sup>11</sup> Forrest Davis, “What Really Happened At Teheran”, *Saturday Evening Post*, 215 (May 13, 1944), 12-13. This was a thinly disguised interview with Roosevelt, who reviewed the manuscript before publication and subsequently commended Davis for accurately stating his views. Forrest Davis to Steven Early, March 23, 1944, The Franklin D. Roosevelt Library, Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Official File, folder 4287; Roosevelt to Davis, June 14, 1944, *ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> Oral History Interview with John D. Hickerson 10 November 1972, 26 January and 5 June 1973, Harry S. Truman Library. (emphasis in the original).

<sup>13</sup> Document No. 84, Unsigned cable (but Stalin’s) to Molotov, 1 June 1942 ,in O. A. Rzheshhevsky, *Voina I Diplomatiya: Dokumenty, Kommentarii (1941-1942)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1997), 192; Vladimir O. Pechatnov, “The Big Three After World War II: New Documents on Soviet Thinking about Post War Relations with the United States and Great Britain,” Cold War International History Project, Working Paper No. 13 (July 1995), 21. For the same thought from Molotov, see Felix Chuyev, *Sto Sorok Besed c Molotovim* (Moscow: Terra, 1991), 76 (entry of 15 August 1975).

<sup>14</sup> For the evidence I refer readers to my paper “Revolution By Degrees: Stalin’s National-Front Strategy for Europe, 1941-1947.” Working Paper No. 31 of the Cold War International History Project. I am now expanding this article into a book with the working title *Revolution by Degrees: Stalin’s Strategy for the Political Conquest of Europe*. Geoffrey Roberts presents a similar argument in his important new book *Stalin’s Wars: From World War to Cold War, 1939-1953* (New Have: Yale University Press, 2006).

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Now this policy, the national front strategy as I have termed it elsewhere, did not succeed, nor did it long survive the war in anything like its intended form. The reasons for this are many but some of them bear directly on the thesis that it was from the first Soviet policy to fasten in short order police regimes upon the countries of Eastern Europe. The circumstances surrounding some of the first instances of Soviet “interference” in Eastern Europe are complex and remain little understood.<sup>15</sup> Romania, for example, figures prominently in *From Truman to Roosevelt*, as an example of brutal intrusion. But when the Red Army entered that country, Stalin’s orders to his commanders were explicit:

“The entry of Soviet forces into Romania has been dictated exclusively by military necessity and does not pursue other goals other than the goals of overcoming and liquidating the continuing resistance of the enemy’s forces . . . . To be preserved without change . . . are all existing Romanian organs of power and the system of economic and political organization existing in Romania. The performance of religious ceremonies is not to be hindered and houses of prayer are not to be touched. Romanian customs are not to be infringed and Soviet customs are not to be introduced.<sup>16</sup>

As Percy Biddiscombe showed some years ago, the change in Soviet policy so evident in early 1945 had much to do with the discovery of a German-directed conspiracy involving the Romanian Army and the underground organizations of the Romanian Nazi Party and the Iron Guard.<sup>17</sup> Recently declassified signals intelligence, moreover, shows that Anglo-American leaders not only knew of this plot but believed that elements of National Peasant Party – much the largest political organization in Romania – were complicit. The danger in Romania was discussed at the highest levels of the British and American governments, and largely explains why there was so little protest when the Soviets imposed a government of their choosing in March 1945.<sup>18</sup>

There is a third subject about which I must acknowledge that I differ from my distinguished colleague. The subject of spheres of influence is obviously central of the origins of the Cold War. Professor Miscamble largely embraces the thesis for which Marc Tractenberg argued in *A Constructed Peace* – in essence, that at the instance of Secretary of State James F.

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<sup>15</sup> I place the term “interference” in quotation marks because while it is commonly employed in this context, it is not really appropriate. Except for Poland and Czechoslovakia, the countries of Eastern Europe were defeated enemies subject to Allied Control Commissions.

<sup>16</sup> Governmental Committee of Defense, Order No. 5594s, 10 April 1944, Document No. 4 in T. V. Volokitina et al., eds, *Sovyetskiĭ Faktor v Vostochnoĭ Yevrope, 1944-1948*, 53-56.

<sup>17</sup> Perry Biddiscombe, “Prodding the Russian Bear: Pro-German Resistance in Romania, 1944-45,” *European History Quarterly*, 23 (1993), 193-232.

<sup>18</sup> David Alvarez and I treat this matter at some length in a study of intelligence in the early Cold War now nearing completion with the working title of “*Through a Glass, Darkly*”: *American Intelligence and the Soviet Union at the Dawn of the Cold War*.

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Byrnes the United States wrote off Eastern Europe at the Potsdam Conference.<sup>19</sup> Now Exhibit A for the argument that an appeasing Byrnes consigned Eastern Europe to outer darkness is the recognition of the Bulgarian and Romanian governments after the Moscow Conference of Foreign Ministers, although both remained unrepresentative. Recognition really represented only a tactical change. From the spring of 1945 Washington had hoped to make the governments of the former German satellites more representative by withholding diplomatic recognition from them. The British argued that this was a futile approach, and the best hope of effecting political change in the satellites would be to conclude as quickly as possible peace treaties that would entail the withdrawal of the Red Army from the satellites. In October 1945 Ambassador W. A. Harriman visited Stalin at Sochi on the Black Sea. During the course of their discussions Stalin convinced Harriman and through him Byrnes and the State Department, that he really did not care whether the United States recognized the interim regimes. Byrnes then changed course and adopted the British view that early peace treaties should be the primary objective. And that decision entailed recognition of the still-unrepresentative governments of Bulgaria and Romania, as otherwise the United States could hardly conclude treaties with them. The diplomatic representatives in those countries, Maynard Barnes and Burton Berry protested, but only until they understood the reason for the change.<sup>20</sup>

To his credit, Professor Miscamble appears at some level to resist full acceptance of the view that after Potsdam the United States consigned Eastern Europe to a kind of diplomatic *Ultima Thule* in defiance of every value that the government of the United States professed to represent and every identifiable interest it possessed. Toward the end of *From Roosevelt to Truman* Miscamble allows himself, with perhaps more insight than he realizes, the statement that "To a great extent, some variation of a 'Finlandized' Eastern Europe is what American policy makers in 1945 and 1946 had hoped might satisfy Stalin . . ." (327-28) The thought here seems to be that Truman and Byrnes hoped that Stalin would define some sort of self-denying ordinance for himself. Actually, however, they went to considerable lengths to help him "Finlandize" Eastern Europe. At the core of Byrnes's diplomacy was a major initiative that finds no mention in *From Roosevelt to Truman*: a treaty of demilitarization for Germany, which Byrnes presented to Stalin at the Moscow Council of Foreign Ministers and for which he continued to press throughout the negotiations of the

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<sup>19</sup> It is of course well established that Byrnes offered a division of Germany with respect to reparations and even, somewhat less certainly, administration. But the issue here is everything else east of Germany. The argument that this was all written off is, to resort to Wolfgang Pauli's famous formulation, "not even wrong." It is entirely appropriate, therefore, that the evidence advanced for it has a certain fanciful quality. Following Charles L. Mee's *Meeting at Potsdam* (always a bad idea) Professor Miscamble adduces the minutes of a discussion at Potsdam (212-13) that purportedly reveal a naked division of Europe – mine, yours. The subject of the discussion, however, is how the victors should draw *reparations from German assets*. There is not a hint of a division of political influence." Thompson Minutes," *Foreign Relations of the United States: Conference of Berlin, 2* (Washington: Department of State, 1960), 566-69.

