

C. BEN WRIGHT

Mr. "X" and Containment

Few issues in recent years have been more hotly contested in the historical profession than the origins of the Cold War, and few Cold War documents have been more controversial than George F. Kennan's 1947 "X" article.¹ Entitled "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," this article was published anonymously in the July issue of *Foreign Affairs* under the pseudonym "X". Since the author of the "X" article was almost immediately identified as the director of the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, it was widely assumed that his ideas were "a guide to official thinking about Russia."² In words which have since become very familiar, Mr. "X" advocated "a long-term, patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies." Such tendencies, he argued, could be contained "by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy."³

No sooner had the "X" article appeared than its "containment" thesis became the focus of debate. In September and October of 1947 Walter Lippmann composed a series of columns for the *New York Herald Tribune* criticizing the "X" article and, by implication, United States policy. The essence of Lippmann's criticism was his prediction that containment would commit the United States indefinitely to military holding actions around the Soviet periphery. Such a policy, he feared, would mean surrendering the "strategic initiative" to the Soviet Union and the "misuse of American power." Published later in book form, Lippmann's columns constituted the first important critique of the containment policy.⁴

1. Two recent collections of essays which explore the concept of "containment" are Thomas G. Paterson, ed., *Containment and the Cold War: American Foreign Policy since 1945* (Reading, Mass., 1973) and Robert W. Tucker and William Watts, eds., *Beyond Containment: U.S. Foreign Policy in Transition* (Washington, D.C., 1973), which includes most of a symposium, "'X' Plus 25," originally published in the Summer 1972 issue of *Foreign Policy*. See also Charles Gati, "What Containment Meant," *Foreign Policy*, Summer 1972, pp. 22-40.

2. Arthur Krock, "A Guide to Official Thinking About Russia," *The New York Times*, July 8, 1947, p. 22.

3. X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, 25 (July 1947):566-82.

4. Walter Lippmann, *The Cold War: A Study in U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York, 1947).

Since 1947, the “X” article has remained at the center of controversy, prompting conflicting interpretations by historians and subsequent explanations and clarifications by George Kennan himself.⁵ Despite all that has been written about the “X” article, the question seems to persist: what did Kennan mean? How did he reach the conclusion that expansionism was the motivating force behind Soviet diplomacy? How did he propose to contain this “fluid stream”? What kind of “counter-force” did he have in mind? The purpose of this essay is to attempt to answer these and related questions. This is not the first effort to clear up some of the confusion surrounding the “X” article, nor will it be the last. But whereas other historians have looked to Kennan’s post-1947 record for clarification,⁶ this study focuses on the years 1944–47, when Kennan first formulated his idea of containment and began using the word itself.

Many of the ideas expressed by George Kennan in the mid-1940s were not new. During the 1930s his attitude toward the Soviet regime had been one of undisguised hostility, and in general he had been very pessimistic about Soviet-American relations. He had not, however, thought in terms of containment as such, for there had not really been anything to contain. Soviet foreign policy, like American policy, had been isolationist, not expansionist.⁷ Containment was, instead, a response to the shift in the international balance of power after 1941, when the Soviet Union and the United States became the major anti-Axis powers. As early as 1942, Kennan wrote that it was up to the United States to determine to what extent it could permit the Soviet Union to expand in Eastern and Central Europe. The advent of air power, he believed, made it technically feasible to guarantee the security of those areas.⁸ Thus, containment was, in the first place, Kennan’s response to a new situation created by World War II, and from the beginning it had military implications.

If containment was directed primarily at the rising star of Soviet influence, it also had a domestic American component. What the United States

5. See especially George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925–1950* (Boston and Toronto, 1967), chapter 15; see also “Interview with George F. Kennan,” in Tucker and Watts, eds., *Beyond Containment*, pp. 3–16. Hereafter Kennan will be identified as GFK.

6. Edward Mark, for example, finds evidence that GFK intended “military” containment in 1949–50. Edward M. Mark, “What Kind of Containment?,” in Paterson, ed., *Containment and the Cold War*, pp. 96–109.

7. For discussion of GFK’s views of the 1930s, see C. Ben Wright, “George F. Kennan: Scholar-Diplomat, 1926–1946” (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1972), chapters 2–4. See also GFK, *Memoirs*, chapters 2–3.

8. GFK, “Russia and the Post-War Settlement,” unused paper, summer 1942, George F. Kennan Papers (hereafter cited as GFK Papers), Firestone Library, Princeton University, Princeton, N.J.

needed in the postwar period, Kennan wrote in 1942, was "a body of opinion capable of viewing Russia dispassionately, without irrational alarm or irrational enthusiasm"—in other words, a "middle ground" between the two "extreme" views of the Soviet Union prevalent in the United States. On the extreme right were the emotional anti-Soviets, who would cut off aid to Russia; on the extreme left were the emotional pro-Soviets, who believed the Russians could do no wrong; somewhere in the middle was Kennan, who favored a policy based on "cool cynicism and self-interest."⁹

From the summer of 1944 to early 1946, while minister-counselor of the United States embassy in Moscow, George Kennan was profoundly disturbed by the "irrational enthusiasm" of American policy toward Russia, a policy he considered altogether too conciliatory; therefore, all of his energies went into moving official thinking from the "extreme" left to the middle of the road, as he defined it. It was during this period that he formulated his containment thesis. Although he did not actually use the word "containment," speaking instead of "firmness" and "manliness," the policy was the same. When the United States adopted a firmer line toward Russia in the spring of 1946, thereby embracing Kennan's position, his emphasis shifted. Satisfied at last with the direction of United States policy, he turned in 1946 and 1947 to the "irrational alarm" manifested by the American people, who seemed to assume that, intimate collaboration failing, war between the United States and the Soviet Union must be inevitable.

The essence of Kennan's containment thesis was embodied in four documents written in Moscow in 1944–46: (1) "Russia—Seven Years Later" (September 1944); (2) "Russia's International Position at the Close of the War with Germany" (May 1945); (3) the unfinished and unused "The United States and Russia" (Winter 1945–46); and (4) the influential "Long Telegram" of February 22, 1946. The first paper, a memorandum referring to Kennan's long absence from Russia, is significant for its identification of the Soviet threat.¹⁰ Kennan now saw, in the fall of 1944, what had not been obvious to him in the 1930s: that Stalin, a realist in foreign affairs, had substituted "a purely nationalistic Soviet foreign policy" for the original Bolshevik goal of world revolution. However, despite the dictator's indifference to Communist dogma, "the basic conception of Soviet policy" remained unchanged: to increase "the relative strength of the Soviet Union in world affairs" by exploiting differences among other powers. The German invasion had forced the Soviet Union into a defensive posture, but by 1944 the military situation

9. *Ibid.*

10. See GFK, *Memoirs*, annex, pp. 503–31; for excerpts see U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1944* (hereafter cited as *FR: 1944*), 7 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1965–67), 4:902–14.

had so improved that Stalin could again entertain “dreams of empire.” It was obvious to Kennan that the war was giving to Stalin that which Hitler had refused. He emphasized that the Soviet Union was not much interested in spreading communism to Eastern and Central Europe. What was desired, pure and simple, was control over the area.¹¹

Kennan did not view the prospect of Soviet expansion with equanimity. The relative increase in Russian power alarmed him. Equally disturbing was the expectation that, following the war, Russia would revert to her program of “military industrialization” and maintain a military establishment “greater than any other in the world.” As long as Stalin’s advisers isolated themselves and their leader from the outside world, thus distorting their view of reality, Kennan could not be sure “that the vast creative abilities of Russia [would] not lead to the tragedy, rather than to the rescue, of Western civilization.”

The second important document of Kennan’s Moscow period, “Russia’s International Position at the Close of the War with Germany,” written on the occasion of V-E Day in May 1945,¹² was less pessimistic. As with his 1944 memorandum, Kennan discussed the nature of the Soviet challenge, but he also made recommendations for an American policy of firmness and manliness. Since this paper included both features of containment—Soviet threat, American response—it can probably be regarded as the earliest version of the “X” thesis. Attention to American power transformed what might have been an even more alarmed paper into a generally positive statement.

With the defeat of Japan in the Far East, Kennan wrote, Russia would find herself “for the first time in her history, without a single great power rival on the Eurasian landmass.” He had implied in 1944 that there were limits to Russia’s ambitions, that she had a specific program for Eastern and Central Europe, but now he posed some questions which seemed to reopen the issue.

Behind Russia’s stubborn expansion lies only the age-old sense of insecurity of a sedentary people reared on an exposed plain in the neighborhood of fierce nomadic peoples. Will this urge, now become a permanent feature of Russian psychology, provide the basis for a successful

11. The “endless, fluid pursuit of power,” according to GFK, also motivated Soviet policy in China and in the Near and Middle East, although the Russians would be tactically flexible, even cautious. See U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1945* (hereafter cited as *FR: 1945*), 9 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1967–69), 7:342–44; U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1946* (hereafter cited as *FR: 1946*), 11 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1969–71), 9:116–19; *FR: 1945*, 5:901–3. That GFK was not indifferent to the Kremlin’s communistic ambitions was revealed in his views about postwar Germany, where he thought Soviet policy was motivated by the desire to establish a “Soviet Socialist state.” See *FR: 1946*, 5:516–20, 555–56.

12. See GFK, *Memoirs*, annex, pp. 532–46; for excerpts see *FR: 1945*, 5:853–60.

expansion of Russia into new areas of east and west? And if initially successful, will it know where to stop? Will it not be inexorably carried forward, by its very nature, in a struggle to reach the whole—to attain complete mastery of the shores of the Atlantic and the Pacific?

