

## The American Intellectual Tradition Reflected in the Truman Doctrine

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The foreign policy of the United States is based firmly on fundamental principles of righteousness and justice. In carrying out these principles we shall firmly adhere to what we believe to be right; and we shall not give our approval to any compromises with evil.

—President Truman as recorded in *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman, Volume I, Year of Decisions*

Certain currents in the American intellectual heritage demand that public policy, domestic and foreign, be justified in their terms. These currents are so powerful that American policy makers frequently are able to embark upon pragmatic solutions to specific problems only after constructing a larger ideological framework in which to carry out their policies, a framework that accommodates these currents. Manifest Destiny, which in the nineteenth century provided us with the ideological basis for territorial expansion, is only one example of this phenomenon. In the twentieth century we have seen very notable recurrences of it. The United States entered World War I with the proclaimed mission of making the world safe for democracy, and World War II with much the same mission, fighting within the ideological framework provided by the Atlantic Charter and the Four

Freedoms. In the postwar world we again found it necessary to build such a structure before we could take specific actions on the international scene that we deemed necessary to our national interests. The cornerstone of this structure was the Truman Doctrine, which in 1947 formulated a position that guided foreign policy for the next twenty years, pledging the United States to help "free peoples" to maintain their "free institutions" against "aggressive movements" that seek "to impose upon them totalitarian regimes." This ideological basis with its messianic promise and broad, imprecise concepts has had profound effects on America and American policy. Among them are the following:

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1. We have become much more involved in the affairs of other nations than may have been required from the standpoint of strict political or economic interests. Thus we have put ourselves in a position of renegeing on this pledge when other situations arose in the world with similar trappings but less strategic significance for us, or conversely, of bolstering threatened governments and societies in a large part of the world almost upon demand.

2. We announced ourselves arbiters of questions as vague as which peoples are "free peoples," which institutions "free in-

stitutions." The fact that such determinations have in actual practice played little part in our policies has in itself been a cause of important internal problems.

3. Large segments of the population have become dismayed at the disparity between our ideologically based proclamations of policy and the actual pragmatically oriented policies we have followed. This reaction reached crisis proportions in the late 1960s.

4. We have felt compelled to carry on a constant (and unsuccessful) effort to reform the totalitarian governments to which we give assistance. Thus we have hoped to make reality fit our proclamations that American assistance is for "free peoples" with "free institutions."

As for the thesis that the tendency to construct idealistic bases within which to undertake pragmatic measures characterizes the United States, one might object that other nations indulge in the same practice. This may be the case, but I believe it would be hard to find a society in which this tendency is more compelling than in America, particularly twentieth-century America. Nevertheless, my purpose is not necessarily to claim this as a unique American phenomenon but to identify it as an important phenomenon in American policy making, to try to analyze the sources of the ideologies we construct as a result of this phenomenon, and to consider the effects, particularly in the post-World War II era, of policies created in this way.

The tendency to build ideological frameworks has been the despair of the more "realistic" school of political scientists, for example Hans Morgenthau, who regards it as "sentimentalism," and also of some of our statesmen, of whom George Kennan is the outstanding example. A rather more complicated criticism is offered by Stanley Hoffmann who, in *Gulliver's Troubles, Or the Setting of American Foreign Policy*, says that this tendency leads American statesmen to ask the wrong questions. The problem, he says:

. . . is what I would call formalism or formalism: formalism, because exceedingly com-

plex realities are reduced to the holy simplicity of a hallowed slogan; formalism, because those slogans reveal an insufficient grasp of the political, historical, and social processes that foreign policy must deal with . . . .

For all their generosity and appeal, America's principles are misleading. They often make the men who are concerned with foreign policy ask the wrong question, turn to the wrong analysis, and thus in the end provoke the wrong results.

At this point, I think it appropriate to define some of the currents in our tradition that I believe operate so strongly in the formulations of our policies. They are:

1. A tendency, resulting from our Puritan heritage, to view world affairs in Manichaean terms of virtue versus vice.

2. A desire to spread Americanism and American virtues around the world, and a contrasting tendency to withdraw to America, thereby avoiding the contamination of the outside world. The two tendencies have vied with each other for ascendancy most notably throughout the twentieth century.

3. A stress on individualism in the liberal tradition of Locke and Mill with an abhorrence of collectivist approaches to social organization.

Although one might argue about the genesis of these currents, I believe their existence and their effect on policy can be clearly demonstrated by an examination of the Truman Doctrine and the background to its formulation. On March 12, 1947, in an appeal to Congress to provide \$400,000,000 in aid for Greece and Turkey, President Truman made the following remarks:

To ensure the peaceful development of nations, free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations. The United Nations is designed to make possible lasting freedom and independence for all its members. We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes. This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed upon free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the

foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States.