<sup>20</sup> I dealt with these matters years ago in an article: "American Policy toward Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1946: An Alternative Interpretation," *The Journal of American History*, 68 (September 1981), 313-336. I return to them in "A Glooming Peace."

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peace treaties for Germany's former satellites. This initiative had had two purposes: to induce the Soviets to relent in Eastern Europe by removing their fears of a revanchist Germany -- or else to force them to show by rejection of the instrument that "security" was only a pretext for prolonging the occupation of Eastern Europe.<sup>21</sup> But if their concerns were sincere, Byrnes offered them a blueprint for a "Finlandized" Eastern Europe. The states of the region could not threaten the USSR without German support, the very possibility of which the proffered treaty of demilitarization would obviate. Byrnes, moreover, took the initiative in the negotiation of treaties of peace with the former satellites that effectively disarmed them while banning fascist organizations and implicitly recognizing a Soviet right of intervention against a resurgence of forces truly "unfriendly" to Russia. This, in fact, was a model for "Finlandization" that went someone further than the actual "Finlandization" we know from a later period.<sup>22</sup> But it was also a dispensation under the former satellites would have remained free in their domestic affairs and hence not ready instruments of aggression for the Soviets.

Professor Miscamble is correct to stress the effect upon the Truman Administration of the Turkish crisis, which more than any other single event of the year of the Cold War convinced American officials that Soviet policy was at least potentially aggressive in dangerous ways. But the other half of the process of reconsidering the Soviets' challenge was their seeming indifference to the deal that Byrnes had offered them. Their bluff, as Truman said, had been called.<sup>23</sup>

The proposition that the United States abandoned Eastern Europe even before the Cold War had begun distorts American diplomacy, rendering incomprehensible not only the constant encouragement of the opposition parties of the region but also equally telling if less familiar initiatives such as radio propaganda to unsettle the communist-dominated interim regime, the leaking to the press of diplomatic reports and intelligence damaging to the Soviet position, and various actions of the secret services such as the extensive contacts in 1946 between the Central Intelligence Group and the partisan formations of the Romanian opposition.<sup>24</sup> The thesis also obscures much of the reason for Washington's reconsideration of Soviet motives in 1946 and, worse, one of the principal reasons why the United States cared about European developments in the first place. A Europe divided in

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<sup>21</sup> Diplomats were open about these purposes when speaking to the press.: *New York Times*, April 30, 1946, 1.

<sup>22</sup> See note 21.

<sup>23</sup> Diary of Joseph E. Davies, September 30, 1946, Library of Congress, Papers of Joseph E. Davies.

<sup>24</sup> Readers familiar with postwar Romanian history will recognize the reference to the so-called "Hall-Hamilton Affair." David Alvarez and I will give the first full account in our book on postwar intelligence. Interestingly, the Romanian who survived this tragic episode told me that they had been shown a letter from Truman saying that Major Thomas Hall and Lieutenant Ira C. Hamilton represented him. Hamilton, whom I knew well, would say only that he took his orders from General Vandenberg of the CIG.

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the way that it seemed likely to be at the end of the war was potentially threatening to the United States. While Roosevelt anticipated an Anglo-Soviet condominium over Europe, he and other policymakers, as we have seen, feared the consequences of unbridled Anglo-Soviet rivalry, for therein, seemingly, lay the only obvious cause of a new war. The danger of an Anglo-Soviet war for the United States was that the British would surely lose it, leaving the Soviets masters of Europe. This was precisely why in 1946 the JCS urged resistance to the Soviet demands on Turkey. The issue, as the Chiefs saw matters, was not Turkey but the Anglo-Soviet war likely to result from Soviet intrusion into the Mediterranean, a conflict that would leave the Soviets in control of Europe and the United States without a militarily significant ally in Eurasia.<sup>25</sup> But a “Finlandized” Eastern Europe might buffer the Anglo-Soviet conflict, sparing the United States the nightmare of a consolidated Eurasia. A closely related fear was that Anglo-Soviet conflict might allow Germany to rise from defeat by playing the victors off against each other. These ideas were the received wisdom of the day, being featured in influential works like William T. R. Fox’s *The Super-Powers* and a remarkable manifesto prepared for the Joint Staff by virtually all the leading figures in the infant discipline of international relations.<sup>26</sup> The concern with the dangers of Anglo-Soviet rivalry presciently predicted the Cold War, save in one respect: there was little appreciation of just how weak Britain would be after the war and even less that it would be the fate of the United States to replace Britain as guarantor of the European balance of power, with the dangers that entailed.

There were many reasons why America stepped in the breach in Britain’s stead. But, as Melvyn Leffler has shown, none was so compelling as the prospect of a Europe united against the United States, a dispensation that would have united Germany’s science with Russia’s manpower and pivotal geopolitical position. That would have been the “empire of the world” about which Mackinder warned at the beginning of the twentieth century. As Roosevelt put it in a radio address of 1941,

For if the world outside the Americas fall under Axis domination, the shipbuilding facilities which the Axis powers would then possess in all of Europe, in the British Isles and in Far East would be much greater than all the shipbuilding facilities and potentialities of all the Americas – not only greater but two or three times greater – enough to win. Even if the United States threw all its resources into such a situation seeking to double or even redouble the size of our Navy, the Axis powers, in control of the rest of the

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<sup>25</sup> “The War Scare of 1946 and Its Consequences,” *Diplomatic History*, 21, 3 (Summer 1997), 392-3.

<sup>26</sup> William T. R. Fox, *The Super-Powers: The United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union: Their Responsibility for Peace* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1944), 96-97, 103, 112, 116; Memorandum for Information No. 382, Joint Secretariat to distribution, 29 March 1945, subj: “A Security Policy for Post-War America,” NARA, RH 218, JCS Decimal File 1942-1945, CCS 092 (7-27-44). The authors of the paper last cited were Frederick S. Dunn, Arnold Wolfers, William T. R. Fox and Davie N. Rowe of Yale University, Edward M. Earle and Harold Sprout of Princeton University.