Such language conjures up the image of the "persistent toy automobile" of the "X" article, moving "inexorably along [its] prescribed path . . . stopping only when it met with some unanswerable force." The question Kennan was raising, and which we must ask of Kennan, was: were there psychological or geographical limits to Soviet expansion?

Without answering the question directly, Kennan nonetheless made his position clear. Though the Russians could not be counted on to restrain themselves, there were two forces which could limit Soviet expansion: first, internal weaknesses of the Soviet system; and, second, Western resistance to Soviet designs. Soviet internal weaknesses included both "the inevitable drawbacks of foreign rule" which the Russians were bound to encounter in Eastern and Central Europe and the Kremlin's loss of "moral dominion" over the Russian people. All in all, Kennan believed that Russia would not have an "easy time" in Eastern and Central Europe—that is, *unless* she received moral and material support from the West. If, however, the Western powers denied Russia the support necessary for consolidation of those areas, if the Western allies abandoned their "appeasement" of Russia for a policy of "political manliness," then before long she might even have to surrender some of her possessions. Kennan considered further Soviet "military advances" in the West highly improbable, for they "could only increase responsibilities already beyond the Russian capacity to meet." Moreover, the Soviet Union had "no naval or air forces capable of challenging the sea or air lanes of the world."

"Russia's International Position" was a more optimistic paper than "Russia—Seven Years Later" not only because of its recognition of inherent limits to Soviet imperialism, but also because of its underlying assumption of Western, primarily American, military superiority *vis-à-vis* Russia. This point cannot be overemphasized, for it was central to Kennan's thinking from 1944 on. It explained his mistaken belief that the Western Allies had done all of the giving in their wartime relations with Russia; it influenced his estimate of Soviet intentions; and it accounted for his faith in a policy of "political manliness" or containment. By pointing to the undeveloped state of Soviet naval and air forces, he implied what would be made explicit in later papers, namely that Stalin would think twice before risking war with the United States. To the charge that he had attributed to the Soviet Union grandiose and virtually unlimited territorial ambitions, Kennan probably would have replied: certainly, the Russians would *like* to expand to the shores of the Atlantic and the Pacific; however, they are not about to take

unnecessary risks to attain distant and ideal goals; therefore, all that is necessary to block further Russian expansion is firmness in the West. In other words, Kennan had identified a dichotomy in Soviet foreign policy: it was expansionary but at the same time cautious.

The unfinished "The United States and Russia," composed sometime during the winter of 1945–46, found Kennan again in a pessimistic mood.¹³ Much to his dismay, the United States was still "appeasing" Russia. If this policy persisted, he warned, some day we would probably have to fight a war with Russia or with one of her "puppets," or "accept situations highly precarious to our security." This was an extreme statement for a self-proclaimed moderate, and since Kennan did not really consider war likely he immediately qualified it.

If, on the other hand, we adopt even a *modest* measure of firmness and realism . . . we should *easily* be able to avoid anything in the nature of this contingency. [Emphases added.]

To assist his government, Kennan drew up a set of rules for dealing with the Russians, representing "the quintessence of ten years of experience in Russian affairs." These recommendations constitute the unique contribution of "The United States and Russia," and they give a better idea of what Kennan meant by "a modest measure of firmness and realism." Their main headings follow:

- A. Don't act chummy with them.
- B. Don't assume a community of aims with them which does not really exist.
- C. Don't make fatuous gestures of good will.
- D. Make no requests of the Russians unless we are prepared to make *them feel our displeasure in a practical way in case the request is not granted.*
- E. Take up matters on a normal level and insist that Russians take full responsibility for their actions on that level.
- F. Do not encourage high-level exchanges of views with the Russians unless the initiative comes at least 50 percent from their side.
- G. Do not be afraid to use heavy weapons for what seem to us to be minor matters.
- H. Do not be afraid of unpleasantness and public airing of differences.
 - I. Coordinate . . . all activities of our government relating to Russia and all private American activities of this sort which the government can influence.
 - J. Strengthen and support our representation in Russia.

13. GFK, "The United States and Russia," unfinished paper, winter 1945–46, GFK Papers; for excerpts see *Memoirs*, annex, pp. 560–65.

"Russia—Seven Years Later," "Russia's International Position," and "The United States and Russia" all laid the groundwork for the containment policy, but it was the "Long Telegram" of February 22, 1946, the fourth document under consideration, which impressed Washington officialdom and actually influenced American policy.¹⁴ Beyond its extraordinary reception in Washington, the most notable feature of the telegram was its resurrection of an ideological theme which Kennan seemed to have laid to rest in "Russia—Seven Years Later." To understand this apparent reversal, one must recall what motivated the telegram. On February 9, 1946, Stalin had delivered a highly publicized "election speech," viewed by many in the West as Russia's declaration of "cold war." By reviving the Marxist-Leninist doctrine that the capitalist bloc contained within it the seeds of another war, and by stressing Soviet military might, Stalin seemed to be saying that cooperation with the West was no longer possible.¹⁵ A few days later, the State Department requested Kennan's analysis of what appeared to be the new Soviet "line."¹⁶ The Long Telegram was Kennan's response.

In Kennan's view, the premises on which the Soviet party line were based were clearly false. This being the case, why had Stalin revived them? Kennan found the answer not in any "objective analysis of [the] situation beyond Russia's borders," but rather in "inner-Russian necessities," particularly in the psychology of Stalin and his associates. Whereas the Russian people were desirous of friendly relations with the outside world, their leaders were motivated by a "traditional and instinctive Russian sense of insecurity." With the establishment of the Bolshevik regime, traditional Russian nationalism had clothed itself in Marxist-Leninist dogma, becoming "more dangerous and insidious than ever before." Communist dogma provided the justification for the "instinctive fear of [the] outside world" and for the manifold cruelties inflicted by the dictatorship. Ideology was, in short, the "fig leaf of [Soviet] moral and intellectual respectability," and therefore its importance should not be underrated. In effect, Kennan had identified three "sources of Soviet con-

14. See *FR: 1946*, 6:696–709; for excerpts see *Memoirs*, annex, pp. 547–59. For extended discussion of the Long Telegram and its reception in Washington, see Wright, "George F. Kennan," pp. 393–421, 438–42; see also GFK, *Memoirs*, pp. 292–95; John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941–1947* (New York and London, 1972), chapter 9.

15. *The New York Times*, February 10, 1946, p. 30; *FR: 1946*, 6:694–96. For a "revisionist" view of Stalin's speech, see Jonathan Harris, "Historicus on Stalin," *Soviet Union*, 1, no. 1 (1974):66.

16. *FR: 1946*, 6:697 n.; Elbridge Durbrow, interview with the author, September 28, 1970. GFK had first noticed signs of a new Soviet line in October 1945. See *FR: 1945*, 5:888–91; GFK to the secretary of state, telegram, October 6, 1945, U.S. Department of State Files (hereafter cited as DSF), Record Group 59, National Archives, Washington, D.C.; GFK to secretary of state, October 9, 1945, DSF.

duct”: traditional Russian nationalism, the psychology of the Soviet leadership, and Marxist-Leninist ideology.

Having analyzed the sources of Soviet policy, the Long Telegram turned next to its practical implementation. On the official level, Kennan looked for the Soviet Union to attempt to extend its power wherever such efforts appeared promising, such as in Iran and Turkey. On the unofficial level, for which the Soviet government accepted no responsibility, Russia could be expected to promote actions essentially “negative and destructive in character,” designed to increase Soviet influence at the expense of the major Western powers. Kennan listed numerous groups which could be utilized for unofficial, or “subterranean,” activities: foreign Communist parties, labor unions, youth leagues, women’s organizations, religious societies, cultural groups, racial movements, foreign branches of the Russian Orthodox church, and so on.

In summary, we have here a political force committed fanatically to the belief that with [the] U.S. there can be no permanent *modus vivendi*, that it is desirable and necessary that the internal harmony of our society be disrupted, our traditional way of life be destroyed, the international authority of our state be broken, if Soviet power is to be secure. This political force has complete power of disposition over [the] energies of one of the world’s greatest peoples and resources of [the] world’s richest national territory, and is borne along by deep and powerful currents of Russian nationalism. In addition it has an elaborate and far flung apparatus for exertion of its influence in other countries, an apparatus of amazing flexibility and versatility, managed by people whose experience and skill in underground methods are presumably without parallel in history. Finally, it is seemingly inaccessible to considerations of reality in its basic reactions.

By placing such a heavy emphasis on Marxism-Leninism and the international apparatus at Moscow’s disposal, the Long Telegram encouraged ideological interpretations. Even though Kennan now believed that peaceful coexistence between capitalist and socialist states was entirely possible, a casual reader might have reached the opposite conclusion. His telegram seemed to suggest that every grievance or disturbance in the West or in the Third World was Communist-inspired, thus illegitimate, and that every liberal organization, labor union, racial association, and so forth, was ripe for Communist manipulation. Here one must confront Kennan’s ambivalence with respect to the Soviet-Communist challenge. Though he recognized limits to Soviet power (recall “Russia’s International Position”), he was also sincerely concerned by Moscow’s control of international communism, which implied a threat of global proportions. In his anxiousness to alert Washington to the “realities” of Soviet policy, he could, as in the Long Telegram, exaggerate the

Communist dimensions of the problem and in so doing invite overreactions.¹⁷

How the United States should respond to the Communist menace was the subject of the final section of the Long Telegram. Coping with the Soviet threat, Kennan wrote, posed "the greatest task our diplomacy has ever faced," but he was convinced that the problem was "within our power to solve"—and "without recourse to any general military conflict." In support of this conviction, he made four observations "of a more encouraging nature." (1) Unlike Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union was "neither schematic nor adventuristic." Using language similar to that in the "X" article, he wrote:

[Soviet] power does not work by fixed plans. It does not take unnecessary risks. Impervious to logic of reason, it is highly sensitive to logic of force. For this reason it can easily withdraw—and usually does—when strong resistance is encountered at any point. Thus, if the adversary has sufficient force and makes clear his readiness to use it, he rarely has to do so.

