

## The Bootblack Stand



Dr. George Washington Plunkitt, our prize-winning political analyst, is celebrating the publication of his new book, which is now available at *avant-garde* bookstores throughout New Jersey. Dr. Plunkitt's book is about the importance of altruism in politics and it is titled *What's in It for Me?* Although Dr. Plunkitt expects to earn ten million dollars from sales of his new book, he has agreed to continue to advise public figures through this column. Address all correspondence to The Bootblack Stand, c/o The Establishment, R.R. 11, Box 360, Bloomington, Indiana 47401, Continental U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Plunkitt:

I have been an activist for the women's movement for a very long time. My wife calls me the Abraham Lincoln of Pretty Feet. In fact, now that the war

is over, she is throwing her considerable weight into the women's movement by setting out on a circumcison of the globe in a little boat.

Now if we are to truly liberate the sexes in this country it seems to me that men are going to have to be able to join women's organizations. In fact, we should probably force men into women's organizations at least to fill certain goals. Have you any suggestions?

Regards,  
Senator Philip Hart

Dear Senator Hart:

I spotted you years ago as a forward-looking solon of the old school, a fitting sequel to Robert La Follette. Yes, by all means men should be forced into women's organizations. I suggest that you take the lead by joining La Leche, the women's organization which advocates natural breast feeding.

GWP

Dear Mr. Plunkitt:

My chances of winning the presidency this year seem hopeless. I took your advice and in kicking off my campaign for the 1973 Democratic presidential candidacy I championed the civil liberties of a sorely oppressed group, that being the precious liberties of U.S. senators. I chose to defend them against those weirdo pre-flight searches by sick airport security guards whose eager hands make

me feel personally like a defenseless muskmelon or something.

I made at least one memorable statement in *The New York Times*: "As a person I do not object to a search. As a senator, I do object." In fact I have gotten quite a lot of publicity. I am now asked to speak before many distinguished groups like the Clyde City Mental Health Association, The Society of Jesters of Greenwich Village, the Paducah Lodge for Disabled and Demented Pig Farmers, Richard Speck, the Wilmette League of Women Voters, the National Association of Melon Growers, and The New Politics Coalition of Palm Beach. But none of the Democratic clubs of New Hampshire or any of the other primary states seems interested in me. I am never going to win the 1973 presidential race. Now where do I turn?

Cordially,  
R. Vance Hartke

Dear Mr. Hartke:

Turn yourself in to the authorities you nitwit before you do yourself harm. There is no presidential campaign this year. And out of reverence for the American political system I am not going to tell you when the next one comes up. I have always thought you one of the biggest blockheads in the Senate. This last stunt proves it. From now on even Senator Gravel takes a back seat to your genius.

GWP

## Book Review

### The Rivals

**America and Russia Since World War II**  
by Adam Ulam  
Compass Viking \$2.95 pb.

It would be pleasant to say that Adam Ulam's new book, now available in a paperback edition, has all the answers to its grand subject, the first quarter century of American-Russian relations since the end of the Second World War. Of course it does not. And yet it contains a good many acceptable answers. The author has spent much time studying Soviet Russian foreign policy; he tends to be opinionated and iconoclastic; sometimes he is too analytic, inclined to see order or thought where there may not have been much; but he brings information, intelligence, and lively prose to his points and the result is always interesting, at times fascinating.

Relations between the two rivals divided conveniently into the years from 1945 to 1950, the fifties, and the sixties, and Ulam's opinions of policy during these three eras are never in doubt. For the first period, when the cold war heated up, he considers the forces behind policy to have been Soviet malevolence and American fear, the latter based on an overestimate of Russian strength. During the fifties Secretary of State John Foster Dulles' prose style obscured the increasing subtleties of Soviet policy,

the sometimes involuted calculations of Nikita Khrushchev who out of increasing concern for the Chinese wanted friendship with the United States. Then in the sixties, after the missile crisis, American policy slipped into irrelevance because of preoccupation with Vietnam. The Soviets were happy to see the Americans in trouble in a corner of Asia. There was even a modest cooperation between the USSR and the People's Republic of China, for the Chinese were likewise happy to see the Americans humbled.