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world, would have the man power and the physical resources to outbuild several times over.<sup>27</sup>

This danger did not disappear with the defeat of the Axis. Far from it. Historians have often observed that the United States emerged from the Second World War the most powerful nation of the world. This is a reasonably accurate description of the *existing* situation in 1945. Yet the *potential* dangers confronting the country were also considerable, although they are much less familiar. After World War II the Soviet Union stood closer to attaining “the empire of the world” than any nation before it. The ironic outcome of the United States’ victory in that struggle was that its strategic position was in fundamental ways *potentially* weaker than it had been in 1940, its wealth and technological supremacy notwithstanding. A victory of the Axis had threatened the domination of Eurasia by an *alliance* of three dissimilar and potentially rivalrous powers, not a single hegemon. Even if the Axis had triumphed, moreover, immense labors faced its strongest members, Germany and Japan. Hitler had entertained no expectation of conquering the entire Soviet Union. He had rather planned to drive the Russians beyond the Urals where, he thought, a struggle would rage essentially forever. Japan’s great project, the subjugation of China, if possible at all, would have been the work of generations. In 1946 the USSR’s prospects were more propitious than those of the Axis had ever been, and the dangers to the United States correspondingly greater. The relentless progress of the Communists in China threatened the voluntary adherence to the Socialist bloc of the world’s most populous state. Half of Europe the Soviets occupied, and throughout the remainder Communist parties flourished with plausible programs for electoral success. The “empire of the world,” or something very like it, stood but a nearly decided civil war and a few elections away from reality.

The reservations I have outlined about *From Roosevelt to Truman* are not insubstantial. But I hasten to remind readers that the heart of the book is a narrowly framed *mise-en-scène* at the center of which stands a well-intentioned but limited president condemned to deal with the uncertain legacy of his predecessor in the face of enormous difficulties. And as that I recommend the work.

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<sup>27</sup> “When you see a Rattlesnake Poised . . .”, 11 September 1941, in Rosenman, ed., *The Public Papers and Addresses of Franklin D. Roosevelt*, 10, *The Call to Battle Stations*, 388.

**Review by Chester Pach, Ohio University**

In his blunt and provocative account of Harry Truman's journey into the Cold War, Wilson Miscamble tells a familiar story, often in familiar ways. According to Miscamble, the Cold War emerged because of Josef Stalin's ambition, aggressiveness, and paranoia. "No action of the Truman administration," Miscamble asserts, could have changed or reassured Stalin. No missed opportunity on the American side could have satiated Stalin's ambition for power and control." (327) Yet try Truman did to secure Stalin's cooperation during most of his first two years in the White House. Miscamble argues that Truman continued Franklin D. Roosevelt's efforts to forge a postwar partnership with the Soviet Union until his administration mounted a belated, "defensive effort" to "check Soviet advances" in Western Europe and, eventually, East Asia. (327) After a fumbling and uncertain start as foreign policy leader, Truman finally took "essential" steps in 1947 to challenge "the Soviet threat to liberal democracy." (328) This story of Soviet aggression and U.S. reaction, FDR's supposed naiveté and Truman's reluctant but necessary departure from his predecessor's policies is as old as U.S. histories of the Cold War. Some of the main themes in Miscamble's analysis have been prominent in Cold War studies for more than half a century

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Yet Miscamble is much too good an historian not to add some important new dimensions to an otherwise familiar story. Especially interesting is his lengthy, meticulous, and thoughtful analysis of Truman's stewardship of foreign policy. As much as he lauds the administration's Cold War achievements, Miscamble is surprisingly tepid about Truman. Indeed, the author reaches troubling conclusions about Truman's grasp of international affairs and his ability to devise strategies to advance U.S. goals and interests. "Those favorably disposed to Truman's foreign policy should neither present him as the main architect of it nor exaggerate his capabilities," Miscamble declares. (329) He does neither. Instead, Miscamble maintains that the Truman administration ultimately did the right thing by containing Soviet power not so much because of the president's leadership but almost despite it.

Miscamble concentrates on individual decision makers, especially Truman, and the policies they formulated. His goal is “to capture something of the[ir] world . . . with its inevitable compromises, ultimate objectives only dimly perceived, and constantly competing pressures that confused and obscured policy vision.” He appreciates “the messiness of policy making,” and he has a remarkable talent for explaining how issues that seemed clear, even simple in retrospect never appeared that way to the contemporaries who confronted them. He concedes that his history is “Washington-centered,” even “White House-centered,” but explains that he wants to probe the ways that individuals have made “a difference in foreign policy.” He insists that both critics and proponents have misunderstood Truman, especially when they have portrayed the president as the feisty, decisive leader who lived by the motto that “the buck stops here.” Miscamble has no desire to replace this popular and appealing image of Truman with another “one-dimensional” portrait. (xii-xiii) Even though he often deprecates Truman’s Soviet policies and the president’s uncertainties and hesitations in formulating them, he also appreciates Truman’s admirable qualities. Truman, he says, was forthright and direct, someone who dealt with his advisors in straightforward fashion, unlike FDR who rarely, if ever, took his associates into his confidence. Especially important was Truman’s conviction that individuals should keep their word and nations should abide by their agreements, a basic value that shaped his approach to the Soviet Union during 1945-46.

Yet what stands out in Miscamble’s discussion are Truman’s limitations and deficiencies. Truman, Miscamble says, had a “distaste for complexity” and was reluctant “to engage in creative or conceptual thinking.” Temperamental outbursts and conspicuous displays of decisiveness could not conceal “a deep insecurity.” (89) Truman understandably struggled to find his bearings when he suddenly became president after Roosevelt’s death in April 1945. But Miscamble emphasizes that international issues continued to flummox Truman during his first months in office—and beyond. As the war ended in Europe, questions about surrender and occupation arrangements left the president “forever struggling to gain some grasp on the situations.” (124) He “hardly aimed to impose coherence and consistency on his nation’s foreign policy. He simply reacted to proposals and to counsel as best he could.” (127) At the Potsdam Conference in July 1945, he deferred to his advisers, especially Secretary of State James F. Byrnes, and settled for “more of a supporting role.” (208) Truman authorized the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki to shorten the war and save American lives, according to Miscamble. But the president’s decisiveness consisted of little more than proceeding with “the predetermined policy” of using the bomb when available. (225) As Byrnes struggled with questions about recognizing provisional governments in Eastern Europe during the fall of 1945, Miscamble notes that “Truman’s own thinking at this time is, to be kind, a little hard to pin down.” (259) Among the president’s many problems was a failure to understand that Stalin was “one of the world’s greatest moral monsters.” (193) As a result, during the next year “Truman provided no firm hand on the tiller of the American ship of state as it navigated into increasingly uncharted waters.” (262) When the president did take a strong stand in the face of Communist provocations, as he did in March 1946 over the removal of Soviet troops from

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Iran, it was supposedly only because British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin encouraged him to do so.