Here we have the ideological principle America needs before acting in a situation that requires a fast, limited, pragmatic response. The United States must go out into the world in defense of political virtue—"to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions," because "totalitarian regimes imposed upon free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States." Note that although Truman makes a bow to the United Nations, for which such a mission might be more appropriate, it is "we"—the United States—whom he calls upon to take action in this situation. Later he would be taken to task from various quarters for not making more of an effort to have at least ostensible involvement of the United Nations in this new program. Nevertheless, mentioning it respectfully and making our action appear to square with its best interests was also an ideological necessity, particularly because the United Nations was founded largely as a result of American initiative and within an ambience of enormous idealism.

In another part of his speech Truman amplifies the universal and moralistic basis of the American position when he says:

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.

One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression. The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio, fixed elections, and the suppression of personal freedoms.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their

own destinies in their own way. I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid, which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes.

The world is not static, and the *status quo* is not sacred. But we cannot allow changes in the *status quo* in violation of the Charter of the United Nations by such methods as coercion, or by such subterfuges as political infiltration. In helping free and independent nations maintain their freedom, the United States will be giving effect to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Here is a superb presentation of the moralistic mission of the United States, and again, here is the dualistic view of the world expressed with brilliant clarity, for Truman says there are only two ways of life. The first is obviously our way, the other what he regards to be the way of life of our adversaries. As D. F. Fleming writes in *The Cold War and Its Origins*, "No room was left for diversity, for many different kinds of systems. It must be one or the other." There are only two choices, a good choice and a bad choice, one based on the expression of the individual and on guarantees of his liberty—our way—and the other on terror and oppression forcibly imposed by a minority—their way.

The duty of the United States is clear; it is to make our way prevail in the world. Yet critics of this view point out that, even if these indeed are the only choices, there is no reason why our nation should be burdened with the task of making our way the world's way, even if it is the better way. This seems to have crossed Truman's mind, for again he makes slight obeisance to the United Nations, saying that what he sees happening in Greece and Turkey is in violation of its charter, but, nevertheless, it is again "we," the people of the United States, who cannot allow this charter to be violated, "we" who must give effect to the principles of that charter, regardless of the fact that the United Nations did not request us to do so. Furthermore, stating the case in terms, however questionable, of doing the United Nation's work for it ennobled our cause, particularly since that organization at that time represented the height of po-

litical idealism. Circumventing the United Nations (as Truman was later accused of doing in spite of these phrases in his speech) would have degraded our mission. But regardless of how our policy fit with the goals of an international organization, Truman was making it clear that we had identified evil and, therefore, we were required to act.

Supporters of Truman's position could very well argue that indeed he had identified an evil and a danger, that indeed it was incumbent upon him to act, and that the United States was the only power in the world that could do so. Certainly if he truly considered the situation in Greece and Turkey to be that which he described, and there was reason at that time to do so, regardless of strong counterarguments then and of widespread reevaluations in later years,\* he took appropriate measures in terms of concrete political and economic actions. In terms of ideological justification, however, he engaged in typical American overkill that would cause great complications as the years went by.

It is perhaps ironic that later in this same speech Truman gives a totally pragmatic explanation in specific terms of the international situation for the American action he proposes. In any country less insistent upon putting tactical actions in a universal moralistic framework, this explanation would have sufficed:

It is necessary only to glance at a map to

\* In general, these reevaluations, popularly called "revisionism," hold that United States intransigence, as much if not more than that of the Soviet Union, brought about and sustained the cold war, although they vary in their interpretations of United States motives. A fair sampling of this sizable body of work would include David Horowitz's *The Free World Colossus*, Gar Alperovitz's *Cold War Essays and Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam*, William A. Williams's *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, Harry Magdoff's *The Age of Imperialism*, D. F. Fleming's *The Cold War and Its Origins*, and Gabriel Kolko's *The Politics of War*. The first work in the "revisionist" spirit may well be Walter Lippman's *The Cold War*, published shortly after the enunciation of the Truman Doctrine. In it Lippman argues against the policy of "containment" of the Soviet Union, which was then just beginning.

realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are of grave importance in a much wider situation. If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority, the effect upon its neighbor, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East.

Moreover, the disappearance of Greece as an independent state would have a profound effect upon those countries in Europe whose peoples are struggling against great difficulties to maintain their freedoms and their independence while they repair the damages of war.

It would be an unspeakable tragedy if these countries, which have struggled so long against overwhelming odds, should lose that victory for which they sacrificed so much. Collapse of free institutions and loss of independence would be disastrous not only for them but for the world. Discouragement and possibly failure would quickly be the lot of neighboring peoples striving to maintain their freedom and independence.

Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far reaching to the West as well as to the East.

We must take immediate and resolute action.