This was the basic premise of the containment policy. (2) The Soviet Union was "by far the weaker force" when measured against the Western world as a whole. Therefore, Soviet success would depend on the "degree of cohesion, firmness and vigor" evidenced in the West. (3) There were several factors which called into question the "internal soundness and permanence" of the Soviet regime. In addition to the internal weaknesses mentioned in "Russia's International Position," the problem of the "transfer of power" after Stalin's death or retirement was important, for, in Kennan's opinion, the Soviet state had yet to prove its capacity to endure. (In the "X" article he went only a step further, suggesting that the next transfer of power might "shake Soviet power to its foundations.") (4) Finally, insofar as all Soviet propaganda was "basically negative and destructive," Kennan believed it should be "relatively easy to combat it by any intelligent and really constructive program." Ultimately, Kennan believed that the United States could "approach calmly and with good heart [the] problem of how to deal with Russia."

Given his analysis of Soviet policy, George Kennan made two basic recommendations during his tenure in Moscow: that the United States should draw a line through Europe, thereby identifying for the Russians our own sphere of influence; and that the United States should consistently and firmly defend all of its interests on the diplomatic level. The first requirement of a spheres-of-influence policy, Kennan wrote in September 1944, would be to "determine in conjunction with the British . . . the line beyond which we can-

17. Another example of overkill was GFK's analysis of Soviet policy in the Near and Middle East as conveyed in his well-received dispatch of October 23, 1945 (DSF 761.00/10-2345; see also *FR*: 1945, 5:901-3).

not afford to permit the Russians to exercise unchallenged power or to take purely unilateral action.”¹⁸ He did not specify, geographically, where such a line should run, but he implied, at various times, that the Russians should not be permitted to expand beyond the limits reached by the Red Army during the war. When it began to look as though the Russians intended to dominate the occupied countries of Eastern and Central Europe in the postwar period, he urged the United States to write those territories off. In this connection, he advocated American withdrawal from the Control Commissions for Bulgaria, Hungary, and Rumania, suggested that we face up to the fact that Poland, the Baltic states, and Czechoslovakia were lost, and proposed that we accept as accomplished facts the partition of Germany and Austria. What concerned Kennan most was the fear that the United States, as the ally of the Soviet Union, would share in the moral responsibility for the fate of peoples under Soviet occupation. To avoid this, he advised his government to disassociate itself from the Soviet Union—that is, to abandon collaboration—and to publicize Soviet misconduct before American and world opinion. A “realistic” policy based on spheres of influence would mean, in short, the moral and political isolation of the Soviet Union, and to that end Kennan recommended, at different times, repudiation of agreements reached at Dumbarton Oaks, Yalta, and Potsdam, and frank acceptance of the division of Europe.¹⁹

Endorsement of spheres of influence involved more than the moral and political isolation of the Soviet regime; Kennan also favored Russia’s economic isolation. His study of Soviet trade practices in the 1930s had convinced him not only that the Russians used commerce for “political” purposes, but also that their state trade monopoly gave them a considerable economic advantage vis-à-vis Western businessmen. His economic dream for postwar Europe did not include the Soviet Union. The division of Europe into spheres of influence—one Soviet, one Anglo-American—would be followed, Kennan hoped, by the creation of a Western European federation, with the western zones of Germany integrated “into the Atlantic economy as independently as possible of the east” (perhaps something like the Common Market of the 1950s).²⁰

18. GFK, unused paper, September 18, 1944, GFK Papers. See also “Russia and the Post-War Settlement,” summer 1942.

19. GFK to Charles E. Bohlen, letter, January 26, 1945, GFK Papers; Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929–1969* (New York, 1973), pp. 174–77; GFK to W. Averell Harriman, memoranda, September 18, December 5, December 22, December 23, 1944, April 12, 1945, summer 1945, October 11, 1945, GFK Papers; GFK to secretary of state, October 31, 1944, DSF 860 C. 48/10-3144, May 16, 1945, DSF; *FR: 1945*, 4:453–54; *FR: 1946*, 6:713–14. See also *FR: 1944*, 1:467–68; *FR: 1945*, 3:83, 110; GFK to secretary of state, October 3, 1945, DSF; GFK, “Comments on the Results of the Crimea Conference as Set Forth in the Published Communiqué,” February 14, 1945, GFK Papers; *FR: 1946*, 5:555–56.

20. GFK to Bohlen, January 26, 1945; GFK, “Comments on PWC-141a (April 21,

From 1944 on, the Soviet Union, not Germany, was, for Kennan, the enemy. Consistent with this attitude, he favored termination of Lend-Lease and UNRRA aid to Russia and vigorously opposed the extension of postwar credits to Russia.²¹ Thus, in practice, a policy of firmness required the denial of material as well as moral and political support for the Soviet regime.

An American sphere of influence in Western Europe was one component of a policy of firmness. A second was vigorous defense of American interests on the diplomatic level, something Kennan had urged on the State Department since the 1930s. In "The United States and Russia" he went so far as to suggest that the United States make an "open issue" of the inadequate housing and working facilities in Moscow.²² This concern for the status of Americans in Russia, and Russian-controlled territories, embraced not only the diplomatic corps, but also American representatives to the Allied Control Commissions, U.S. military personnel, American businessmen, the Red Cross, the press corps, and individual American citizens. When Soviet authorities violated American rights, or merely caused inconvenience, Kennan's advice was, first, to protest the violation, and then, if the United States did not receive satisfaction, to take retaliatory action. Concrete examples of retaliation suggested by him in 1944–46 included the termination of Lend-Lease aid and Red Cross relief, the withdrawal of U.S. diplomatic missions from Eastern Europe, the exclusion of Moscow from international conferences, and the inconveniencing of *Soviet* officials by withholding visas or otherwise delaying access to Western Europe.²³ If the United States was not prepared to back up its requests with concrete action, "proving that Russian interests suffer if our wishes are not observed," Kennan opposed making the requests in the first place. This attitude, that doing nothing was preferable to making vain diplomatic approaches, figured prominently in his recommendations to Washington.²⁴ For Kennan, good form was all-important. Unfortunately, from his

1944)," written about February 1945, GFK Papers; GFK to John G. Winant, letter, March 1944, GFK Papers; GFK to Harriman, summer 1945.

21. GFK to Harriman, memorandum, December 3, 1944, GFK Papers; GFK to Harriman, summer 1945; Thomas G. Paterson, "The Abortive American Loan to Russia and the Origins of the Cold War, 1943–1946," *Journal of American History*, 56 (June 1969):86. See also GFK to Winant, March 1944; *FR: 1944*, 2:881; *FR: 1946*, 6:745–48, 728–31.

22. GFK, *Memoirs*, p. 564. See also GFK to secretary of state, April 28, 1945, DSF.

23. *FR: 1944*, 4:927–28, 267–68, 272–73, 1:467–68; *FR: 1945*, 3:83, 4:453–54, 820, 5:868–70; GFK to secretary of state, April 28, May 16, May 25, 1945, DSF; GFK to Harriman, April 12, October 11, 1945; *FR: 1946*, 6:1–4, 711, 718–19, 728–31; Council on Foreign Relations, "The Soviet Way of Thought and Its Effect on Soviet Foreign Policy," Discussion Meeting Report, January 7, 1947, p. 6, GFK Papers.

24. GFK, *Memoirs*, p. 562; GFK to secretary of state, April 21, 1945, DSF; *FR: 1945*, 4:532–33, 5:295–96; GFK to Harriman, October 11, 1945. On one occasion, the

point of view, neither good form nor “realism” characterized America’s Russian policy—that is, until the spring of 1946.

Sometime between January and April of 1946 George Kennan experienced a significant change in attitude, from near-despondency to restrained optimism. In January he reaffirmed his intention, first expressed one year earlier, to resign from the Foreign Service, suggesting as reasons dissatisfaction with U.S. policy, the feeling that his talents were not being fully utilized, and the desire to establish “roots” in the States.²⁵ By April, however, his mood had improved to the point that he was perceived by others as a “transformed person.”²⁶ On April 17 he wrote a friend that his two years in Moscow had been “hard” and that he was very “tired” but that he felt less discouraged now than he had for some time. “I have a feeling,” he wrote, “that some of the most dangerous tendencies in American thought about Russia have been checked, if not overcome. If we can now only restrain the hot-heads and panic-mongers and keep policy on a firm and even keel, I am not pessimistic.”²⁷ George Kennan had been pessimistic about American policy since the 1930s; he had been pessimistic in January. What had happened in three short months to alter his outlook?

Although the evidence is not conclusive, the answer seems obvious: the United States government had finally come around to Kennan’s way of thinking. His shift in mood paralleled a much-talked-about shift in Washington toward a “get tough” policy with Russia.²⁸ The immediate pretext for the reorientation of American policy was a crisis over Iran, the first full-blown crisis of the postwar era, and the intellectual rationale for the new policy was Kennan’s very own Long Telegram.²⁹

During World War II, the British, the Russians, and the Americans had sent troops into Iran to secure it from the Germans. According to agreements made during the war and reaffirmed in September 1945, all foreign troops were to be removed from Iran by March 2, 1946. The crisis developed when it became clear that the Russians had no intention of evacuating their forces.