Miscamble shows that on most issues involving relations with the Soviets, Truman depended heavily on his advisers. The two most influential in 1945-46 were Joseph Davies and James F. Byrnes. Davies's importance is something of a surprise; his influence overshadowed that of Ambassador W. Averell Harriman, Admiral William D. Leahy, and Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, aides who often figure prominently in histories of Truman's emerging Cold War policies. Miscamble, however, demonstrates that Davies had a close relationship with Truman and shaped the president's thinking on Soviet matters during his first weeks in office, at Potsdam, and occasionally thereafter until September 1946. Miscamble deplors Davies's naive misunderstanding of Stalin and his efforts to discourage the formulation of tougher U.S. policies to deal with Soviet challenges. That Davies had the president's ear, however, buttresses Miscamble's contention that Truman was determined to follow a conciliatory approach toward the Soviets. Byrnes was considerably more important than Davies; indeed, he had almost a free hand to pursue negotiations with the Soviets during the fall of 1945 while Truman concentrated on the transition from war to peace in domestic affairs. Miscamble challenges conventional wisdom that Byrnes lost the president's confidence when he failed to keep the White House sufficiently informed about his negotiations in Moscow in December 1945. The resulting tensions between the president and his secretary of state were more about style rather than substance, according to the author. Byrnes carried the main burden of foreign policy until he left the administration a year later and, like the president, continued to hope for practical agreements with the Soviets until his final months as secretary of state. The animosity between Truman and Byrnes, Miscamble asserts, arose not from disagreements about international policy or who ultimately made the decisions but over the campaign of 1948.

One of Miscamble's most important arguments is that neither the president nor any of his principal advisors during the early Cold War were effective strategists. "Surprisingly," Miscamble writes, "neither Byrnes nor Truman appeared to grasp fully the dramatic impact of World War II on the architecture of the world." Nixon and Kissinger they weren't. Neither thought deeply about the international configuration of power; neither had clear ideas about how to deal with a world in which British capabilities were declining and Soviet power growing. Byrnes was primarily a tactician, with long experience in government as a negotiator, who searched for the means to bargain effectively with the Soviets. No grand strategy guided Byrnes or Truman at Potsdam or, for that matter, during the next two years. George F. Kennan's Long Telegram of February 1946 provided intellectual support for those in the administration who thought that conciliation would never produce a lasting settlement with the Soviets, but "it had no immediate impact on policy." (280) As the Truman administration moved toward stronger policies to resist the advance of Soviet power in mid-1946, U.S. policy, in Miscamble's judgment, still emerged in ad hoc fashion, devoid of "an overall strategic framework. The president failed to provide broad guidance. . . . His engagement with foreign policy remained episodic at best." (287)

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Even the Truman Doctrine, which seemed to promise global containment, failed to provide “any explicit course of action” about how to meet Soviet challenges. (310)

Much of Miscamble’s book is a sustained critique of the Truman administration for adhering to a misguided effort to conciliate the Soviets that it only gradually abandoned in 1946 and did not completely shed until the following year. Truman, in Miscamble’s judgment, did not engage international issues consistently or thoughtfully, accepted flawed advice about Soviet matters, and persisted in naive, futile, or foolish efforts to forge an international partnership with the Soviet Union after the surest bond—a common enemy—had vanished. One wonders, then, how an administration that, in the author’s estimation, got so many things wrong in dealing with the Soviets ultimately got it right. A brief and suggestive concluding chapter sketches the answer. By 1947, “the Americans finally recognized with some clarity” that FDR’s vision of great power cooperation in the postwar world was “an illusion.” Miscamble praises Truman for being “capable of learning” as well as recognizing his own limitations and relying “on other capable policy makers.” The State Department, first under the leadership of George C. Marshall and then Dean Acheson, took the lead in formulating new policies. Further impetus came from the British, when they informed the Truman administration in February 1947 that they would have to terminate aid to Greece and Turkey, which precipitated the U.S. decision to ask Congress for military and economic assistance to those two nations. “Thus, it was a British action,” Miscamble asserts, “rather than any initiative of an American official that forced the Truman administration to begin moving seriously beyond the confusion and contradictions of 1946.”

That last observation is misleading. British initiatives did shape U.S. actions in Greece and Turkey in early 1947 and in Iran a year earlier. Yet Miscamble creates the impression that without British impetus U.S. policy would have remained indecisive. In September 1946, the Truman administration, as Miscamble himself points out, was determined to thwart Soviet efforts to gain control of the Turkish straits, even at the risk of war. By February 1947, State Department officials were so concerned about Communist gains in the Greek civil war that they had decided to recommend the extension of U.S. military aid to the Greek government. The British announcement accelerated U.S. action but it was hardly responsible, by itself, for the toughening of U.S. policy. A year earlier, Bevin did indeed tell American officials that the United States “could not and must not stand aloof” while Soviet troops remained in Iran. (278) Yet State Department officials had already concluded that the continued Soviet military presence threatened Iran’s sovereignty and independence and might lead to the establishment of the first Russian satellite outside Eastern Europe. American officials, in short, had their own reasons for following firm policies toward Soviet challenges in the eastern Mediterranean and Middle East.

Miscamble’s most significant achievement is his careful reconstruction of the “confusion, ambiguity, contradiction, and messiness” that sometimes prevailed as the Truman administration formulated its Soviet policies. He has refrained from using “the distinctive colors of black and white” when shades of gray prevailed. Although his understanding of

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policy making is complex and thoughtful, it is still somewhat narrow, even a bit myopic. In Miscamble's analysis, officials in the White House, State Department, and, occasionally, U.S. embassies play major roles. Members of Congress only infrequently enter the discussion. Miscamble rarely examines public attitudes toward foreign policy, either mass opinion expressed in polls or elite views in editorials, opinion pieces, or public speeches that might have influenced official thinking. He pays little, if any, attention to partisan discussions of foreign policy—disagreements between Democrats and Republicans or other evidence that political calculations might have affected foreign policy choices. Adding these dimensions would have made Miscamble's approach to policy making more nuanced and sophisticated. Indeed, they might have helped to explain why Truman sometimes devoted his attention to domestic, rather than foreign affairs or why administration officials did not move more quickly to confront the Soviet Union, something Miscamble believed the administration ought to have done.

One final point. Miscamble does not shrink from moral judgments. In fact, he considers moral evaluation an essential part of the historian's task. Miscamble has strong views about the evilness of Stalin's leadership, and he minces no words in his denunciations of academics who fail to share his view of Soviet responsibility for the Cold War. His judgments will rankle, even outrage some readers; they will please or satisfy others. Yet whatever one's reactions to his moral reckonings, it's still possible to appreciate Miscamble's significant historical achievements. He has breathed life into old questions about the emergence of U.S. Cold War policies and has offered a different, even iconoclastic view of Truman's role in his own administration's foreign policy. Those are no small accomplishments, even if the overall story is still awfully familiar.

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Review by David S. Painter, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University

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In the preface to his study of the first year and a half of the Cold War, Wilson Miscamble argues that historians should still care strongly about the origins of the Cold War because of “the moral and political stakes involved in the Cold War, its enormous impact on the postwar world, and its implications for the present...” (xvi). Less temperately, he argues later in the book “the time has come to drive the stake finally and completely through the heart of the false accusation that Truman quickly reversed Roosevelt’s accommodating approach” [to the Soviet Union] (171). This view, he charges in the conclusion, “is not supported by the evidence but rather was based upon a quicksand of faulty assumptions and misused tissues of evidence” (323).