What can one agree with in Ulam's book? Perhaps the best part of the book is the framework, the general analysis. The reader may well be wary of some of the supporting detail. Ulam probably is showing hindsight when he stresses the Soviets' economic and military weakness in the immediate postwar years. The Truman Administration was itself weak; in domestic politics it was in a confusing situation, and for foreign policy there was little conventional military strength. The President was unsure of election in 1948. He managed that hurdle, contrary to most of the guesses of the time, but then a year and a half later the Korean War began and Truman once more had his hands full. It is easy in retrospect to point out Soviet weakness during the Truman era. Then consider the essentially conservative nature of American foreign policy during the past quarter century, the years since 1945. In a theoretical manner it is fairly easy to say something should have been otherwise, but then so many mistakes would have been possible, especially beginning

in 1952 or 1953 when there was a virtual equality in nuclear arms between the United States and the USSR. The historian can be thankful that policy proved as sensible as it did.

At the same time it is attractive to read about alternatives. American-Russian relations since 1945 have often been costly in lives and treasure—a hundred thousand American, not to mention Asian, lives, and defense budgets are approaching the astronomic. It may be that the better is the enemy of the good, but one wonders whether courses other than a careful conservatism might have worked better. In wondering the first move should be to accumulate information. Hence the reason for reading this book. The author in a footnote to his concluding chapter properly remarks that "an informed and dispassionate mind is the first and perhaps the most fundamental condition of the individual's contribution to social improvement."

Robert H. Ferrell

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ment was to propel Stettinius into the United Nations.<sup>32</sup> Byrnes talked tough within administration circles (not openly to the Russians) in the summer of 1945, and the revisionists have found several good quotations to show that he was no naïf. But contrary to the revisionists, Byrnes' views on Russian-American relations in 1945 are difficult to pin down. Probably the highly intelligent Jimmy was himself unsure of his position, as was true of most Americans at the time. Underneath his geniality he did not like to be pushed around, as no one likes to, and he had the impression, which was as good as true, considering what the Russians were doing in Eastern Europe, that the Soviets were being extremely difficult. But then in the autumn and winter of 1945-1946, Byrnes appears to have gotten so weak on the Russian question that, so Truman in a famous section of his memoirs would contend, he, the President, had to bawl out the Secretary of State for "babying" the Soviets. Byrnes denied this allegation and there is not the slightest reason to doubt the denial. The point is that in Byrnes the revisionists clearly are dealing with no doctrinaire on the Russian question, and what does that fact do to some of their hard-line commentaries about Byrnes' machiavellian influence on the inexperienced President? Moreover, the Byrnes papers at the Clemson University library have just (1971) been opened, and it would behoove the revisionists, who have written at great length about Byrnes' baneful influence, to take a look at the private correspondence.

It would be possible to relate in detail the evidence, which is undeniable, that Roosevelt was hardening his own view of the Russians just before his death,<sup>33</sup> but suffice to say of the point that Truman reversed Roosevelt's policy that it is at the least unproved and that most signs point in the direction of continuity.

In considering the responsibility of leading personalities there seems much more reason to believe that Stalin, rather than Truman, forced the cold war, though the reasoning for that conclusion must be widely open to debate. Perhaps the Jacques Duclos letter of April, 1945, was a communist declaration of war on the West, though perhaps it was not.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps Stalin was mad; perhaps he was not, although of his later madness there is excellent testimony by N. S. Khrushchev. As Melvin Croan, a political scientist at the University of Wisconsin, re-

marked at a scholarly conference in London some years ago, the internal compulsions of the Soviet state in 1945 — the political unreliability of large sections of the Soviet people, the need to force a rebuilding of Soviet industry after the war's devastation — made it highly convenient, maybe even necessary, for Stalin to have an external enemy, for him to have a cold war.<sup>35</sup> And anyway, nothing short of the conversion of the United States into a satellite would have sufficed to abolish Stalin's distrust. Even that might not have sufficed, considering the manner in which he could assail his closest friends, or states with the most friendly political systems, for some mythical deviation or other.