International Trade Policy Office became so irritated with GFK’s negativism that it proposed, sarcastically, that the United States close its Moscow embassy and return him to Washington, where his “sublime insight” would be more readily available (International Trade Policy memorandum, February 14, 1946, DSF 861.24/2-1446).

25. GFK to Elbridge Durbrow, letter, January 21, 1946, GFK Papers; see also GFK to Bohlen, January 26, 1945; GFK to H. Freeman Matthews, letter, August 21, 1945, GFK Papers.

26. William A. Crawford, interview with the author, September 29, 1970. Crawford was third secretary of the Moscow embassy in 1945–46.

27. GFK to Dr. Bruce Hopper, letter, April 17, 1946, GFK Papers.

28. Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, chapter 9.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 302–4; Louis J. Halle, *The Cold War as History* (New York, 1967), pp. 104–8.

On January 19, 1946, the government of Iran, encouraged by the United States, filed a formal complaint with the United Nations Security Council, charging Russia with interference in Iran's internal affairs. After heated debate, during which Soviet-Western differences were revealed for all the world to see, the Security Council adopted a resolution on January 30 referring the Soviet-Iranian dispute to bilateral negotiation.

For the next month Iran faded from the public glare. However, the so-called "Russian problem" remained at center stage. On February 9, Stalin delivered his "election speech," which, coupled with Soviet unilateralism in Eastern Europe and the retention of troops in Iran and Manchuria, raised anew the question of Soviet intentions. An answer was provided on February 22 by George Kennan in the Long Telegram. The effect of the Long Telegram on Washington officialdom was, in Kennan's words, "nothing less than sensational."³⁰ Navy Secretary James Forrestal promoted it within military circles, while the State Department distributed it among diplomatic missions abroad. In view of this high level publicity, it was widely interpreted in official circles as a statement of a new United States "line," a switch from the "appeasement" of the Roosevelt era to a policy of containment.³¹ Arriving in Washington at exactly the right moment, the Long Telegram, according to Joseph Jones, contributed "markedly to the stiffening of United States policy toward Soviet expansion."³² Only slightly less impressed was State Department Counselor Benjamin Cohen, who later said of the telegram: "Policy was then in transition—but certainly directly and indirectly it influenced Departmental thinking, although the specific decisions it affected or determined might be difficult to pinpoint."³³

If the Long Telegram was as influential as Cohen and others believed, it must have had some effect on the American response to the Iranian situation, which on March 2 assumed crisis proportions. American and British forces had been withdrawn from Iran, but Soviet troops remained. Since the Soviet Union was in clear violation of previous agreements, on March 4 both the British and Iranian governments presented formal protests to the Soviet government. The next day, Secretary of State James Byrnes instructed George

30. GFK, *Memoirs*, p. 294.

31. Durbrow, interview; Crawford, interview; Benjamin V. Cohen, interview with the author, September 29, 1970; "The Reminiscences of Walter Lippmann," April 8, 1950, pp. 257–59, courtesy of Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. Prior to 1947, the "get tough" policy was, of course, not referred to as "containment."

32. Joseph Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks: February 21–June 5, 1947* (New York, 1964), p. 133; see also Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York, 1969), p. 151; Dean Acheson to the author, letter, March 5, 1971; Walter Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries* (New York, 1951), pp. 135–40.

33. Quoted in George Curry and Richard L. Walker, *E. R. Stettinius, Jr., 1944–1945, and James F. Byrnes, 1945–1947* (New York, 1965), p. 202.

Kennan, chargé d'affaires in Moscow, to deliver the American protest.³⁴ Meanwhile, even as Kennan was receiving this communication, two events of related importance were occurring. On March 5 the State Department sent Kennan's Long Telegram, one statement of the administration's new policy, to various diplomatic missions around the world,³⁵ and on the same day Winston Churchill delivered his famous "iron curtain" speech at Fulton, Missouri, in which he seemed to propose the containment, diplomatic and military, of Soviet expansionist drives. Iran was identified as one of several trouble spots.³⁶

Despite public expression of Anglo-American toughness, all signs pointed to a worsening of the crisis. Early March 6, the State Department received a report from the American vice consul in Tabriz of exceptionally heavy Soviet troop movements toward Tehran.³⁷ Convinced that the Russians were now adding military invasion to political subversion in Iran, Secretary Byrnes remarked to his staff on March 7, "Now we'll give it to them with both barrels."³⁸ With timing too perfect to be accidental, the State Department announced that the United States was sending the battleship *Missouri* and destroyer *Power* to the Eastern Mediterranean,³⁹ and it instructed George Kennan to deliver a second note to the Soviet Foreign Office, requesting an explanation of Soviet troop increases in Iran.⁴⁰ Though retaining his public composure throughout the crisis, on one occasion President Truman confided to Averell Harriman, whom he was trying to persuade to become ambassador to Great Britain: "It is important. We may be at war with the Soviet Union over Iran."⁴¹

Conditions remained tense for the next two weeks. The crisis finally broke

34. *FR: 1946*, 7:340–42. The text of the U.S. protest was released to the press on March 7 (*The New York Times*, March 8, 1946, p. 2). On March 5 the United States also protested the removal of war booty from Soviet-occupied Manchuria (*FR: 1946*, 10:1113–14).

35. Office of European Affairs, Supplement to Weekly Review, March 5, 1946, GFK Papers. See also David E. Lilienthal, *The Journals of David E. Lilienthal*, 5 vols. (New York, 1964–71), 2:26.

36. *The New York Times*, March 6, 1946, p. 4. The headline for March 6 read: "U.S. Sends 2 Protests to Russia on Manchuria and Iran Actions; Churchill Assails Soviet Policy."

37. *FR: 1946*, 7:340, 342–43, 344–45.

38. Quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 346–48.

39. *The New York Times*, March 7, 1946, p. 18. In its announcement the State Department denied that the voyage, whose ostensible purpose was to return the body of the late Turkish ambassador, had "political implications." See also Millis, ed., *The Forrestal Diaries*, pp. 141, 144–46, 171.

40. *FR: 1946*, 7:348.

41. Quoted in Herbert Feis, *From Trust to Terror: The Onset of the Cold War, 1945–1950* (New York, 1970), pp. 82–83.

on March 25, when George Kennan reported from Moscow that Iran and the Soviet Union had reached an agreement for the complete evacuation of Soviet troops from Iran within six weeks.⁴² Confronted by Anglo-American diplomatic firmness, unfavorable publicity in the United Nations, and the implied threat of Western military resistance, the Soviet Union had been forced to back down in Iran. As Kennan had foreseen,⁴³ the Soviets had been reluctant to risk a complete break with the West by pushing the dispute with Iran too far; containment had worked, in this its first test. Commenting several months later on the Soviet humiliation in Iran, he had only one regret, that three American correspondents had been in the first jeep entering liberated Tabriz. Their presence, along with a tactless speech by the American consul, "seemed to rub in the recent Russian reverse."⁴⁴ Mr. "X" may have had this incident in mind when he cautioned against outward "threats or blustering"; containment had to "leave the way open for compliance not too detrimental to Russian prestige."

George Kennan's later assertion that containment meant "not the containment by military means of a military threat, but the political containment of a political threat,"⁴⁵ is difficult to reconcile with the record of 1944–46. Soviet troops in Iran certainly constituted a military threat to Iran, if not to the United States, while Churchill's "iron curtain" speech and the dispatch of the U.S.S. *Missouri* to the Mediterranean, to which Kennan never objected, conveyed the implied threat of Anglo-American military action. Diplomacy is of slight value if not backed up by military force and, as Kennan put it in the Long Telegram, "the readiness to use it." Kennan's confidence in a policy of containment ultimately derived from his conviction, also expressed in the Long Telegram, that the Soviet Union was "by far the weaker force" when compared with the West. Residence in Moscow during the war made him sensitive to the military-industrial weaknesses of the Soviet Union;⁴⁶ awareness of American air and naval superiority, not to mention the United States' atomic monopoly,⁴⁷ convinced him that the United States had it

42. *FR: 1946*, 7:378–79; see also pp. 405–7.

43. *Ibid.*, pp. 362–64.

44. Council on Foreign Relations, "The Soviet Way of Thought," January 7, 1947, p. 7. See also "Question and Answer Session" with GFK and Llewellyn Thompson, following lecture by GFK to Foreign Service and State Department personnel, Washington, D.C., September 17, 1946, GFK Papers.

45. GFK, *Memoirs*, p. 358.

46. At one time or another during his service in Moscow GFK commented on the decline of Soviet production of the following: copper, aluminum, oil, railroad cars, construction machinery, coal, iron ore. (GFK to secretary of state, November 16, 1944, DSF 861.6352/11-1644; January 27, February 7, July 19 [#2625, #2627], July 20, July 28, July 31, 1945, DSF.)

47. *FR: 1945*, 5:884–86.

within its power to set the limits to Soviet expansion. Confronted by “sufficient force,” Kennan wrote in the Long Telegram, the Russians could be expected to back down. Thus, he may not have been thinking *exclusively* in terms of military “force,” but that would have been one important ingredient of a policy of containment. That containment lent itself to military interpretations is attested to by the fact that the Long Telegram was widely distributed among the military establishment and by the fact that Kennan’s personal reward for the Long Telegram was his assignment to the National War College.