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*From Roosevelt to Truman* is not limited to setting the record straight on whether and when Truman reversed FDR’s policies toward the Soviet Union. Miscamble also believes that his “examination of Truman’s initial foreign policy sheds further light on the development of the Cold War conflict,” and “raises questions about the criticisms that revisionist scholars regularly aimed at the Truman administration for not persisting with the cooperative approach of Roosevelt” (325-26).

Unfortunately, the book’s conceptualization is too narrow to bear the weight of this larger goal of discrediting critical accounts of U.S. policy. Miscamble focuses almost exclusively on two issues -- Eastern Europe and the U.S. decision to use atomic bombs against Japan. He seems uninterested in the rest of the world: he barely mentions colonialism and racism; he does not deal with economic influences on U.S. foreign policy (a core revisionist argument); he does not examine internal conditions in other countries; and there is no analysis of geo-strategic concerns and objectives of the United States, the Soviet Union, or Great Britain. Although Miscamble makes a good case that until some time in 1946 Truman and Secretary of State James F. Byrnes believed that they were continuing FDR’s policies toward the Soviet Union, his larger goal of refuting revisionism seems to have compromised his ability to analyze objectively Truman administration policy.

After a chapter on Truman’s life and career before 1945 based largely on secondary sources, Miscamble moves to FDR’s wartime diplomacy, noting that “clarifying Roosevelt’s hopes and plans for the postwar world is an obvious prerequisite for determining if Truman continued or reversed

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his policies” (xiv). Although he astutely criticizes FDR for not effectively communicating his central policy assumptions to anyone in his administration except, perhaps, Harry Hopkins (82, 83), Miscamble’s account of FDR’s diplomacy seems to be based largely on outdated critiques by British writers and neoconservative ideologues and on uncritical acceptance of the views of Winston Churchill and George Kennan.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Churchill and Kennan’s views are treated as the last word on any subject that they address. These sources lead him to charge that FDR was naïve about the Soviet Union and to repeat the discredited myths that FDR “largely separated military objectives from political goals beyond the defeat of his Axis enemies,” and that FDR “consistently refused to conceive of Soviet-American relations in terms of a military balance in Europe” (74). Scholars who disagree with these myths are dismissed as “Roosevelt defenders” (79-80).

In particular, Miscamble berates Roosevelt for not “saving” Poland. He never explains what the United States could have done to “save” Poland, however. The Soviets were bearing the brunt of the fighting against Hitler; Soviet armies would control Eastern Europe as a result of their war efforts; efforts to try to seize Eastern Europe were militarily unsound and could jeopardize the more important goal of consolidating control of Western Europe; such efforts would also risk losing Soviet assistance in defeating Japan. In short, Poland was not important enough to jeopardize these other goals. Later in the book (293), Miscamble admits that Eastern Europe was not vital to U.S. security, but this belated recognition does not play a role in his discussion of the issue during World War II.

Miscamble also fails to discuss British military intervention in Greece in late 1944. Warren Kimball has argued that the infamous percentages agreement between Churchill and Stalin was really a trade of Greece for Poland, a deal that Churchill reneged on after British forces had secured Greece. Kimball also points out that the United States privately approved of British intervention in Greece.<sup>2</sup> Whether or not Miscamble agrees with this argument, he should address it, not ignore it.

As for U.S. strategy being insufficiently attentive to political considerations, the Western Allies ended up with all of Western Europe and two-thirds of Germany, including its most important industrial areas – at a very low cost in lives. In this regard, any assessment of alternative policies should compare U.S. and British war-related deaths of around 410,000 and 400,000 respectively with Soviet losses of 25-27 million.

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<sup>1</sup> Compare Mark A. Stoler, “A Half-Century of Conflict: Interpretations of US World War II Diplomacy,” *Diplomatic History* 18 (Summer 1994): 375-403. On Roosevelt, see Geoffrey Roberts, “Why Roosevelt Was Right About Stalin,” <http://hnn.us/articles/36194.html>. On Churchill’s reliability as a source, see David Reynolds, *In Command of History: Churchill Fighting and Writing the Second World War* (New York: Random House, 2005). Miscamble cites John Harper’s criticism of FDR, but ignores his equally, if not more, critical views of Kennan. John Lamberton Harper, *American Visions of Europe: Franklin D. Roosevelt, George F. Kennan, and Dean G. Acheson* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> Warren Kimball, “Naked Reverse Right: Roosevelt, Churchill, and Eastern Europe, from TOLSTOY to Yalta – and a Little Beyond,” *Diplomatic History* 9 (Winter 1985): 1-24; reprinted in *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 159-83.

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Miscamble also should have considered the available options and the context. Two attempts by Germany to dominate Europe made it clear that a Germany strong enough to contain the Soviet Union was also strong enough to dominate Europe, and the Holocaust demonstrated what German domination could mean for the peoples of Europe and the world. In other words, before the successful test of the atomic bomb, the options for containing Soviet power were limited.

Unfortunately, Miscamble's discussion of FDR's policies on atomic weapons is incomplete and misleading. It is hard to get around the basic point that Martin Sherwin made many years ago: FDR may have envisioned a world run by Four Policemen, "but only two of them would have the bomb."<sup>3</sup> Miscamble tries to get around this by claiming that FDR wanted to share information on the Anglo-American atomic program with the Soviets. FDR may have talked about sharing information with the Soviets, but he never took any action to do so.

Miscamble ignores Anglo-American efforts to gain preclusive control of world supplies of uranium and thorium.<sup>4</sup> Although uranium is one of the most common elements in the earth's crust, large deposits of high-grade ore are relatively rare. During World War II, the United States and Great Britain set up an organization, the Combined Development Trust (CDT), to gain control of the world's supply of uranium and thorium. By the end of the war the CDT controlled an estimated 97 percent of world uranium production and 65 percent of the world supply of thorium.<sup>5</sup> U.S. forces also seized the bulk of existing German supplies of uranium and bombed facilities in Germany that processed uranium for the German atomic project. U.S. policymakers believed that Western control of uranium and thorium would delay, if not prevent, Soviet development of atomic weapons and would drastically limit the number of atomic weapons the Soviets could produce if they successfully tested a bomb.

One could argue that such efforts were prudent and necessary, but one cannot deny that the Soviets might regard them as hostile. As Sherwin demonstrated many years ago, taking Anglo-American policy on atomic weapons during World War II into account gives a very different view of FDR's policies from that held by Miscamble.

According to Miscamble, Truman tried to follow what he believed were FDR's policies toward the Soviet Union until the fall of 1946.<sup>6</sup> He begins his discussion of Truman by noting that the familiar

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<sup>3</sup> Martin J. Sherwin, "The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War, in *Origins of the Cold War: An International History*, Second Edition, Eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and David S. Painter (London: Routledge, 2005), 63. Sherwin's article was originally published in the *American Historical Review* 78 (October 1973): 945-68.

