

hold of the American people with increasing intensity during recent years. Not just our talk but our behavior makes it clear that we have a compelling commitment to equality, and that leads to a fixation on uniformity in the impact of government on individuals. Determined that individuals living side by side as well as far apart who are caught up in competition for something of value shall enjoy equal protection of the law, we leap to the conclusion that Americans living anywhere within the national boundaries must be subjected to identical law. The only way to guarantee that one rule of law will extend over the whole nation is for Congress to enact the legislation, for a monolithic bureaucracy to enforce it, and for a national Supreme Court to review and revise the variant interpretations of each statute.

Local self-government was invented so that each community could have its own preferred services and its own preferred regulations. The glory of the American federal system has been its provision that the people of each state should live under their own code of laws. I recognize the necessity of calling national authority into action when any lesser political jurisdiction withholds elementary justice from any part of the population. If it becomes evident that the only way a black man can be assured of the right to vote in Mississippi is for federal agents to register voters and sit at the polls on election day — if that is the only way they can be assured the right to vote—then I agree that local regis-

tration and election officials will have to move over and let the federal officers take charge. The assurance of elementary justice is not what I am talking about when I say we have an over-developed attachment to uniformity in the application of law. I am not talking about the need for the federal government to come into a state or community to make sure that a minority group gets the fair deal in public services which is denied to them by state or local public authorities. I think that redress of local injustice by the national government is imperative.

What I have in mind when I warn against an exaggerated affection for uniform application of laws is a supposition that the surest way to prevent injustice is to have one government govern everybody. What I deplore is the supposition that national rules and regulations must cover, say, the growing of tobacco in order to escape the disadvantage someone might suffer if the rules governing measurement of tobacco fields in Kentucky differ a little bit from the rules governing measurement of tobacco fields across the state line in North Carolina.

The issue now before the Supreme Court relating to the financing of public education invites inspection in this connection. It seems to me to be a sound principle that some of the money stripped off of the wealthier communities of the state by taxation ought to be invested in the improvement of education in the poorer communities of the state. If this is a good rule for education, then it seems to me to be a good rule for

health services, care for the aged and the crippled, and a good many other services we expect government to provide. If the judges conclude that the equalizing of services is mandated by the Constitution, inherent in the laws' equal protection requirement, how can the judges escape concluding that the quality of essential services in poverty-ridden West Virginia must be brought up to the level of the same public services in the far wealthier states of Ohio and Pennsylvania? If all the communities of the nation must be brought to the same quality of service, how would you guarantee that result except by a mass of ever-changing regulations of nationwide application enforced by a number of ever-enlarging federal bureaucracies? And if the great swarm of regulators bring all parts of the nation to the same level of public service, who will run ahead of the rest and set models for the less imaginative communities to imitate?

I do not predict that the Supreme Court will immediately project us upon this course of all plains and no mountains, all lock step and no pace setting. I do say that there is a mood hovering over the nation, a sentiment settling heavily upon great numbers of American people, which favors equality of condition and uniformity in the application of law. It is a mood and a sentiment which, if it persists and dominates our political philosophy, will negate any hope you or I may have of returning government of the American people back to the states and the communities where the people live. □

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

Truman and the Maelstrom of History

At no time are complex historical events more neatly comprehensible than during a reign of ideology, and today in America, ideology is clearly in the ascendant. In some circles it goes under the rubric New Left; in other circles it is more ambiguously described as revisionist. Whatever it is called, it always manages to round the ragged edges off history's complicated events. That is precisely what it has attempted to do with the cold war. In its haste it has sheared off a great deal of the glory that a tough little man earned for himself and his naive countrymen right after the conclusion of the Second World War. I speak of Harry S. Truman, an authentic image of the American democratic ideal, an ideal still celebrated in the American heartland, and an ideal which holds that everyone counts — even a commoner from the remote state of Missouri. According to this ideal, any American citizen can become president, and working within the scheme of the American Constitution he should be able to do tolerably well.

As if to demonstrate the validity of his democratic ideal, fate kicked Mr. Truman into the presidency at one of the most inopportune times imaginable. The Second World War was drawing to a close, leaving half the civilized world

heaped in a shambles. During the reign of Franklin Roosevelt, President for the past twelve years, America had undergone one of the most profound changes in domestic policy in its history. Mr. Roosevelt was a magisterial leader, considered to be one of the greatest in American history. He was idolized for his dramatic accomplishments, his break with the past, his powerful personality, and his fabulous entourage. When he died so suddenly and mysteriously on the afternoon of April 12, 1945, a shocked nation found it hard to envision the puny figure of Vice-President Harry S. Truman as inheriting Roosevelt's magnificent position. Had they realized the depth of Mr. Truman's condition, their fractured confidence would have been all the more shattered. Truman had hardly had a word with President Roosevelt in the few months he had been in the administration. He knew little about the intricate diplomacy Mr. Roosevelt had been weaving throughout the turbulent world. And he knew less of the military situation. When Truman was suddenly made President, he actually knew nothing of the revolutionary new bomb being hatched in the desert of New Mexico.

And his predicament was aggravated by the fact that most of Roosevelt's ad-

visers had been positing their diplomacy with the Russians on notions that were utterly incompatible with Soviet designs. The Russians thought only of security. They desired to ring their vast nation with a *cordon sanitaire*, protecting them from any future foreign invasions, and Mr. Stalin intended that this *cordon* be as thick as possible. Meanwhile Roosevelt and his advisers implacably pursued a policy of unconditional surrender in the field and high-minded idealism at the diplomatic table. They dreamed of a postwar world characterized by self-determination under the irenic suzerainty of some sort of international government, welded together by international trade. It is hard to confect a dream more antithetical to the insular obsessions of the suspicious Russians. Yet these were the ideas of the leaderless administration when Truman became the thirty-third American president. And of course Roosevelt's misguided advisers now became Truman's advisers.