Granted, even here there is a bit of hyperbole and, furthermore, one might well argue that Greece and Turkey were not really being victimized to the extent Truman seemed to believe. Variations of this argument were presented by George Kennan at the time, and by the "revisionist" historians at a later day. Nonetheless, given Truman's interpretation of events, his request for assistance constituted an appropriate response for the United States. The point is, the case for assistance could very well have been made solely on the basis outlined in the five paragraphs quoted above. In them Truman is saying essentially that a power antagonistic to the United States and its allies is threatening to bring two strategically located countries into its orbit, an event that would be bad enough in itself, but that, furthermore, could have a domino effect on other countries, causing them to go from our sphere of influence into our adversary's sphere of influence. Whether this was a correct or incorrect analysis in the light of history, if believed at the time it would have been a legitimate motive for

international political action. In all probability it would not, however, have been enough justification for Americans because it was limited and pragmatic (we are pragmatic in many ways but rarely, if ever, in our rationales for policy). Although the actions based on such a policy might well have been identical, at least at the beginning, with those based on an ideologically grander policy, American satisfaction would have been much diminished. In fact, it is unlikely that we would have taken any action at all on such a basis, which was apparently very much the view of Truman and the men around him at the time he outlined his doctrine, as we shall see.

The characteristic American phenomenon, one of building ideological castles to house pragmatic kitchens, so well exemplified by Truman's speech, is aptly identified by Hans Morgenthau when he says:

Wherever American foreign policy has operated, political thought has been divorced from political action. Even where our long-range policies reflect faithfully, as they do in the Americas and in Europe, the true interests of the United States, we think about them in terms that have at best but a tenuous connection with the actual character of the policies pursued. We have acted on the international scene, as all nations must, in power-political terms; but we have tended to conceive of our actions in non-political, moralistic terms.

Morgenthau's point is superbly illustrated by a review of the background of the Truman speech, presented in great detail in *The Fifteen Weeks*, by Joseph Jones, special assistant to the assistant secretary of state for public affairs, who was involved in the formulation of the new policy and in drafting the speech in which it was presented. It may be appropriate to point out that Dean Acheson, then undersecretary of state, who supervised most of the department's work on this project, attests to Jones's credentials to speak on this matter, saying he was "both a participant in and the historian of all this effort." Jones describes the State Department's deliberate efforts to achieve exactly the moralistic tone that so disturbs Morgenthau. He also tells

of the excitement felt by all involved, the result of being engaged in a great undertaking of momentous consequences. In an era grown more cynical about sweeping initiatives in international affairs, Jones's phrases tend to bring to mind that World War II song which, expressing the crusading spirit of that engagement, said, "Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition/All aboard, we're on a mighty mission."

He tells how a British embassy official delivered a note to the department explaining that Great Britain would very soon have to discontinue financial and military assistance to Greece and Turkey. "Reading the messages, Hickerson [a State Department official] realized at once, as had Henderson [also a department official] that Great Britain had within the hour handed the job of world leadership, with all its burdens and all its glory, to the United States." Jones states that "This sudden spark set off a dazzling process which within fifteen weeks laid the basis for a complete conversion of American foreign policy and of the attitudes of the American people toward the world. It was clear to many at the time that an enduring national conversion to the role of world leadership was taking place." That America's leadership role was to endure may well be true, although the characteristics of that role are surely changing, very likely diminishing. That a basis was laid for the conversion of the attitudes of the American people is unquestionable. Both the president and the State Department, with the help and at the insistence of Senator Arthur Vandenberg, majority leader in the Senate and chairman of its Foreign Relations Committee, made a strenuous effort to convert those attitudes from isolationism, our heritage from the earliest days of the republic, to the messianic ones amplified in this century by Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Roosevelt.

The business of formulating the policy and drafting the speech that would inaugurate it was begun following the decision, reached almost immediately in the executive branch of the government, that the United States should step into the breach and give assistance to Greece and Turkey.

The next major step was a meeting with congressional leaders at which the president, Secretary of State George C. Marshall and Undersecretary Acheson would explain what the administration had in mind. Truman, in his memoirs, gives the impression that he laid out the concept of the proposed program and then Marshall filled in its diplomatic details. He does not mention Acheson. In Jones's version, Marshall handled most of the briefing, but in a lackluster manner that left the congressmen with little sense of urgency. At this point Acheson asked to speak and gave such a powerful presentation that the congressmen were stunned and alarmed. What he reports Acheson as saying is very interesting in light of the thesis that Americans see the world as divided between good and evil and believe that good, which we must propagate, can be defined in terms of our own society.

Only two great powers remained in the world, Acheson continued, the United States and the Soviet Union. We had arrived at a situation unparalleled since ancient times. Not since Rome and Carthage had there been such a polarization of power on this earth. Moreover the two great powers were divided by an unbridgeable ideological chasm. For us, democracy and individual liberty were basic; for them, dictatorship and absolute conformity. And it was clear that the Soviet Union was aggressive and expanding. For the United States to take steps to strengthen countries threatened with Soviet aggression or Communist subversion was not to pull British chestnuts out of the fire; it was to protect the security of the United States—it was to protect freedom itself. For if the Soviet Union succeeded in extending its control over two-thirds of the world's surface and three-fourths of its population, there could be no security for the United States, and freedom anywhere in the world would have only a poor chance of survival. The proposed aid to Greece and Turkey was not therefore a matter of bailing out the British, or even of responding on humanitarian grounds to the need of a loyal ally. It was a matter of building our own security and safeguarding freedom by strengthening free peoples against Communist aggression and subversion. We had the choice, he concluded, of acting with energy to meet this situation or of losing by default.