<sup>4</sup> See Jonathan E. Helmreich, *Gathering Rare Ores: The Diplomacy of Uranium Acquisition, 1943-1954* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986).

<sup>5</sup> David Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy, 1939-1956* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 174.

<sup>6</sup> A key part of his evidence for this claim seems to be that Truman stayed in touch with, and, at times, listened to, FDR's former ambassador to the Soviet Union, Joseph E. Davies, long a focus of conservative criticism of FDR's policies.

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story of Truman berating Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov over Poland cannot be supported from contemporary documents, as Geoffrey Roberts pointed out in a 2004 article.<sup>7</sup> It is not clear what this shows, however, except that Truman, like FDR, realized that clashing with the Soviets over Poland could jeopardize larger goals, such as Soviet assistance in the war against Japan.

Although Poland was not vital to U.S. security, Germany was. Miscamble's discussion of U.S. policy toward Germany ignores the implications of U.S. and British determination to limit German reparations. U.S. policy was not only self-interested, but also had a significant impact on Soviet security. The United States wanted to rebuild Germany in order to foster the recovery of the Europe and the world economy. In addition, the United States and Britain also did not want to be in the position of indirectly contributing to reparations for the Soviets by replacing resources the Soviets took as reparations. The Soviets, for sound historical reasons, saw an economically powerful Germany as a threat. Reparations from Germany would not only strengthen the Soviet economy, but would also help keep Germany weak. Moreover, without reparations from Germany, or aid from the United States, which was a non-starter, the Soviets had two options to obtain the resources they needed for reconstruction – they could take what they could from Eastern Europe, including their occupation zone in Germany, and/or sweat them out of their own people. In other words, U.S. policy on reparations had profound implications for the peoples of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, and for the origins of the Cold War, as Bruce Kuklick pointed out twenty-five years ago.<sup>8</sup>

Miscamble's discussion of the Potsdam conference plays down the extent to which possession of the atomic bomb influenced U.S. tactics. Among other things, the bomb meant that the Soviets were no longer needed to contain Germany. As for Japan, Miscamble seems to believe that refuting Gar Alperovitz's arguments about "atomic diplomacy" equals refuting revisionism. Most historians, including many revisionists, have long accepted the argument made years ago by Sherwin and Barton Bernstein that the United States used the atomic bomb to end the war with Japan quickly and to save American lives.<sup>9</sup> Most also recognize that the primary goal of ending the war quickly was not inconsistent with the goal of limiting Soviet gains -- the two goals were complementary; they were not mutually exclusive. Miscamble admits this when he writes in regard to Soviet plans to occupy the northern island of Hokkaido, "who knows how much they might have procured and at what cost to the Japanese people without the surrender the atomic bombs had forced" (240).

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<sup>7</sup> Geoffrey Roberts, "Sexing Up the Cold War: New Evidence on the Molotov-Truman Talks of April 1945," *Cold War History* 4 (April 2004): 105-25. Roberts' new study, *Stalin's Wars: From World War to Cold War* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), appeared too late for him to consult, but he should have taken into account Roberts' other work on Soviet foreign policy.

<sup>8</sup> Bruce Kuklick, *American Policy and the Division of Germany: The Clash with Russia over Reparations* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972).

<sup>9</sup> See J. Samuel Walker's valuable historiographical essays, the most recent of which is "Recent Literature on Truman's Atomic Bomb Decision: A Search for Middle Ground," *Diplomatic History* 29 (April 2005): 311-34, and his succinct study, *Prompt and Utter Destruction: Truman and the Use of Atomic Bombs Against Japan*, Revised Edition (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

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Miscamble's discussion of atomic diplomacy after Hiroshima also adds little to the literature. He does not address David Holloway's argument that the U.S. monopoly of atomic weapons made Stalin less likely to compromise for fear that compromise would be seen as weakness and would lead to further demands for concessions.<sup>10</sup> He also does not seem to understand that U.S. possession of the bomb stiffened Soviet determination to control Eastern Europe because of the increased need to extend defenses against air attack. In addition, his account of U.S. plans for control of atomic energy, a better issue with which to gauge the impact of the atomic bomb on the origins of the Cold War, misses most of the main issues.

Although earlier an advocate of "atomic diplomacy," Secretary of War Henry Stimson argued in September 1945 that the United States should talk directly with the Soviets about atomic weapons in order to reduce distrust. According to Stimson, the standard by which to judge cooperation with the Soviets was not whether the United States could prevent the Soviets from developing atomic weapons, something he did not believe feasible, but what would be the state of U.S.-Soviet relations when the Soviets did so.<sup>11</sup>

Truman, however, listened to other advice, and endorsed plans that sought to maintain the U.S. monopoly of atomic weapons as long as possible. Both the Acheson-Lilienthal Plan and the Baruch Plan called for control of world supplies of uranium and thorium by an international body. Without these elements, nations could not build atomic weapons. Both plans also provided that the United States would retain its atomic arsenal until an international control system was fully functioning to U.S. satisfaction. Baruch's Plan also called for sanctions for violations and for the permanent members of the Security Council to give up their veto on matters related to atomic energy. These provisions would preserve the U.S. atomic monopoly while preventing other nations from developing atomic weapons.<sup>12</sup>

Truman believed that the United States should maintain its monopoly over nuclear weapons until a foolproof system of control was in place. He wrote Baruch in July 1946, "we should not under any circumstances throw away our gun until we are sure the rest of the world can't arm against us" (288). Truman's view is understandable, but it is hardly evidence of a willingness to reach agreements with the Soviets. Truman's position minimized the risks to the United States, increased the risks the Soviets and others had to take, and ensured that there was no international agreement to control nuclear weapons.

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<sup>10</sup> Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb*, chapter 12; abridged and reprinted in Leffler and Painter, eds., *Origins of the Cold War*, 72-90.

<sup>11</sup> US Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1945*, 2: 40-44 (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1967); McGeorge Bundy, *Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House, 1988): 136-42.

<sup>12</sup> David S. Painter, *The Baruch Plan and the International Control of Atomic Energy* (Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University, 1990).

Due to word limits, I will not address the remainder of the book. In any event, as Miscamble notes, most of his discussion after 1946 is based on his earlier study of Kennan.<sup>13</sup> It is also largely uninformed by recent scholarship on such issues as the civil war in Greece and the economic and strategic implications of the Marshall Plan.

The final chapter also seeks to analyze the meaning of his findings for the larger history of the Cold War. Miscamble repeats his vigorous criticism of FDR's diplomacy, argues that the Truman administration tried to continue cooperation with the Soviet Union until the fall of 1946, and celebrates uncritically the turn to a vigorous policy of containment. In polemical language ill-suited for an academic study, Miscamble condemns those who disagree with him, and claims "it is an undisguised travesty that Truman and his administration have been subjected to ill-founded criticism by many American academic historians who so easily shrug off the danger that Stalin and his system presented" (331-32).