Outside the government American political discourse was not much better informed. America has always been a land visited by men of enthusiasms. The enthusiasms whistling through America at this time were not very intelligent or useful to a man in Truman's awesome position. Sober-minded leaders were

making very few intelligent statements on foreign policy. Even General Eisenhower was given to vacant statements like "Nothing guides Russian policy so much as a desire for friendship with the United States." Imagine what less realistic persons were saying!

Though Americans in 1939 had indicated in opinion polls that if forced to choose between fascism and communism they would prefer the former, by 1942 they had reversed their positions, and influential elements of the American press were actually leading cheers for the Soviet way of life. *Life* magazine proclaimed Lenin "perhaps the greatest man of modern times," and jabbered on that "the Russians are one hell of a people... (who) to a remarkable degree ... look like Americans, dress like Americans and think like Americans." True, a section of the American people remained skeptical of communist Russia, and some had even tempered their expectations for the postwar period. But the more educated and influential Americans remained enthusiastic about Russia's willingness to promote the ideals of the Atlantic Charter. With such enthusiasms loose in the land, with imperious politicians and advisers of the Roosevelt administrations often contemptuous, Truman, the only American president in this century without a college education, tried to guide America through the last months of World War II and into the postwar era.

In July, 1945, he went to Potsdam and tried to fill FDR's position between the two remaining giants of the Grand Alliance, Winston Churchill and Joseph Stalin. In the midst of the meeting the British snatched Churchill from his side and Truman was left with Attlee to confront the serpentine Soviet dictator. Their worlds were as wide apart as can be imagined. What democracy and freedom meant to Truman must have been incomprehensible to a tyrant like Stalin, so given to paranoia and treachery. We can only speculate about how many of their difficulties were born of guile and how many were born of the insurmountable misunderstandings of two men cultured in two diametrically opposed poli-

tical philosophies. Just before the Potsdam meetings America perfected the atomic bomb, and Truman had to decide how to go about prudently informing Stalin of it and of its significance to the war. During all of this time Truman was trapped in the ambiguous grasp of past commitments and policies made by his predecessor. At this time FDR had been making vague commitments, and his policies may have been in a state of flux. At any rate his propensity for loose administration and procrastination would have left American foreign policy in somewhat of a mess even if his premises had been well-founded and congruent with Russian strategic interests, which they were not.

Steadily the war ended. After balancing the costs and benefits of using America's terrible new weapon, Truman chose to end the war quickly. Two bombs were dropped and the Japanese sued for peace. By now Truman was gaining a realistic perception of Russian intentions, but his realism was not shared by many of his fellow citizens. Before he could implement a policy of firmness for dealing with the rapacious communists, another old enthusiasm rushed through the American people — the enthusiasm for peacetime jubilation, then "normalcy." It was a re-enactment of the frivolous period following World War I. A chorus went up to "bring the boys home." Military appropriations were slashed, and Americans either showed no interest in their world responsibilities or maundered on delusively about the United Nations.

The precipitous American withdrawal and disarmament encouraged Soviet expansion. The Soviets had not been very cooperative at Yalta and were even less cooperative at Potsdam. As 1945 faded into 1946, they became obdurate. They would not sign treaties, repatriate prisoners of war, or show any interest in relieving the devastated areas of Europe. To the contrary, their interest was in reparations. Through it all Truman had to contend at home with the men of enthusiasms: enthusiasm for our noble Russian allies, who were not very genial

anymore; enthusiasm for world trade, international organization, and self-determination for all nations. All were unrealistic notions. And then there was this new enthusiasm at home, an enthusiasm for ambrosia. It came at a time in which resolutions and farsightedness were necessary to assure world peace and a measure of freedom for war-torn Europe.

Churchill soon was describing Europe as "a rubble heap, a charnel house, a breeding ground of pestilence and hate." Many of the ravaged nations were without the essentials of life and were incapable of providing them. The situation was desperate. In Eastern Europe the democracies drifted imperceptibly into communist tyranny. First the ministry of the interior would come under Red domination. Then allegations of impropriety would be directed at the other branches of government. Then chaos, and finally Red dominance.

It was not until 1946 and 1947 that Americans became sufficiently aware of Russian truculence to support a sensible policy against it. During this time the average man from Independence, Missouri had his arms full trying to run the government. It is important to grasp the political and intellectual problems that hobble a politician during such times. Respect and prestige are essential if a man is to govern. After the glamorous Roosevelt it was very hard to respect a simple man like Truman. Many politicians sniffed at the thought that Truman would do more than fill out FDR's term. They began challenging him almost immediately. Many Roosevelt advisers suspected Truman's competence. Truman made some minor and expected errors, and his Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes, was callow and in other ways unacceptable.

Most Americans wanted to "get out of" Asia and Europe. Not many people knew what the Russians were up to and few appreciated the difficulty of ending a world war. It was a time of pother. Somehow Truman managed. He sweated away earnestly and energetically. He replaced Byrnes with a very sound Secretary of State, George C. Marshall, and he followed Marshall's counsel. As President he asserted himself as a confident leader determined to do his duty. He intended to be elected in 1948 and he manifested his seriousness by launching new policies that were singular and intelligent.

In reviewing his foreign policy achievement, one cannot help but note the mark of his strong character. His proposals were a dramatic departure from the past. He ended Japanese hostilities by ordering use of the atomic bomb. During his first administration a policy of prudent containment was outlined and given definition in the Truman Doctrine, which made it "the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." Enunciated on March 12, 1947, it directed economic and military aid to Greece and Turkey, lest they fall into communist hands. It initially cost four hundred million dollars, and was a bold *démarche*.

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