A second hypothesis of the revisionists, concerning diplomacy during the year



1945, on which they have shown considerable agreement, is that after the Yalta Conference the American government sought to intervene in Russia's security zone in Eastern Europe, trying to gain influence, perhaps even dominance, over the *cordon sanitaire* of weak nations lying between Western Europe and the Soviet borders. Henry Wallace was saying in 1946 that the United States was being self-righteous in trying to force its way into a supervision of the politics of the Eastern European nations, that Russian "efforts to develop a security zone in Eastern Europe . . . are small change from the point of view of military power as compared with our air bases in Greenland, Okinawa, and many other places thousands of miles from our shores." Walter Lippmann soon was pointing to a double standard, that at the end of the war the Anglo-Americans had dominated the reorganization of the Italian government. Stalin in a cable to Truman in 1945 had remarked that he had not sought to intervene in the politics of Belgium or Greece. What to the revisionists has seemed the height of the Truman Administration's hypocrisy in trying to give the Soviets advice on Eastern Europe was the telephone conversation on May 8, 1945, between John J. McCloy, present at the San Francisco Conference, and Secretary Stimson, in the course of which these two administration stalwarts agreed

that the United States could maintain its sphere of influence in Latin America and still reasonably ask the Soviets for concessions in Eastern Europe; McCloy and Stimson spoke of having their cake and eating it too, a metaphor not soon forgotten by their critics of the 1960s.

The revisionists have pointed out that President Roosevelt during the war had tried to avoid talk of division of Europe or the world into spheres of influence, and favored a kind of universalism which, some of the revisionists have said, was naught but the open door for American commerce. The revisionists have noted that this presidential strategy of delaying decisions about the postwar political map had its special advantage in Eastern Europe, the homeland of large numbers of the Democratic party's supporters. It is true that Roosevelt at Teheran told Stalin that he hoped there would be no decision on the map of Eastern Europe until after the 1944 presidential election and mentioned the Polish problem in particular. There is no question but that the strategy of delaying the drawing of postwar boundaries and establishment of political regimes allowed Roosevelt to avoid telling the American people, especially his Polish supporters, some hard truths about what the Red Army might do in the regions it occupied — although in the Polish case the outrageous behavior of Stalin in refusing to send the Red Army across the Vistula to assist the Warsaw uprising in 1944 while the Germans blew up the city, block by block, should have carried a message to any American Poles who wondered about the postwar policies of the Soviets. At Yalta, Roosevelt then almost openly gave in to the Russians in regard to boundaries and politics and human rights in Eastern Europe, and when Admiral Leahy protested FDR said there was nothing the United States could do. He glossed over his inability to change things by arranging the Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe, and the revisionists are quite right in pointing out also that the terms for operation of the Allied Control Councils in the occupied territories gave complete control to Soviet troops.

After an initial angry outburst at Molotov, Truman accepted this state of affairs, as well he might have, the revisionists to the contrary. As the Soviet Union in the next two years committed outrage after outrage in Eastern Europe the protests that issued from Washington were protests and could be nothing more, though the revisionists interpret them as efforts at interference, failing to

32. *Loc. cit.*; also the important analysis in Richard L. Walker and George Curry, Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., and James F. Byrnes (New York, 1965). Curry's account deserves careful attention, for he based it on close personal consultation with Byrnes and also had the run of the Byrnes papers. Prior to publishing in the *American Secretaries* series Curry had assisted the Secretary in research and writing of the autobiography.

33. To the chagrin of the revisionists, Schlesinger in "Origins of the Cold War," p. 24n, published an account of a conversation between Anna Rosenberg Hoffman and FDR on March 24, 1945, the last day Roosevelt spent in Washington. After luncheon the President was handed a cable, read it, and became quite angry. He banged his fists on the arms of his wheelchair and said, "Averell is right; we can't do business with Stalin. He has broken every one of the promises he made at Yalta." See also the article in *The New York Times*, Mar. 27, 1972, by Francis L. Lowenheim, printing a hitherto unpublished cable from FDR to Churchill, dated

Apr. 6, 1945.

34. "Frere Jacques" Duclos, the Comintern official in charge of the western communist parties, in *Cahiers du Communisme* for April, 1945, launched an attack on the American Communist party, condemning Earl Browder's revisionism. Schlesinger in "Origins of the Cold War" says that he could not have planned and written this piece much later than the Yalta Conference, and hence it shows that Stalin was turning against the West well before the incidents the revisionists often cite to demonstrate American responsibility for the cold war. The revisionists refuse to believe this, and stress the unimportance or Schlesinger's misinterpretation of the letter.

35. "Origins of the Post-War Crisis — a Discussion," *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 3 (1967-1968), 233-237, excerpted in Paterson, ed., *Origins of the Cold War*, p. 112.