In some respects, *From Roosevelt to Truman* represents a lost opportunity. A less jaundiced analysis of FDR's policies might have led to a better-balanced perspective on the question of whether and when Truman abandoned FDR's approach to the Soviet Union. Miscamble's analysis of FDR's diplomacy is central to his argument, however, and his account of Truman's early policies is marked by the same flawed assumptions that shaped his views about Roosevelt. The result is a study that is not only too narrowly conceptualized but also too unbalanced in its judgments to offer much insight into the origins of the Cold War.

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<sup>13</sup> Wilson D. Miscamble, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947-1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

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**Author's Response by Wilson D. (Bill) Miscamble, C.S.C., History Department,  
University of Notre Dame, Notre Dame, Indiana.**

Let me begin by thanking Tom Maddux for organizing this roundtable on my book and the six scholars who participated in it. I am grateful for their willingness to engage the arguments I present and the conclusions I reach in *From Roosevelt to Truman* (hereafter *FRTT*). I should clarify that I know each of my commentators to some degree and have benefited from the personal and professional kindness of a number of them. I also draw significantly upon the work of three of them (Hamby, Mark, and Jervis) in my book. Whatever their past associations with me, these five distinguished historians and a terrific political scientist have been generous enough to provide honest and critical evaluations of my book. Let me offer a brief response to their comments in the same spirit of forthright scholarly exchange.

I suspect that many historians share a fear that their published work — the product of countless hours of toil — will sink like the proverbial stone leaving barely a ripple on the historiography of their chosen area. I confess that as I worked away (off and on over the years!) on yet another book on the United States and the origins of the Cold War some variation of this fear entered my mind. “Will anyone be interested? Hasn’t this ground been more than well-covered, already?” went my own questions. Obviously, I answered the latter question in the negative because I concluded that the development of postwar American foreign policy and the contributions of Franklin Roosevelt and Harry Truman to it were not well understood. I tried to rectify that situation. Now, a number of my commentators note that my arguments are not particularly “new” and that specialists in the field will find much that is “familiar” (to borrow from Chester Pach) in the broad story that unfolds in my work. I readily concede that there are some grounds for this observation but my aim in this book was not to fashion some novel interpretation but to present the most accurate understanding of American foreign policy during this crucial period and the impact upon it of the leadership transition from Roosevelt to Truman. This is what I (modestly, of course) claim to have done.

**Rev. Wilson D. (Bill) Miscamble, C.S.C.** joined the permanent faculty at Notre Dame in 1988 after completion of the Ph.D. at Notre Dame in 1980 and was ordained a priest by the Congregation of the Holy Cross in 1988. Miscamble’s primary research interests are American foreign policy since World War II and the role of Catholics in 20th century U.S. foreign relations. His book, *George F. Kennan and the Making of American Foreign Policy, 1947-1950*, published in 1992 by Princeton University Press received the Harry S. Truman Book Award. He also has authored *Keeping the Faith, Making a Difference* (2000), and edited *American Political History: Essays on the State of the Discipline* [with John Marszalek] (1997), and *Go Forth and Do Good: Memorable Notre Dame Commencement Addresses* (2003). His next major project is a book-length survey entitled – “The Search for Influence: Catholics and American Foreign policy from the Spanish-American War to the War in Iraq.” This study will shed further light on the intersection of religion and foreign policy and will fill a definite lacunae in the field of U.S. diplomatic history.

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I trust my book will have some impact in the field and influence how historians, their students, and the broader public think of the origins of the Cold War because there is still a great deal of confusion and misunderstanding on the subject. Let me illustrate this by quick reference to three recent books which advance rather flawed interpretations of important aspects of the early Cold War. Mary Glantz in her *FDR and the Soviet Union* (2005) writes approvingly of Roosevelt's cooperative approach to Stalin and then posits that Truman quickly reversed it under the influence of Averell Harriman and other anti-Soviet officials. Tsuyoshi Hasegawa's *Racing the Enemy* (2005)<sup>1</sup> argues that Truman raced to use the atomic bomb against Japan before the Soviets could enter the conflict and questions the American claim for the military necessity of the bomb in securing Japan's defeat. In some ways he provides an updated version of the old "atomic diplomacy" thesis. Geoffrey Roberts's *Stalin's Wars* (2007)<sup>2</sup> paints the picture of a rather cautious Stalin eager to continue the Grand Alliance after the war and willing to reach a settlement with the western powers. This benign portrait allows Roberts to attribute a major portion of the "blame" for the Cold War to the failures of western statesmen. If only Truman, Byrnes, Attlee, Bevin, and company had been more sensitive to Stalin's legitimate concerns etc. goes this familiar (to use that word again) argument--much favored in many revisionist interpretations--the Cold War might have been avoided. Either directly or indirectly my work vigorously challenges the arguments of the three historians mentioned above. In light of this I acknowledge gratefully Chester Pach's observation that my work "has breathed life into old questions about the emergence of U.S. Cold War policies," but I must add that these are still very much LIVE and debated questions.

I am very glad that my six commentators from their diverse perspectives accept—with just some limited qualifications—my basic argument that Truman sought to continue FDR's cooperative approach towards Stalin's Soviet Union. If nothing else I trust my book will lay to rest notions of a sharp and deliberate reversal in policy towards the Soviet Union and the associated exaggeration of the significance of the Truman-Molotov conversation of April 23, 1945. Similarly, the commentators—aside from some mild carping by David Painter—appear to accept the essential case I make regarding Truman's decision to use the atomic bombs to end the war against Japan. I am truly glad of this and assume that it reflects in part the positive impact of splendid works like Richard Frank's *Downfall: the End of the Imperial Japanese Empire* (1999), which so influenced my own thinking.

The area that attracted the most attention — and much of it critical — from my commentators concerned my forceful and negative treatment of Franklin Roosevelt's wartime policy towards the Soviet Union and his planning for the postwar world. If I were interested in orchestrating a more positive response to my book, I assuredly would have tempered my criticism of FDR. But there already has been too much of that and consequently FDR has been given a pass for his sad misjudgments concerning Stalin.

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<sup>1</sup> [Editorial Note- An H-Diplo roundtable on *Racing the Enemy*, published in January and February 2006, may be found at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/#hasegawa> ].

<sup>2</sup> [Editorial Note- An H-Diplo roundtable on *Stalin's Wars*, published on 22 July 2007, may be found at <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/roundtables/#roberts> ].

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Historians too often dutifully engage in a kind of apologetics to explain Roosevelt's actions and even the estimable Eduard Mark lurches somewhat in this direction in his commentary. But the various palliative explanations, extenuating circumstances, and mitigating excuses offered by the roundtable contributors don't persuade me from the need to acknowledge honestly the major limitations in FDR's efforts both in dealing with Stalin and in preparing for the postwar world. In saying this let me clarify for Frank Costigliola that I am not questioning FDR's manliness/masculinity in dealing with Stalin. I question his judgment. Let me also add here my thanks to Lon Hamby for appreciating my argument that FDR clung to assumptions regarding the Soviet Union that were quite common in liberal circles of his day, yet profoundly mistaken.