If one accepts Kennan’s disclaimer of military intentions, then one has no choice but to conclude with Herbert Feis that “words led Kennan’s thoughts by the nose.”⁴⁸ What exactly did he mean by “sufficient force” if not military force? In his memoirs Kennan conceded that the language of his “X” article was “careless and indiscriminate,”⁴⁹ but the Long Telegram had similar deficiencies. The most glaring deficiency was, of course, the failure to define the relationship between diplomacy and military power. Some of Kennan’s proposals for dealing with Russia were vague at best, suggesting different things to different people. For example, he argued that the success of containment depended to a considerable degree on the “health and vigor” of American society, the ability of the United States to solve its own internal problems. In combating Soviet communism, we should be careful to preserve our own “methods and conceptions of human society.” Specifically, what did he have in mind in the way of solutions to America’s internal problems? For that matter, which internal problems required solution? Which “methods and conceptions” of American society did he want to preserve? He did not say.

In mid-April 1946, George Kennan was appointed deputy commandant for foreign affairs for the newly established National War College, which began instruction in Washington in September, and in May 1947 he became the first director of the State Department’s Policy Planning Staff, in which capacity he helped give birth to the Marshall Plan. It was also during his first year back in Washington, from the summer of 1946 to May 1947, that Kennan coined the word “containment” to describe the policy of firmness he had been advocating since 1944 and made explicit many of the ideas, particularly with respect to military power, which had been primarily implicit before. With American policy finally “on a firm and even keel,” he was concerned now with the attitudes of the American public. He was critical not only of Henry Wallace and other “liberals” who wished to return to

48. Feis, *From Trust to Terror*, p. 223.

49. GFK, *Memoirs*, p. 360.

Roosevelt's policy of "appeasement,"⁵⁰ but also of the "hot-heads" and "panic-mongers" who feared war with Russia. Even though the United States and the Soviet Union were approaching "a parting of the ways in Europe" and would have problems "for a long time to come," that did not mean that war was inevitable.⁵¹ The Russians were not about to provoke a conflict with "a superior force," Kennan declared in September 1946, and the United States was superior "politically," "militarily," "economically," and "morally." Soviet weakness, he believed, made the "Russian problem," though complicated, also manageable. "That gives us an edge on them, thank goodness, for the moment," he said, "which should enable us, if our policies are wise and nonprovocative, to *contain* them *both militarily and politically* for a long time to come." [Emphases added.]⁵²

Valuing diplomatic style and good form as much as he did, Kennan was reluctant to face up to the unpleasant consequences likely to flow from a policy of containment. Containment, he hoped, would be nonprovocative. United States policy should be firm *and* polite; strength should be combined with "courtesy and respect" for the Soviet Union. Wherever the Soviets attempted "to encroach upon the vital interests of a stable and peaceful world," they should be confronted with "superior strength," but "in so friendly and unprovocative a manner that its basic purposes [would] not be subject to misinterpretation." Even though Kennan fully supported the new American policy of firmness toward Russia, he shied away from the phrase "get-tough line" being used to characterize this policy, for "get-tough" suggested to him that *no* cooperation was possible between the two nations. While stationed in Moscow he had consistently urged an end to Soviet-American collaboration; now, in 1946–47, he continued to favor disassociation from Russia, but he also believed that "more normal" relations might be possible within five or ten years, provided the United States combined its policy of containment with, remarkably, an "open door" to collaboration. Such a combination, Kennan now thought, would encourage "moderates" within the Kremlin and might force changes in the Soviet government, making the Russians "easier to deal with."⁵³

50. See, for example, GFK, "'Trust' as a Factor in International Relations," lecture, October 1, 1946, Yale Institute of International Affairs, Yale University, New Haven, Conn., GFK Papers; see also *FR: 1946*, 6:721–23.

51. Minutes of Organization Meeting on Russia, Washington, D.C., June 12, 1946, GFK Papers.

52. GFK, lecture to Foreign Service and State Department personnel, Washington, D.C., September 17, 1946, GFK Papers; see also *Memoirs*, pp. 301–4.

53. Minutes, June 12, 1946; lecture, September 17, 1946; "'Trust' as a Factor in International Relations," October 1, 1946; GFK, "Russia," lecture, October 1, 1946, Naval War College, Newport, R.I., GFK Papers; GFK, "American-Soviet Relations," discussion, December 29, 1946, American Political Science Association, Cleveland, Ohio, GFK Papers; GFK to Bohlen, January 26, 1945.

Since the Russians could be expected, according to Kennan's thesis, to exert continuous pressure in pursuit of their objectives, democratic countries required certain tools to resist. In a revealing lecture at the National War College on September 16, 1946, George Kennan outlined the nonmilitary components of a policy of containment. Among these were (1) psychological weapons, (2) economic weapons, (3) political weapons, and (4) diplomatic weapons.

Everything which the United States did, Kennan argued, had psychological effects abroad. Containment required more than "mere passive and negative resistance to Russian aspirations"; it demanded "a *counter-force* of hope, of idealism and of practical determination which can win respect everywhere." [Emphasis added.] But he wondered whether the United States had "enough of a positive philosophy applicable to other peoples . . . to make it a dynamic force in the world."⁵⁴ Kennan had less confidence in economic weapons. Economic pressure against Russia would not yield "immediate incisive or spectacular results," though it might have "an important cumulative effect" if applied over a long period of time. More promising was the use of economic pressure against Soviet satellite countries, which required outside help for economic advancement. Since the Soviet Union had little to spare to give to its satellites, the Western powers could "make it highly uncomfortable . . . for any smaller power to be outside their economic orbit." The most important political weapon, Kennan believed, was "the cultivation of solidarity with other like-minded nations on every given issue of our foreign policy." In 1944 and 1945 he had been extremely skeptical about the United Nations Organization. Now he had to admit that the United Nations had been a useful tool for promoting Western solidarity; it had made it possible for the United States to avoid dealing with key "power issues" unilaterally. On the diplomatic level, Kennan suggested that the government assume control over all facilities in the United States which could benefit foreign states. The United States should then "turn these controls on and off like a faucet, exactly in proportion to the treatment we ourselves get abroad."⁵⁵

These weapons—psychological, economic, political, and diplomatic—should be adequate, Kennan concluded, "to get us what we want without

54. GFK, "Measures Short of War (Diplomatic)," lecture and discussion, September 16, 1946, National War College, Washington, D.C., GFK Papers; "American-Soviet Relations," December 29, 1946. See also GFK, "Structure of Internal Power in U.S.S.R.," lecture and discussion, October 10, 1946, National War College, GFK Papers; GFK, "Russian-American Relations," lecture, February 20, 1947, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Va., GFK Papers; GFK, "The Background of Current Russian Diplomatic Moves," lecture, December 10, 1946, National War College, GFK Papers.

55. "Measures Short of War," September 16, 1946.

going to war for it," *provided* that "we keep up at all times a preponderance of strength in the world." This was a crucial proviso, for it revealed the relationship of military power to Kennan's idea of containment. He saw "no insuperable difficulty in our maintaining such a preponderance of strength for the foreseeable future that there [would] be little likelihood of Russia taking up arms against us." Of course, for strength to be effective, one had to be ready to use it. This did not mean, Kennan cautioned, that one should be "trigger happy" or adopt a "blustering" or "threatening" posture. The United States did not have to "broadcast" its strength; "The mere fact is enough."⁵⁶

Thus, containment did indeed have military components. Some of these were spelled out clearly in a lecture to the Air War College on April 10, 1947. Kennan began by observing that the military-industrial strength of the Soviet Union had been exaggerated. Russia could employ "tremendous military power in areas relatively near to her own frontiers and easily accessible to her ground forces," but she was "deficient" in those features of military power, specifically air and naval power, calling for "high industrial and technical development of a broad nature." Soviet weakness made it imperative for the Russians to rely on "ideological weapons" in the pursuit of their objectives, and it made containment possible.⁵⁷

Despite his confidence in containment, Kennan did not absolutely rule out the possibility of war. If the "technical skills" of a united Germany were ever "combined with the physical resources of Russia," or if "the total war-making potential" of the Soviet Union began to develop "at a rate considerably faster than that of ourselves," then the United States might have to consider preventive war. "I believe," Kennan told his audience at the Air War College, "that with probably ten good hits with atomic bombs you could, without any great loss of life or loss of the prestige or reputation of the United States as a well-meaning and humane people, practically cripple Russia's war-making potential." However, before contemplating war, Kennan preferred to see exhausted the possibilities of containment, for he continued to believe that there was a "good chance" of a "peaceful solution" to the Russian problem.⁵⁸

From these remarks, one might conclude that when Kennan spoke of

56. *Ibid.*

57. GFK, "Russia's National Objectives," lecture, April 10, 1947, Air War College, Maxwell Field, Alabama, GFK Papers. On December 10, 1946, GFK speculated that the peak of Soviet power may have passed ("The Background of Current Russian Diplomatic Moves," December 10, 1946).

58. "Russia's National Objectives," April 10, 1947; see also Council on Foreign Relations, "National Power and Foreign Policy," Study Group Report, Digest of Discussion, October 30, 1946, GFK Papers.

war he was thinking solely in terms of another major war, but the essence of containment was that it was designed for all military contingencies, limited wars as well as total war, and in this sense it was a comprehensive blueprint for American global involvement in the postwar era. On January 23, 1947, in a talk to the National Defense Committee of the United States Chamber of Commerce, Kennan elaborated on the military requirements of a policy of containment: continued American air superiority; monopoly of atomic weapons; a skeleton defense establishment (with the adoption of universal military training) capable of rapid mobilization for a major war; and “a compact, mobile and hard-hitting task force” to fight on limited fronts. The purpose of the task force would be to prevent “unruly people elsewhere” (presumably Communists) from launching limited acts of aggression.⁵⁹ George Kennan, it should be noted, was one American official who not only favored withholding atomic secrets from the Russians but also advocated “atomic diplomacy.” At a discussion meeting of the Council on Foreign Relations on February 6, 1947, he offered the opinion that the Russians were so afraid of the atomic bomb that, if confronted by a hostile world armed with atomic bombs, they would make significant concessions. For example, he thought the Russians could be pressured into eventually accepting the American plan (that is, the Baruch Plan) for the control of atomic energy.⁶⁰

If, as suggested, containment was a truly global policy, with both military and nonmilitary features, did it recognize any geographical limits? Where should “counter-force” be applied? On the basis of Kennan’s record during 1946–47, the answer would seem to be: almost everywhere. Of foremost importance, of course, was the Western Hemisphere, so central to American security that its inclusion in any containment policy was simply taken for granted.⁶¹ Containment also embraced the Near and Middle East, where Kennan was anxious for the United States to work closely with Great Britain to prevent the creation of “new power vacuums” for the Russians to fill.⁶² What this meant in practice was the defense of British colonial interests throughout the area, the blocking of any efforts by Russia to extend her influence, and, necessarily, a new and enlarged role for the United States.