Note that according to Jones, Acheson spoke not only of "a polarization of power," a perfectly good reason for alarm, but also of the confrontation of good and evil. America (in this case its congressmen) needed to sense that confrontation before it would take action internationally. "For us, democracy and individual liberty were basic; for them, dictatorship and absolute conformity." The administration was proposing steps to protect not only the security of the United States but also "freedom itself."

Acheson, in *Present at the Creation*, an account of his years at the State Department, goes into much less detail about this meeting, recounting only that Marshall "flubbed his opening statement," at which point Acheson says he addressed the congressmen. He states that "These congressmen had no conception of what challenged them; it was my task to bring it home." He describes, however, only his account of the specific political factors involved and none of the ideological issues. All accounts concur, however, that at the end of the session Senator Vandenberg agreed to support the policy and stated his belief that most of the Congress would do the same. Acheson says that when he finished speaking:

A long silence followed. Then Arthur Vandenberg said solemnly, "Mr. President, if you will say that to the Congress and the country, I will support you and I believe that most of its members will do the same."

Jones goes on to say the following regarding this meeting with key congressmen:

Acheson had abandoned the manner of a judge and for ten or fifteen minutes had spoken as a fervent advocate. When he finished a profound silence ensued that lasted perhaps ten seconds. It was broken by the voice of Senator Vandenberg. Slowly and with gravity, Vandenberg said that he had been greatly impressed, even shaken, by what he had heard. It was clear that the country was faced by an extremely serious situation, of which aid to Greece and Turkey, although of great importance, was only a part. He felt that it was absolutely necessary that any request of Congress for funds and authority to aid Greece and Turkey should be

accompanied by a message to Congress, and an explanation to the American people, in which the grim facts of the larger situation should be laid publicly on the line as they had been at their meeting there that day. . . . The very definite impression was gained, and was conveyed to the State Department staff the next day as a working hypothesis, that the congressional leaders would support whatever measures were necessary to save Greece and Turkey, *on the condition*, [Jones's emphasis] made by Senator Vandenberg and supported by others present, that the President should, in a message to Congress and in a radio address to the American people, explain the issue in the same frank terms and broad context in which it had been laid before them. What Vandenberg meant by the broad context may be indicated by something he wrote six days later to a congressional colleague:

"I am frank in saying that I do not know the answer to the latest Greek challenge because I do not know all the facts. I am waiting for all the facts before I say anything. . . . But I sense enough of the facts to realize that the problem in Greece cannot be isolated by itself. On the contrary, it is probably symbolic of the worldwide ideological clash between Eastern communism and Western democracy; and it may easily be the thing which requires us to make some very fateful and far-reaching decisions."

. . . The explicit reaction of all in the government, from the President down, who were concerned with the decision to aid Greece and Turkey was that a historical turning point had been reached, that the United States must now stand forth as leader of the free world in place of the flagging British and use its power directly and vigorously to strengthen free nations. But there is a great difference between thinking or determining this and announcing it as the policy of the United States to a questionable Congress and an apathetic electorate. Because of the searing political lessons of the previous twenty-eight years, beginning with the rejection of membership in the League of Nations and continuing through the isolationism of the twenties, the neutrality of the thirties, and the reaction against President Roosevelt's "quarantine" speech in Chicago in October 1937, the cautious, limited, backdoor approach to involvement in world affairs had become almost a reflex in successive administrations, notwithstanding support of the United Nations and vigorous participation in the negotiation

of peace treaties. At the meeting with the congressional leaders Acheson discovered that he had to pull out all the stops and speak in the frankest, boldest, widest terms to attract their support for a matter which in parliamentary democracies without a tradition of isolationism would have been undertaken quietly and without fanfare. This time the frank and bold approach, far from shocking the congressional leaders into timorousness, paid off. They were deeply impressed and felt that on that basis they could go before their constituents. It was Vandenberg's "condition" that made it possible, even necessary, to launch the global policy that broke through the remaining barriers of American isolationism.

Vandenberg's condition that the president explain his policy to the Congress and the American people in the same convincing way, the same broad terms Acheson had used with the lawmakers, terms of a "worldwide ideological clash," is highly significant. If Vandenberg perhaps did not realize that there are two conflicting elements in the American heritage, one isolationist and the other messianic, he clearly realized that there was a strong current of isolationism abroad in the land; indeed he has often been regarded as one of its main spokesmen. Consequently, he also knew that before politicians could safely embark on a program of the type proposed by the administration this current had to be blocked and a desire to deliver the world from evil had to be started. Truman, who obviously had as great a political stake as anyone in this matter, and in addition faced a Congress controlled by the Republican party, realized the same thing. In his memoirs he says:

I could never quite forget the strong hold which isolationism had gained over our country after World War I. Throughout my years in the Senate I listened each year as one of the senators would read Washington's Farewell Address. It served little purpose to point out to the isolationists that Washington had advised a method suitable under the conditions of *his* day to achieve the great end of preserving the nation, and that although conditions and our international position had changed, the objectives of our policy—peace and security—were still the same. For the isolationists this

address was like a biblical text. The America First organization of 1940-41, the Ku Klux Klan, Pelley and his Silver Shirts—they all quoted the first President in support of their assorted aims.