An area where I provide a somewhat different and more richly textured analysis than is found in the existing literature is in my portrayal of Harry Truman and his struggle to get some grasp of the foreign policy for which he bore ultimate responsibility. Chester Pach notes that I don't hold back from noting Truman's "limitations and deficiencies" and Bob Jervis observes that I show "Truman's ad hoc, confused, and often desultory style of foreign-policy making." Obviously I build on the work of scholars such as Hamby and Deborah Larson in my depiction of Truman, but I trust that readers of my book will gain from it an appreciation of Truman as a more complex and real person and policymaker. Such an appreciation is essential to comprehend how American foreign policy developed from 1945 through to 1947.

Whatever his limitations, Truman proved capable of learning on the job and eventually came to terms with the need to contain Soviet expansion. Some of the commentators (especially David Painter) question the need for this. Painter implies, although doesn't explicitly state, that if only some more gentle soul (say Henry Wallace) had occupied the oval office rather than Truman—someone who was more understanding of Stalin's needs and more trusting of his intentions such that he generously would share the atomic bomb, etc—then the Cold War might have been avoided. But as I demonstrate in my book, Truman and Byrnes went to considerable lengths to reach genuine settlements with Stalin, especially as regards Eastern Europe. They tried negotiation and compromise but to little avail. Stalin hardly seemed reassured. In the end, the major moves to "contain" the Soviets came only after the Truman administration rightly concluded that Stalin's ambitions extended far beyond Eastern Europe—in Iran, the eastern Mediterranean and even Western Europe. One could ask if the United States should have conceded to Stalin on these issues so as to "reassure" him, but the answer is blatantly obvious to all but those who continue to cling to a naïve view of Stalin.

At the risk of taxing the stamina of the readers of this symposium let me offer a few further comments in direct response to specific points made by individual commentators. Frank Costigliola raises a concern that my "condemnation of the Soviets is especially striking because it is not matched by a similar criticism of the Nazi Germany wartime enemy." Let me assure him that the reason for this is that my book is not primarily concerned with U.S. attitudes towards or relations with Nazi Germany. Yet if he wants a hint of my attitude to

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that ghastly regime, I refer him to p. 249 of *FRTT* where in discussing the critics of Truman's use of the atomic bomb I write the following: "Perhaps they might also ask if the weapon had been ready say a year before would they have refrained from using it against Hitler's Berlin where they might have wiped out the viperous head of the Nazi regime and possibly saved the lives of millions on the battlefields and in the gas ovens."

By the time I got to the end of David Painter's commentary I began to get the distinct impression that he didn't much like my book. He appears overly defensive and reluctant to concede on any point for fear that the whole revisionist house of cards might come tumbling down—as indeed much of it should. Painter is also exercised because of the topics he alleges I ignore in my book, e.g. colonialism and racism, and the economic influences on U.S. foreign policy and so forth. While I do touch on such topics — see for example pp. 41-43 where I discuss FDR's postwar economic planning and attitudes to colonial empires -- Painter's larger point stands. There are topics that I don't address at length in my book. But what I would claim is that I have addressed the central issues involved in exploring the transition from Roosevelt to Truman and the development of foreign policy in the immediate postwar period.

Eduard Mark knows more about Eastern Europe and Soviet behavior and intentions there than I could ever hope to learn. I relied on his work in my book and found especially helpful his crucial article on the "War Scare of 1946" and his brilliant *CWIHP* paper "Revolution by Degrees."<sup>3</sup> I look forward to reading his forthcoming books that he mentions in footnotes 1 and 14 of his commentary. I am sure that I will learn much from them. Given his critical roundtable comments, however, I worry that I may not have drawn as accurately from his work as I should have in my study, and if so, I apologize. I thought I understood the "national front strategy" he ascribed to the Soviets and that I fairly described it as Stalin's effort to advance his version of socialism by "caution and deception." (See my discussion pp. 292-94 of *FRTT*) On the subject of Soviet tactics in Eastern Europe, I am curious if Mark objects to my relying upon the conclusion of Norman Naimark and Leonid Gibianski that "from the very beginning of their occupation of Eastern Europe, the Soviets manipulated East European leaders, bullied and deceived the populations, arrested and shot political opponents. They operated cynically and forcefully to accomplish their aims." How seriously should we take the supposed Soviet commitment to "bourgeois democracy?"

Chester Pach raises some question about the role I assign to the British in influencing American policy. He suggests that I "create the impression that without British impetus U.S. policy would have remained indecisive" in 1947. I think this is an over-reading of my argument. It was Soviet actions and intentions that ultimately forced the American response, but the British did influence the timing of it. However, I am glad that Pach introduced this matter for I consider it an important contribution of my book to include the

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<sup>3</sup> [Ed. Note] Eduard Mark, "Revolution By Degrees: Stalin's National-Front Strategy for Europe, 1941-1947," *CWIHP* (Cold War International History Project, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars) Working Paper No. 31," <http://www.wilsoncenter.org/topics/pubs/ACFB11.pdf>.

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British in the account of the origins of the Cold War. Understanding British Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin's great concern to draw a somewhat hesitant and reluctant United States into the European vacuum to counter Soviet influence is crucial for grasping the dynamics at the beginning of the Cold War.

Reading Bob Jervis's commentary was truly stimulating. I appreciate his reflections on the various stages through which American policy progressed and I would certainly agree with the first three he lists. I need to give more thought to the "fourth phase" which involved moving from containment to a "more offensive stance." Jervis also addressed my willingness to engage a number of the moral issues raised in my history. I am glad that, for the most part, he judges my efforts in this area to be responsible but he concludes with a challenge to my criticism of FDR. He concedes that Roosevelt's policies towards the Soviet Union may well have been misguided and wrong, but notes that FDR's desire to preserve "the possibility for harmonious post-war relations" and his hopes for a "better world" made his "gamble" worth taking. Thus, Jervis suggests, "the policies of Roosevelt and the early Truman administration may then have been both deeply flawed and moral." I remain unsure that "good intentions" alone can be used to justify actions. Serious reflection and careful weighing of policy options and their likely consequences surely must be required. If Roosevelt had done due diligence regarding Stalin and moved beyond his hunches and intuitions and naïve conceit that he could establish a personal relationship, one might conclude differently about him. At least Truman and Byrnes eventually broke free of FDR's "hunches" regarding Stalin. I regret it took them so long to do so.

Lon Hamby's final section which he titled "The Achievement" was a pleasure to read and I commend it to all those who begin their reading of this roundtable by glancing at the author's response! I'm not sure my book is the "new hegemonic work on the origins of the Cold War" but I hope it will prove of interest to scholars of various perspectives and deepen our collective understanding of this crucial subject.

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