In the spring of 1946, circumstances had seemed to warrant the application of containment to Iran. One year later, two additional nations, Turkey and Greece, fell under the protective American umbrella. On February 21,

59. GFK, address to National Defense Committee, Chamber of Commerce of the United States, January 23, 1947, Washington, D.C., GFK Papers; see also *Memoirs*, pp. 311–12.

60. Council on Foreign Relations, “National Power and Foreign Policy,” Study Group Report, Digest of Discussion, February 6, 1947, GFK Papers; see also *FR: 1945*, 5:884–86; Council on Foreign Relations, “The Soviet Way of Thought,” January 7, 1947, pp. 7–9.

61. See, for example, *FR: 1946*, 5:70.

62. “Russia,” October 1, 1946.

1947, the British government officially informed the United States that economic problems in England made it necessary to terminate economic and military aid for Greece and Turkey as of March 31. This announcement set in motion the chain of events culminating in the "Truman Doctrine." On March 12, President Truman appeared before Congress to request aid for Greece and Turkey. After describing the ideological confrontation between the American "way of life" and the Soviet "way of life," Truman said, "I believe it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure."⁶³ Here was global rhetoric which would justify containment not only of overt *Soviet* expansion but also of internal revolutions supported by Communists.

At the suggestion of Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, George Kennan had been included in the State Department deliberations preceding the Truman Doctrine speech. Although his voice was only one of many, his reasons for supporting aid to Greece and Turkey were fairly typical. In a discussion at the National War College on March 28 he offered his version of the "domino theory" to justify this new extension of American power. In view of the instability and cultural uniqueness of the Near and Middle East, Kennan doubted whether the Soviet Union could ever dominate the area successfully, but he did fear Soviet occupation of key strategic positions, which would have dire psychological effects on other countries, especially in Western Europe. To deliver the Near East to Soviet "political penetration" might have the following consequences: Italy, France, and the Iberian Peninsula might go Communist; England might become isolationist; and the United States might lose its positions in North Africa and find its influence in the Far East limited to those areas controlled "by force of arms." In short, failure to support Greece and Turkey threatened to restrict American "political and military influence" to the Western Hemisphere, the Pacific islands, and southern Africa.

That Kennan embraced the military implications of the Truman Doctrine was made clear in his concluding remarks. The Doctrine, he felt, was a "new" departure for the United States because it gave "flesh and blood" to American rhetoric. As a major power, the United States had to exert its power and assume its share of risks. Once Americans accepted this "bitter truth," said Kennan, "our *military* situation will be sounder than it has been for years."

For we will then have, at long last, a tangible goal to our foreign policy, an organic connection between *military* strength and political

63. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, Harry S. Truman: 1947* (Washington, D.C., 1963), pp. 178-79.

action, and a strong hope that our armed establishment may play its true role as a deterrent to aggression [Emphases added.]⁶⁴

Notwithstanding the strategic importance of the Near East, for Kennan the area most vital to the security of the United States was Europe. This was to be expected, given his own background in European affairs and his deep loyalty to “Western civilization.” Of the opinion that some European countries were closer to the United States in terms of distance and “political philosophy and institutions” than were many South American countries, he also considered them more important to American security.⁶⁵ Generally speaking, containment did not apply to the countries of Eastern Europe, which Kennan had previously consigned to the Soviet sphere of influence, for behind the “iron curtain” the United States lacked power “to do anything but talk.”⁶⁶ However, he was ambivalent about Eastern Europe. He had accepted the idea of a Soviet buffer zone from the Baltic to the Black Sea, but he also wanted the United States to continue to fight for the “national independence” of these countries. “We must make the Russians understand,” he told an audience on October 22, 1946, “they must confine their security demands to *our* concept of security demands.” [Emphasis added.]⁶⁷ Thus, containment could be stretched to include Eastern Europe, though “liberation” by force was not part of Kennan’s schema.

Having accepted the division of Europe into spheres of influence, Kennan was primarily concerned with the fate of Western Europe. Since Germany was the key to European economic recovery and potentially the greatest military power in Central Europe, he understandably assigned top priority to the western sectors of Germany. Rather than see the total resources of Germany fall under Soviet control, he would accept the partition of Germany and even contemplate preventive war. Nor was he willing to give up Austria or Trieste, and in October 1946 he suggested that the United States strengthen its military forces in that disputed city.⁶⁸ However, as Kennan reminded military audiences in May 1947, the “big stick” was “only one part of the formula.” The contest between the United States and the Soviet Union was “a long-range fencing match in which the weapons are not only the development of military power but the loyalties . . . of hundreds of millions of people.” It was “absolutely essential” to maintain “a very alert

64. GFK, “Comments on the National Security Problem,” Strategy, Policy and Planning Course, National War College, March 28, 1947, GFK Papers; see also *Memoirs*, pp. 315–21.

65. GFK to Admiral Harry W. Hill, memorandum, October 7, 1946, GFK Papers.

66. Lecture, September 17, 1946.

67. GFK, “Contemporary Soviet Diplomacy,” lecture and discussion, October 22, 1946, National War College, Washington, D.C., GFK Papers.

68. *Ibid.*; “Russia,” October 1, 1946.

and strong military posture" as a deterrent, but this was primarily a "*political war . . . fought by political, rather than military, means.*" [Emphases added.]⁶⁹

Here is the earliest evidence of Kennan's distinction between military containment and political containment. What should be obvious, contrary to the impression conveyed by Kennan in his memoirs, is that military weapons and political weapons were two sides of a single coin, the coin being American resistance to Soviet-Communist challenges. Since the problems facing Western Europe in 1947 were political and economic in nature—problems of postwar reconstruction—it was logical for him to view European recovery as the "political" side of containment. It should be emphasized, however, that political containment presupposed the "maintenance of U.S. military effectiveness."⁷⁰

In the spring of 1947, Western Europe, like Greece, confronted an economic and political crisis of such proportions that to many observers collapse seemed imminent. To save Western Europe for capitalism and democracy, the United States decided, almost immediately after the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine, to provide financial support for a comprehensive European Recovery Program. Better known as the Marshall Plan, this program of American assistance became an essential part of the evolving containment policy. It was, therefore, fitting that one of the Plan's principal architects was George Kennan, who in April was appointed director of a new State Department Policy Planning Staff.

Kennan's first assignment as director of the Policy Planning Staff was to analyze the problem of European reconstruction and set forth recommendations for American action. On May 23, the Planning Staff submitted its report, which became one of the fundamental documents in Department planning for the Marshall Plan. According to this memorandum, the source of the difficulties in Western Europe was not communism as such but the disruptive effects of the recent war, which had been aggravated by the division of the continent into east and west. Therefore, American aid to Europe "should aim . . . to combat not communism, but the economic maladjustment which makes European society vulnerable to exploitation by any and all totalitarian movements and which Russian communism is now exploiting." Concretely, the Planning Staff recommended that the European nations be charged with the responsibility for formulating their own recovery program; the role of the United States would be to support the Europeans' plan. If the

69. GFK, "Current Problems of Soviet-American Relations," lecture, May 9, 1947, United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md., GFK Papers; GFK, "Soviet-American Relations Today," address, May 12, 1947, Army Information School, Class #5, Carlisle, Pa., GFK Papers.

70. U.S., Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, 1947* (hereafter cited as *FR: 1947*), 8 vols. (Washington, D.C., 1971-73), 3:220 n.

Russians and Eastern Europeans agreed "to abandon the exclusive orientation of their economies," they might participate in such a plan; otherwise, Western Europe would have to go it alone.⁷¹

On May 28 Secretary of State George Marshall called a meeting of his senior advisers to discuss the Planning Staff memorandum. Although there was no significant dissent from the Staff's analysis of the problem, questions were raised about Russian participation in a recovery program. Since it was probable that the Russians would not agree to American conditions for participation, George Kennan argued that the United States should not define the area which would receive American aid. Let the Russians reject the American offer and thereby assume responsibility for dividing Europe. Secretary Marshall decided to take the risk and extend the offer to all of Europe.⁷² When he unveiled his Plan at Harvard on June 5, he declared, "Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos."⁷³

Marshall's words were, as calculated, good public relations, but they were less than sincere. The Marshall Plan was motivated both by the desire to restore the economies of Western Europe *and* by the determination to contain Russian communism. Having already accepted the division of Europe, Kennan was delighted with his discovery of a way to shift the onus of division to the Russians. Since Marshall's Harvard speech "tore the veil off the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe," Kennan considered it "one of the astute political moves of all time." So confident was he in a policy of containment that in February 1948, he predicted that if Congress would pass the Marshall Plan, "within six months we will be able to do business over the table with our Russian friends."⁷⁴

In spite of Kennan's optimism, containment did not produce the happy results he had anticipated. Instead, the Cold War got worse. After denouncing the Marshall Plan as an American plot to dominate Europe, the Russians adopted their own economic program for Eastern Europe, the so-called "Molotov Plan." Together, the Marshall Plan and its Soviet counterpart gave

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 223–30. See also Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks*, pp. 249–52; GFK, *Memoirs*, pp. 335–42; Harry B. Price, *The Marshall Plan and Its Meaning* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1955), pp. 22–25.

72. Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks*, pp. 252–54. See also GFK, *Memoirs*, pp. 342–43; Eric Goldman, *The Crucial Decade—and After: America, 1945–1960* (New York, 1960), pp. 71–75.

73. U.S., Department of State, *The Department of State Bulletin*, 16 (June 15, 1947): 1159–60; see also *FR: 1947*, 3:237–39.

74. GFK, draft address, February 17, 1948, to be delivered at Baltimore Historical Society, GFK Papers. That GFK neither wanted nor expected the Russians to participate in the Marshall Plan is attested to by former colleagues Benjamin Cohen and Ware Adams (Cohen, interview; Ware Adams, interview with the author, September 30, 1970).

administrative structure to the division of Europe. When the United States set in motion steps leading to the creation of a North Atlantic Treaty Organization, George Kennan began to get cold feet. Troubled by the hardening of Cold War positions and the militaristic direction of American foreign policy, he left the government in 1950 for the more pastoral setting of the Institute for Advanced Study.

Although Kennan remained in basic agreement with United States policy until 1949, one can detect as early as March 1947, at the time of the Truman Doctrine, signs of second thoughts with respect to the containment of Soviet-Communist probes everywhere in the world. It is ironic that the global implications of containment were becoming manifest to him at the very moment when the policy was being implemented in Greece and Turkey. On March 6, 1947, six days before President Truman's historic speech, Kennan, who was still at the War College, stopped by the State Department to see how things were going. According to Joseph Jones, who had drafted the president's speech, when Kennan was shown a copy he was alarmed by its global rhetoric. He objected not only to the ideological content of the message, the portrayal of two antagonistic ways of life, but also to the open-ended commitment to aid "free people" everywhere. In addition, he apparently questioned the decision to include Turkey under the Truman Doctrine. He favored aid to Greece, though he wanted military aid kept small, but he opposed aid of any kind to Turkey, which bordered the Soviet Union. It is Jones's recollection that Kennan was so appalled by the draft speech that he feared the Russians might even declare war! Protests to Under Secretary Acheson and others about Jones's draft got him nowhere, nor did his own "revised draft." The decisions had already been made: the Truman Doctrine would reflect the new global policy.⁷⁵

Following Truman's speech of March 12, George Kennan resumed his efforts to rebottle the genie, aided by Truman Doctrine critics such as Walter Lippmann and Senator Robert Taft. On March 14 and 28 Kennan cautioned his students at the War College against viewing aid to Greece and Turkey, which was "within our economic, technical and financial capabilities," as a precedent. He could think of no country, except France, worthy of a similar commitment, and he specifically ruled out China, where the problems were not "manageable."⁷⁶ However, as critics of containment predicted, the com-

75. Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks*, pp. 154–55; GFK, *Memoirs*, pp. 314–15, 317; Loy W. Henderson, interview with the author, October 3, 1970; *FR: 1947*, 5:98 n. On March 8, during a dinner with Dean Acheson and David Lilienthal, GFK expressed the hope that the president would not inflate the Greek issue (Lilienthal, *Journals*, 2:158–60).

76. GFK, "National Security Problem," Orientation on Strategy, Policy and Planning Course, National War College, March 14, 1947, GFK Papers; "Comments on the National Security Problem," March 28, 1947.

mitment escalated. By May 1947, with the Marshall Plan in the offing, Kennan favored aid to Western Europe as a whole, not just France, and was willing to consider aid to Korea as well.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, he continued to distinguish between his own policy of containment, which embraced *most* of the world, and the Truman Doctrine, which seemingly embraced *all* of the world.⁷⁸

That Kennan was finding it necessary to impose limits on containment is suggested by his ambivalence toward potential Communist seizures of power. As a general rule, of course, he regarded communism anywhere with considerable apprehension. However, in February and May 1947, he told audiences that the United States should not be too afraid about a Communist Party coming to power in a country not bordering the Soviet Union. Although Communists out of power necessarily depended on Moscow for support, it was, in fact, possible that a Communist Party in power would assume a more independent line, and he specifically mentioned the Communist Parties of China, France, and Brazil. Clearly, Kennan was groping for a definition of those areas vital to American security even *before* publication of the "X" article.⁷⁹

The "X" article was published in the summer of 1947, and that autumn its thesis was attacked by Walter Lippmann. At first Kennan ignored the Lippmann broadside. That he was not disowning his own article, however, was made clear in an October letter to Frank Altschul, president of the Woodrow Wilson Foundation and director and secretary of the Council on Foreign Relations. He thanked Altschul for "taking up the cudgel on behalf of the X article" in the *New York Times* and thereby defending the author's "intellectual integrity." He even provided Altschul with additional evidence to buttress the "X" thesis.⁸⁰ Thus, the article itself was not causing him second thoughts. What did trouble him, in time, was the personal disapproval of

77. GFK, "Problems of U.S. Foreign Policy After Moscow," lecture, May 6, 1947, National War College, GFK Papers; see also *Memoirs*, pp. 329–35, 339–41.

78. *FR: 1947*, 3:229–30. On August 15 GFK told Clark Clifford and Robert Lovett that the United States should try to forget Truman's promise to aid free people everywhere; such a commitment was beyond our capacity to meet (George M. Elsey, memorandum of conversation, August 15, 1947, George M. Elsey Papers, courtesy of Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, Mo.).

79. "Russian-American Relations," February 20, 1947; "Problems of U.S. Foreign Policy After Moscow," May 6, 1947; GFK, Robert Linn, and Sherman Kent, "Current Political Affairs," discussion, January 10, 1947, National War College, GFK Papers. In his memoirs GFK gives the impression, unsupported by any direct evidence I have been able to discover, that at the time of the "X" article he was *already* thinking in terms of five crucial industrial areas of the world: the United States, the United Kingdom, the Rhine Valley region, Russia, and Japan (see *Memoirs*, p. 359).

80. GFK to Frank Altschul, letter, October 24, 1947, GFK Papers. See also Frederick L. Schuman, letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, October 5, 1947, sec. 4, p. 8; Altschul, letter to the editor, *The New York Times*, October 12, 1947, sec. 4, p. 8.

Walter Lippmann, whom he admired, and Lippmann's mistaken impression that he, Kennan, was the author of the Truman Doctrine and not the Marshall Plan. On November 7 Kennan wrote: "I have never doubted that in the end the paths of Mr. Lippmann and myself would meet. History will tell which was the more tortuous."⁸¹

History reveals that on the issue of containment Kennan's road was the more tortuous. His first of many attempts to reexplain the "X" article came in April 1948 in a draft letter, appropriately, to Walter Lippmann.⁸² Although the letter was never sent, Lippmann had set in motion a process of reevaluation which would culminate in Kennan's own disillusionment with American foreign policy. Kennan began by reminding Lippmann of discussions the two had had on the eve of the Marshall Plan in May 1947. Since both had deplored the dramatic rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine while supporting the "constructive" approach of the Marshall Plan, Kennan was understandably "non-plussed" to find himself rebuked as the author of the former and given no credit for the latter.⁸³ He was also disturbed by the military interpretation Lippmann had placed on the term "containment." "I do not know what grounds I could have given for such an interpretation," he wrote. He then drew a distinction between "military" containment and "political" containment.

The Russian threat has not been basically a military threat. . . . Theirs is first and foremost a *political* attack. Their spearheads are the local communists. And the counter-weapon that can beat them is the vigor and soundness of political life in the victim countries

The Russians don't want to invade anyone. . . . They far prefer to do the job politically, with stooge forces. Note well: when I say politically, that does not mean without violence. But it means that the violence is nominally *domestic*, not *international*, violence. It is, if you will, a police violence, in inverse—not a military violence.

The policy of containment related to the effort to encourage other peoples to resist this type of violence and to defend the internal integrity of their own countries. . . . [Emphases Kennan's.]

The "X" article, Kennan recalled, had been aimed at the "puerile defeatism" of those Americans who in 1946 had considered war with Russia inevitable. "It was my task," he wrote, "to persuade them that only a firm policy on our part had a chance of preventing a deterioration of the world situation which would eventually be bound to engage our military interests."

81. GFK to Hamilton Fish Armstrong, letter, November 7, 1947, GFK Papers.

82. GFK to Walter Lippmann, draft letter, April 6, 1948, GFK Papers; see also *Memoirs*, pp. 359–63.

83. According to Lippmann's own recollection, he and GFK had "a very good understanding" in May 1947 ("The Reminiscences of Walter Lippmann," pp. 258–59).

Containment, he insisted, had nothing to do with American military strength at the borders of the Soviet Union; nor did it imply an active campaign to liberate the satellite countries.

It also did not mean that we could expect to be successful everywhere. It meant that nowhere did we need to accept defeat by default in the cold war (not the hot war, please note) which was under way.

There were only isolated spots (Japan, Germany, Austria, Trieste, Italy) where Kennan saw containment having a military accent, but even there the presence of U.S. armed forces was the result of wartime commitments "which originally had nothing to do with the containment policy." Containment did not imply, as Lippmann suggested, the military defense of all countries supported by the United States. Such an idea, Kennan wrote, was an "absurdity," for it would require the United States to keep vast armies and air forces stationed abroad. (This was, of course, the very point Lippmann had made.) The sanctions of containment derived not from U.S. battalions overseas but from basic Soviet caution and the maintenance of American military superiority.