I had a very good picture of what a revival of American isolationism would mean for the world. After World War II it was clear that without American participation there was no power capable of meeting Russia as an equal. If we were to turn our back on the world, areas such as Greece, weakened and divided as a result of the war, would fall into the Soviet orbit without much effort on the part of the Russians. The success of Russia in such areas and our avowed lack of interest would lead to the growth of domestic Communist parties in such European countries as France and Italy, where they were already significant threats. Inaction, withdrawal, "Fortress America" notions could only result in handing to the Russians vast areas of the globe now denied to them.

This was the time to align the United States of America clearly on the side, and the head, of the free world. I knew that George Washington's spirit would be invoked against me, and Henry Clay's, and all the other patron saints of the isolationists. But I was convinced that the policy I was about to proclaim was indeed as much required by the conditions of my day as was Washington's by the situation in his era and Monroe's doctrine by the circumstances which he then faced.

Following the meeting with the congressmen a tremendous effort was undertaken by the State Department to prepare America for its new role. Acheson launched it the next day at the department, an event Jones recounts in these words:

Tenseness and controlled excitement grew by the moment in the large room as Acheson launched into a full statement of the larger issues, repeating the exposition that had so impressed the legislators. And when he described their generally favorable reaction and the indications they had given of support, and told of Vandenberg's "condition," which the President had welcomed, it seemed to those present that a new chapter in world history had opened and that they were the most privileged of men, participants in a drama such as rarely occurs even in the long life of a great nation. . . . All barriers to bold action were indeed down [Jones's emphasis]. . . . Our policy

was not directed against any country or even any movement, but was a positive policy directed toward helping free nations strengthen their democracy and their independence and thereby protecting the liberties of the individual citizen. . . . These other specific tasks were assigned: the drafting of replies to the British notes, *the drafting of the specific terms of a request for United States aid which would be suggested to the Greek government* [emphasis added]. . . . The meeting broke up; the members returned to their offices to undertake tasks in which they found release from the professional frustrations of years.

Anyone writing on historical topics obviously must recognize his own prejudices and those of his time before he can fully appreciate the attitudes of the period about which he writes. Clearly, in 1973, with isolationism making something of a comeback, classical cold war attitudes can be almost incomprehensible and tend frequently to be viewed in a very jaundiced way. Indeed, it may be almost as difficult today to comprehend and justify to any degree the ambience in the State Department of Marshall and Acheson as it is to sense fully the spirit and motivations of the court of Charlemagne. But even when one tries to make allowances for variations in outlook, Jones's description of these officials feeling that "they were the most privileged of men, participants in a drama such as rarely occurs even in the long life of a great nation," has a numbing quality to a generation in which many thoughtful persons regard that drama as ending in the agonizing efforts to disentangle from the jungles of Southeast Asia. Certainly if Jones has recorded this attitude accurately, and it is to be found also, if less explicitly, in the writings of other officials of the era, one must wonder how much of America's determination to undertake an enormous crusade was traceable to this official thrill of involvement in great and desperate events. Although such speculation may stray somewhat from my purpose, one must wonder how much of our "mighty mission" stemmed from that human attribute that Johan Huizinga describes in the phrase *Homo ludens* (man the player), when in his book by that name he claims

that man's love of drama is fundamental in the story of his conflicts.

Whether or not one wants to accept *Homo ludens* as part of the explanation for the events the Truman Doctrine put into play, the Jones statement is still comprehensible in terms of the American tradition. Certainly within the State Department, at least, isolationism was turned off and the department was ready to enter America in the lists against the great and evil champion. When the enemy was subdued, democracy and individualism, the Lockean principles that had proved so fruitful in our own society, would prevail. If we had to engineer the Greek request, that was surely a small enough matter considering the benefits for the whole world that would result, or so the ideology would have it. In strict political terms, we wanted Greece in our camp before it slipped into the enemy's camp, and the protocol of the official request had little relevance.

Jones's concluding sentence in the quotation above is fascinating not only because of what it adds to his description of the prevailing attitude of excitement and, to some extent, of bureaucratic self-importance, but also because of its enigmatic quality: "The meeting broke up; the members returned to their offices to undertake tasks in which they found release from the professional frustrations of years." One can only guess that these officials, probably not taken seriously enough in the military atmosphere of the war years, hampered by President Roosevelt's personal diplomacy, and cramped by prevailing isolationism before and immediately after those years, now saw the dawning of their own day.

Work on a program of public information was begun at once under the guidance of Francis Russell, director of the State Department's Office of Public Affairs. Russell was also chairman of the Subcommittee on Foreign Policy Information of an inter-agency group known as the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee. According to Jones:

The specific tasks of the subcommittee were to draw together background information from

the three Departments relating to all aspects of the problem, to point out the main obstacles to public acceptance and suggest how to overcome them, to define the program of aid contemplated, to draft the themes to be used in the public approach, to consider what the lines of Soviet propaganda would be and how to counter them, and to prepare information programs for getting the story over to the press, radio, periodicals, and group leaders throughout the country.

Furthermore, in describing the subcommittee's first meeting, Jones says:

The most striking thing about the ensuing discussion was the unanimous view that the new policy of the United States should be presented to the public in terms of assistance to free governments everywhere that needed our aid to strengthen and defend themselves against Communist aggression or subversion. This was not a proposition that was stated by one and acquiesced in, committee fashion, by others. With gravity it was advanced in different words by representatives of each of the three Departments:

"We should couch it in terms of a new policy of this government to go to the assistance of free governments everywhere."

"We should say we are prepared to back any country that is a democracy."

"We should relate military aid to the principle of supporting democracy. We should say the United States will support free governments to the point where they can defend themselves."

"The only way we can sell the public on our new policy is by emphasizing the necessity of holding the line: communism vs. democracy should be the major theme."

"We should emphasize the idea of a common purpose with all democracies."

It is perhaps ironic that we have accused our cold war enemies of being intractable because of their dedication to an ideological line that makes their policy inflexible and real bargaining out of the question. For as the preceding quotation clearly indicates, we were putting our own policy into a strict ideological framework and announcing it in these terms to the nation and the world. True, the major statement of American policy was Truman's speech on March 12, which did not put the case

quite as bluntly as some of the suggestions cited above, but it came very close and actually made our commitment even broader by calling for an American policy "to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." This vague ideologically based policy would give many countries a claim on our assistance when they faced rebellions of whatever legitimacy, and, by treating Franco's Spain, Salazar's Portugal, Stroessner's Paraguay, and Diem's Vietnam, among others, as nations of free peoples, it would create constant opposition among the American Left. Our policy, including that part of it directed toward the totalitarian regimes of the "free world," has been the result of *Realpolitik* as interpreted by successive administrations because, as Morgenthau argues, that is the only basis a nation has for a foreign policy. Yet that basis is unacceptable to the American conscience.

In the days immediately preceding the announcement of the Truman Doctrine, the American public and their representatives were being prepared for the burden they were about to be called upon to carry. To quote Jones again:

The strategic importance of Turkey ranked high in discussions within the executive branch and in discussions with congressional leaders. They were, however, consciously played down in the President's message, in the public sessions of the congressional committees, and in the public approach generally. There were two main reasons for this. The American people were not accustomed to thinking then, as they are now [1955], in strategic-military terms in time of peace, and too much emphasis upon supplying straight military aid to Turkey might have been alarming to the point of defeating the proposed action. The other was of course that supplying military aid to a country on the border of the Soviet Union, even though purely for defense against Soviet pressures, involved some danger of Soviet reaction, and at the very least there would be cries of "provocation" and "encirclement," which would be used in Soviet world-wide propaganda. It was therefore considered advisable to play down military aid to Turkey and to present that aid, as could be done with truthfulness, in the con-

text of Turkey's over-all economic situation. Military aid to Turkey was not concealed; but it was not emphasized. . . .

While the President's message was being drafted, Acheson's background talks with representatives of the press and radio bore fruit in the shape of a formidable and generally well-informed public build-up for a major policy change. At the same time the congressional leaders who attended the White House meeting were quietly exerting their influence on their colleagues. News and radio men collected and spread the pollen of information and speculation among congressmen, government officials, and the public.

It is interesting to note that in this careful preparation of the American mind Dean Acheson again leads the way. He clearly emerges as a latter-day Paul Revere or Iago, depending on one's point of view regarding the cold war, as the history of that war is revealed by Jones and by Acheson himself. Meanwhile, as America was being prepared for the new policy, drafts, additions, deletions and revisions for the president's message were being rushed around the State, War and Navy Departments. When finishing touches were made under the State Department's guidance it was sent to Clark Clifford, then special counsel to the president. According to Jones, the White House did some rearranging of paragraphs, made some changes, and suggested a few ideas. The general impression he gives is that the changes were minor. Truman gives a rather different account, which is interesting, not only because it provides the eternally amusing spectacle of officials contradicting each other, but because of what it shows regarding Truman's attitude—his determination that this would be a speech that would move America on a crusade. He states:

The drafting of the actual message which I would deliver to the Congress had meanwhile been started in the State Department. The first version was not at all to my liking. The writers had filled the speech with all sorts of background data and statistical figures about Greece and made the whole thing sound like an investment prospectus. I returned this draft to Acheson with a note asking for more emphasis

on a declaration of general policy. The Department's draftsmen then rewrote the speech to include a general policy statement, but it seemed to me half-hearted. The key sentence, for instance, read, "I believe that it should be the policy of the United States. . . ." I took my pencil, scratched out "should" and wrote in "must." In several other places I did the same thing. I wanted no hedging in this speech. This was America's answer to the surge of expansion of Communist tyranny. It had to be clear and free of hesitation or double talk.