Although Kennan acknowledged that there were "very definite limits" to American power, he clearly believed that as of 1948 the United States was not overextended. "What is wrong, in fact, with the whole policy of containment?" he asked Lippmann. "You have said it was bound to fail, since we could not be equally strong everywhere. Actually, it has worked better than I would have dared to hope a year ago." Among its successes were the prevention of Communist takeovers in Iran, Turkey, and Greece, the preservation of Trieste and Austria, and the infusion of "new hope and spirit" into Western Europe. Most important, given Kennan's advocacy since 1944 of the division of Europe into clear-cut spheres of influence, was the isolation of the Soviet Union.

Europe is admittedly not over the hump. But no fruits have dropped. We know what is west and what is east; and Moscow was itself compelled to make that unpleasant delineation. . . . The western nations have found a common political language. They are learning to lean on each other, and to help each other. Those who fancied they were neutral are beginning to realize that they are on *our side*. A year ago only that which was communist had firmness and *structure*. Today the *non-communist world* is gaining daily in *rigidity* and in the power of resistance. [Emphases added.]

Like so many other papers by Kennan, this draft letter to Lippmann poses real problems. Judging from the passage just quoted, one must conclude that Kennan welcomed the freezing of Cold War positions which had ensued since 1946. Once these positions assumed "rigidity" and "structure," diplomacy, of course, became virtually impossible. Yet, for some reason, Kennan continued to believe that containment would eventually *force* the Russians to

sit down at the bargaining table, and then later he could not understand his own government's reluctance to undo its commitment to a formalized policy. Also perplexing is his discomfort over the global rhetoric of the Truman Doctrine, for he too had depicted the Cold War as a struggle between *them* and *us*, between the Communist world and the non-Communist world.

Finally, what is one to make of Kennan's artificial distinction between "military" and "political" containment? As one critic has observed, these terms are not mutually exclusive.⁸⁴ Containment presupposed American military supremacy and the Russians' acute awareness of their own weakness. Without its military underpinning, the containment thesis would collapse, for in the absence of "counter-force" what incentive would there be for the Russians to back down? Although the Marshall Plan may have been largely a political-economic program, aid to Greece was both "military" and "political" in nature. That Kennan fully understood and accepted the military implications of this aid is attested to by his suggestion in December 1947 that the United States should give "very careful consideration to the idea of sending American combat troops to Greece."⁸⁵ His colleagues assumed that his doctrine included military containment, and since he never saw fit to correct this assumption,⁸⁶ how can one read his letter to Lippmann and all subsequent explanations of the "X" article with anything but skepticism?

The original purpose of this essay was to clear up confusion about George Kennan's containment policy, to determine what Mr. "X" *really* meant. However, after thoroughly analyzing the record for 1944–47, one is left with the unsatisfying conclusion that Kennan did not fully recognize the implications of his own policy. His mastery of the English language is undeniable, but one should not confuse the gift of expression with clarity of thought. In fact, this gift may have been one of his problems, for according to colleagues, once Kennan committed ideas to paper he could become "intellectually locked in." Being a stylist, he was reluctant to alter his analysis or the flow of his language.⁸⁷ Another opinion was that he was better at analysis than he was at

84. Mark, "What Kind of Containment?," pp. 98–100.

85. *FR: 1947*, 5:466–69. GFK wondered whether it would be "feasible to throw a cordon of foreign troops right across Northern Greece." Very recently, GFK wrote: "If . . . the French or Italian communists, acting as minority factions and sweeping aside all democratic practises, had successfully seized power, or threatened seriously to seize it, in 1948, I can conceive that this might well have engaged our military reaction . . ." (GFK to the author, letter, May 30, 1975).

86. General Alfred M. Gruenther, interview with the author, August 11, 1975; Paul H. Nitze, interview with the author, October 2, 1970; Llewellyn E. Thompson, interview with the author, October 2, 1970; Henderson, interview; Cohen, interview; U.S., Congress, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Hearings, *Nomination of Charles E. Bohlen*, 83rd Cong., 1st Sess., March 2 and 18, 1953 (Washington, D.C., 1953), pp. 5, 11, 71.

87. Nitze, interview; Charles E. Bohlen, interview with the author, September 29, 1970. See also Cyrus L. Sulzberger, *A Long Row of Candles: Memoirs and Diaries, 1934–1954* (New York, 1969), p. 987.

developing policies in line with his analysis.⁸⁸ A French critic once observed that indecision and inaction can result from “super-analysis” and that Kennan in particular knew so much about Russia that he had “no answers at all.”⁸⁹

Although this critic exaggerated—Kennan, as we have seen, had many answers—his insight may help to explain the problems of interpretation, re-interpretation, and misinterpretation that have haunted Kennan since 1947. How else can the historian account for Kennan’s demonstrated ambivalence with respect to central issues? Did Soviet conduct derive from traditional Russian nationalism, as suggested in “Russia—Seven Years Later,” or from the Bolshevik Revolution (that is, communism), as suggested in the Long Telegram and his letter to Lippmann? Was Stalin a cynical nationalist sensitive to power realities or a fanatical Communist bent on world conquest? “Russia—Seven Years Later” pictured the Soviet dictator as the most recent in a long line of Russian despots, but at other times Kennan stressed Stalin’s devotion to world revolution.⁹⁰ Was the Soviet threat limited to areas bordering Russia, as defined by historical precedent, or did it embrace the entire Eurasian land mass? Was collaboration with the Russians possible or was it a pipe dream? Kennan was apt to give different answers on different occasions.

It would be a mistake to assume that Kennan was unaware of his own ambivalence, for he had formulated a theory of contradiction which could explain it. “Whenever,” he wrote, “in the consideration of Russian matters, there is a question as to *whether* this *or* that, the answer is usually ‘both.’”⁹¹ According to this theory, contradiction was “the essence of Russia.” Just because one proposition was true did not make its opposite false.⁹² Although one wonders whether the Western mind was any less susceptible to contradiction than the Russian mind, this theory provides a possible tool for rationalizing Kennan’s thought. For example, in 1944 Kennan noted the dual nature of Soviet foreign policy: collaboration with the West and unilateral pursuit of a sphere of influence. The Soviet Union did not pursue one of these policies to

88. Carleton Savage, interview with the author, September 30, 1970.

89. “The Reminiscences of Nicolas Chatelain,” 1962, pp. 21–22, courtesy of Oral History Research Office, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.

90. See, for example, “Structure of Internal Power in U.S.S.R.,” October 10, 1946, where GFK suggested that the differences between Stalin and Trotsky were merely ones of “emphasis.”

91. GFK to Hill, October 7, 1946. “What historian,” GFK recently asked, “faced with the contradictory quality of most historical evidence (and Russia, one should remember, is the classic country of contradictions), has not had to face the temptation to improve the coherence and persuasiveness of his account by ignoring or softening the contradictory nature of the material he has before him?” GFK, *The Marquis de Custine and His “Russia in 1839”* (Princeton, 1971), p. 112.

92. GFK, *Memoirs*, pp. 528–29. The image of Russia as a land of extremes and opposites was not original to GFK. See, for comparison, Edward Crankshaw, *Russia and the Russians* (New York, 1948), pp. 22–23, 31, 49, 67.

the exclusion of the other; it pursued both simultaneously.⁹³ Similarly, the satellite countries of Eastern Europe served not one purpose but two, as a protective shield against capitalist aggression *and* as a "springboard of attack" against other nations, while Soviet policy in the Near East, Kennan averred, was motivated by considerations of security *and* aggrandizement.⁹⁴ If "Russia—Seven Years Later" focused on Stalin's nationalism, another paper by Kennan might stress the Communist ideology underlying Soviet foreign policy; he was not alone in his belief that Stalin was a good Russian *and* a good Communist.⁹⁵ Thus, whenever Kennan appeared to be ambivalent or contradictory in his views about Russia, the source of the problem *may* have been the contradictions inherent in the country itself.

Notwithstanding this unique theory, the impression persists that George Kennan simply did not see where some of his ideas might lead. "By a dialectic as old as the history of statecraft," Robert Tucker has written, "expansion proved to be the other side of the coin of containment."

To contain the expansion of others, or what was perceived as such, it became necessary to expand ourselves. In this manner, the course of containment became the course of empire.⁹⁶

To Kennan's credit, he faced up to the overmilitarization, absolutism, and globalism of containment before the logic of events, especially the Vietnam War, made the limits to American power painfully obvious. He was also willing to explore the possibilities of détente before such an idea became popular in the United States. Certainly he cannot be held personally responsible for the way in which his policy was implemented after 1947; United States policy undoubtedly would have followed the same course with or without him. On the other hand, Kennan's contribution to the Cold War mentality should not be minimized, for as this essay has attempted to demonstrate, the essential ambiguity and, paradoxically, rigidity of his containment thesis, as expressed in 1944–47, invited the kinds of interpretations he would later deplore.

93. *FR: 1944*, 1:826–28; Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought* (Princeton, 1957), pp. 433–36.

94. GFK to Hill, October 7, 1946; *FR: 1945*, 5:901–3.

95. Michael B. Petrovich, interview with the author, February 20, 1970.

96. Robert W. Tucker, *The Radical Left and American Foreign Policy* (Baltimore and London, 1971), p. 109. See also Thomas G. Paterson, *Soviet-American Confrontation: Postwar Reconstruction and the Origins of the Cold War* (Baltimore and London, 1973), chapter 9.