George Kennan, at the time the groundwork for the Truman Doctrine was being done, already was regarded as one of the government's principal Sovietologists. Consequently he was approached at the National War College at Fort McNair, where he was teaching at the time, and asked to take part in planning the United States response to the problem caused by the British withdrawal from Greece and Turkey. In his *Memoirs: 1925-1950* he tells the story in these words:

Mr. Acheson . . . asked me to participate in the deliberations of a special committee that was being established to study the whole problem of assistance to Greece and Turkey. The committee met that same evening (February 24), as I recall it. . . . I gave it as my opinion that we had no choice but to accept the challenge and to extend the requisite aid; this was the consensus of the group as a whole; an appropriate recommendation was drawn up. . . . It was (I learn from Mr. Jones's book) on the day before the State Department's final draft of this message [the president's speech of March 12] went to the White House, presumably about March 6, that I came over to the department to have a look at the paper. What I saw made me extremely unhappy. The language to which I took particular exception . . . had been produced at the initiative of the department's public relations office, in a subcommittee of the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee (SWNCC) which evidently felt itself under the necessity of clothing the announced rationale for the President's decision in terms more grandiose and more sweeping than anything that I, at least, had ever envisaged. . . . I remonstrated, by my own recollection, to Henderson [head of the special committee]. Mr. Jones says I also remonstrated to Mr. Acheson. . . . [In *Present at the Creation Ache-*

son confirms that, however it was communicated, he was aware of Kennan's viewpoint.]

The situation of Turkey differed quite fundamentally from that of Greece. There was no serious Communist penetration in Turkey—no comparable guerrilla movement. The Turks had nothing to fear but fear . . . but . . . should they be increasingly encircled by Communist-dominated entities, it would plainly be harder for them to maintain this stance [one of "precarious immunity to Russian pressure"]. Aid to Greece was therefore important as a support for stability in Turkey as well.

It should be noted that this view of the problem of Turkey afforded no rationale for the mounting of a special aid program for Turkey itself. The accent was put on internal morale and on firmness of diplomatic stance, not on military preparations. It was for this reason that I was not happy to find in the draft of the President's message to Congress a proposal for aid to Turkey as well as to Greece. I suspected that what was intended primarily was military aid, and that what had really happened was that the Pentagon had exploited a favorable set of circumstances in order to infiltrate a military aid program for Turkey into what was supposed to be primarily a political and economic program for Greece. . . .

Were I reacting today [1967] to the Truman Doctrine message . . . I would also take exception to the repeated suggestions, in the text of that message, that what we were concerned to defend in Greece was the democratic quality of the country's institutions. We would find it necessary to give aid, over the ensuing years, to a number of regimes which could hardly qualify for it on the basis of their democratic character. . . .

Kennan, however, was fighting not simply inflexible officials; he was fighting the American tradition. We will go out into the world if we must, but we will not do so just to fix something here or shore up something there. We live at home in virtue; if we must go forth to defeat vice, we will do so, but we are absolutists, and we will do so in a thoroughgoing way, founded in an ideology that gives us the strength we must have to carry out a mighty mission. We had made a similar effort once before in the twentieth century—to make the world safe for democracy, or in effect, for the American way of life—and failed. Per-

haps we had not intended to make that effort again, but fate thrust the necessity of doing so upon us, first by hurling us into World War II and now by forcing us to continue the very struggle for which we had shed our blood in that war—the struggle to defend four great freedoms, or again, in effect, the American way of life. Fate now called upon us to bring out the American way of life for all to enjoy, to bring out Lockean liberalism as we had perfected it, to bring out freedom for the individual, in short, to provide all of these advantages to a world threatened by tyranny, indeed, by a tyranny with a collectivist philosophy that made it even more abhorrent.

If Kennan did not recognize the futility of what he was suggesting, did not recognize what Vandenberg, Truman and Acheson recognized, that if there were not total ideological warfare, there would be no warfare at all, yet he recognized the ideological tendency. Indeed he says:

It was not enough for us, when circumstances forced us into World War I, to hold in view the specific reasons for our entry: our war effort had to be clothed in the form of an effort to make the *world* (nothing less) "safe for democracy." It was not enough for us, in World War II, that the Japanese attacked us at Pearl Harbor and that both Japanese and German governments declared war on us: we did not feel comfortable until we had wrapped our military effort in the wholly universalistic—and largely meaningless—generalities of the Atlantic Charter. Something of this same compulsion became apparent in the postwar period in the tendency of many Americans to divide the world neatly into Communist and "free world" components, to avoid recognition of specific differences among countries on either side, and to search for general formulas to govern our relations with the one or the other.

But Kennan, with his noncrusading notions of limited commitments to achieve limited objectives, and his distaste for proclamations couched in terms of absolute, universal values, apparently came to be regarded as something of an intellectual gadfly, particularly by Acheson. One has this distinct impression from Kennan's memoirs, in which he himself is frank in

recognizing this phenomenon. Marshall, who called upon him to organize and head the State Department's policy planning staff, regarded him as an important policy advisor, but the policy planning staff had not been set up at the time of the Truman Doctrine announcement and, even if it had been, it is doubtful that Kennan's views would have had much effect because obviously the doctrine and the effort leading up to it was Acheson's show much more than Marshall's. At that time, and when he became secretary of state two years later, Acheson seems to have regarded Kennan almost as Lear regarded his fool: as someone who was full of strange notions, often penetrating, always articulate, and frequently wise, but whose observations were seldom a basis for policy. So in spite of Kennan, the business of planning the crusade went forward until that afternoon on March 12, 1947, when President Truman announced it to Congress, the nation and the world.

It is interesting to note that from the beginning there were fears that this entire program would be turned into a matter of purely military advice and supply. We have already seen Kennan's premonitions about this in regard to aid to Turkey and the State Department's anxieties about alarming the Congress and the public on this same issue. Meanwhile, Senator Robert Taft, according to Jones, was not troubled by the economic and financial aspects of the program but worried that sending military equipment and advisors would increase the possibility of war with the Soviet Union. But most interesting of all is Truman's observation in his memoirs concerning the very first days of the assistance program's existence:

Meanwhile, Dwight P. Griswold, former governor of Nebraska, whom I had named to be the administrator of our aid program in Greece, had arrived there. He was vigorously starting to build up a staff and to make arrangements for the reception and distribution of aid supplies. The Greek government, however, continued to show itself mostly concerned with military matters. The Greeks wanted equipment, advisors, money to expend its [*sic*] army,

and would have given all our aid to the military if we had let them do it. Both Ambassador MacVeagh and Griswold worked steadily to induce the government to broaden its base and to seek the widest possible popular support.

Yet there is something perhaps even more interesting in this paragraph of Truman's, indicating a problem that would bedevil the foreign aid program as much as, if not more than, the fears that it was fundamentally a military operation. The last sentence tells the story: ". . . to induce the government to broaden its base and to seek the widest possible popular support." Why—because then it would be stronger? The fact is that authoritarian governments in the postwar period, as in others, have an impressive record of stability and longevity. No, the Greek government was to be urged to broaden its base of popular support in order to make the pragmatic policy of American aid to Greece square with the American ideology regarding the country's new mission and with America's traditional belief in the liberal ethic. It was the beginning of that hopeless effort described earlier in this article, to reconcile political fact with ideological fantasy by purifying the regimes of other countries, an effort that would be repeated in nation after nation—for example, Brazil, Pakistan, Vietnam and, ironically, in Greece again more than twenty years later.

But there was no way out of this dilemma. A specific situation existed in the Balkans which, in the minds of American policy makers, required a response that, even when held to its minimum as urged by Kennan, would constitute an important play on the international scene. This occurred almost immediately after World War II, when Congress and the administration assumed, probably correctly, that Americans were ready to wash their hands of international politics and to revert to characteristic isolationism. Judging from accounts of the meetings at which the new policy was formulated and from the manner in which the president and the State Department presented it, it seems clear that the government leaders involved believed,

correctly in my opinion, that the only way to get any action out of the American people was to present the case in the absolute terms of a universal struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil, to launch America on a mighty mission of salvation. That is why they could not take George Kennan seriously. That is why Truman's task in speaking before the Congress and the nation was similar in many respects to that of Pope Urban II before the Council of Clermont when he urged the Franks to undertake the Crusades and fight God's war against the infidel.

There are, of course, problems with presenting policy in these terms. As noted elsewhere in this article, it causes grave disappointment among much of the population when, as we go about the pursuit of practical politics, the facts no longer fit the announcements. The common complaint that we bolster dictatorships in a program we claim is protecting free peoples results to a great extent from this sort of outraged sense that our ideology has been betrayed in mid-crusade. Meanwhile apologists for our policy are left to explain lamely that our dictators are better than the other side's dictators. Furthermore, there seems to be a tendency among our officials and lawmakers to overextend our commitments in order to keep policy in line with ideology, partly as a result of their own initiative, partly as a result of claims made on us from abroad, using our own ideology as a lever.

It seems clear that two things have happened since the announcement of the Truman Doctrine. Much of the American public has come to believe that we are overextended in our commitments, and much of it (not necessarily the same segment) has come to believe that there is a wide divergence between our ideology and our actions in the field of foreign affairs. The result of these two attitudes is a desire to withdraw and, perhaps more important, among a sizable portion of the populace a cynicism regarding American ideals. Both attitudes propel us back to our traditional stance of isolationism. One says we have been unable to do what we wanted to do;

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let us give up the job and go home where we belong. The other says we have turned into an evil and hypocritical force in the world, mouthing a phony morality while bombing civilians abroad and ignoring the disadvantaged in America; let us go home and put our house and our soul in order.

Whether or not isolationism in its tra-

ditional form will prevail, as it did temporarily after World War I and even more briefly after World War II, remains to be seen. If it does, America will have completed the circle, having gone from one extreme to the other and come back again without ever leaving the American intellectual tradition.