

Meanwhile, the exposure of Alger Hiss as a Soviet agent followed, in relatively rapid succession, by the fall of Czechoslovakia's coalition government to a Soviet-backed coup, the Soviet attainment of an atomic bomb and the victory of Mao's Communists over Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang regime in China, cast the entire policy of containment into doubt. Never mind that the right's own feckless or muddled proposals for fighting the Cold War would not have ameliorated any of these situations. The right swept them into the memory hole and offered a new answer to Americans bewildered by how suddenly their nation's global preeminence had been diminished: Yalta.

A growing chorus of rightwing voices now began to excoriate our wartime diplomacy. Their most powerful charge, one that would firmly establish the Yalta myth in the American political psyche, was the accusation that our delegation had given over Eastern Europe to the Soviets. According to "How We Won the War & Lost the Peace," an essay written for *Life* magazine shortly before the 1948 election by William Bullitt — a former diplomat who had been dismissed by Roosevelt for outing a gay rival in the State Department — FDR and his chief adviser, Harry Hopkins, were guilty of "wishful appeasement" of Stalin at Yalta, handing the peoples of Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Baltic states over to the Soviet dictator.

The rightwing's *dolchstosslegende* was a small but fateful conspiracy, engineered through "secret diplomacy" at Yalta. Its linchpin was Hiss, a junior State Department aide at Yalta who was now described as a major architect of the pact. Hiss was a perfect villain for the right's purposes. He was not only a communist and a spy; he was also an effete Eastern intellectual right down to his name — and, by implication, possibly a homosexual. He had been publicly exposed by that relentlessly regular guy, Dick Nixon, as an unnatural, un-American element who had used his wiles to sway all of his superiors in the Crimea.

Just how he had accomplished this was never detailed, but it didn't matter; specificity is anathema to any myth. Bullitt and an equally flamboyant opportunist of the period, Congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce, offered a more general explanation. The Democrats, Mrs. Luce had already charged, "will not, or dare not, tell us the commitments that were overtly or secretly made in moments of war's extermination by a mortally ill President, and perhaps morally scared State Department advisers."

The idea of the "dying President" at Yalta was plausible to much of the public, who had seen photographs of Roosevelt looking suddenly, shockingly gaunt and exhausted throughout much of the last year of his life. To the rightwing — which had conducted a whispering campaign against Roosevelt throughout his term in office, claiming that his real affliction was not polio but syphilis, and that he, his wife, and various advisers, including Hopkins, were "secret Jews" and Soviet agents — it all made perfect sense. To the many Americans who still loved Roosevelt and whose votes the Republicans needed, FDR himself could now become the Siegfried figure, a dying hero betrayed by the shady, unnatural Hiss.

All of this, of course, falls apart under the most cursory examination. Hiss was a "technician" at Yalta, relied upon mostly for his expertise regarding the planned United Nations, and — already suspected of espionage — he had played no policy-making role in a large, bipartisan delegation that included most of the nation's military and diplomatic leadership. Roosevelt was in severe physical decline and would die from a massive stroke two months later, but his mind was still active and engaged. Chip Bohlen — who actually was at Yalta and who went on to become a leading Cold War statesman under both Republican and Democratic administrations — would echo many other observers in reporting that while Roosevelt's "physical state was certainly not up to normal, his mental and psychological state was certainly not affected. He was lethargic but when important moments arose, he was mentally sharp."

Far from handing over anything to anyone, Roosevelt had actually persuaded Stalin to sign onto a "Declaration on Liberated Europe" that affirmed "the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live" and committed the Big Three "to the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people." More was not possible. The salient fact about Eastern Europe at the end of World War 2 was that the Red Army enjoyed an immense numerical advantage there. To dislodge it, the United States would have had to embark immediately upon another epic struggle, a vast new war for which the American people, already clamoring for demobilization, showed absolutely no enthusiasm. It is likely that the United States would have eventually prevailed in such a struggle, but only at a cost of American lives that would have dwarfed the total cost of World War 2 itself, and the further devastation of the very European countries we had sought to liberate.

As Bohlen told a Senate committee in 1953, "I believe that the map of Europe would look much the same if there had never been a Yalta conference at all." Why this should have been surprising, and how it possibly reflected a failure of American foreign policy, is a mystery in any rational analysis of the situation: But any such analysis could never be made by the heroic state. Instead, Roosevelt and the nation he represented had to have been betrayed. The previous, disastrous policies advocated by the Republican right — ignoring the growing Axis threat, then leaving Western Europe defenseless while plunging into war in China — could be safely forgotten.

Republicans now began an almost continuous campaign against alleged Democratic conspiracies. Following Chiang's defeat, conservatives in Congress demanded to know "Who lost China?" and Robert Taft, discarding his much vaunted integrity, egged on Joe McCarthy's witch-hunt against the Truman administration, urging him to "keep talking and if one case doesn't work



DANIEL BISHOP (ST. LOUIS STAR-TIMES)

out, he should proceed with another." Yet it would take another hot war — and another expansion of the *dolchstosslegende* — to permanently enthrone the idea of a vast, treasonous leftwing conspiracy in the American psyche.

The outbreak of hostilities in Korea in 1950 was disturbing enough, but the defeat of General Douglas MacArthur that winter by invading Chinese forces sent shockwaves throughout the United States. More than anyone else, MacArthur brought about his own defeat, launching his troops up the Korean peninsula in separate columns, divided by mountain ranges, ignoring both orders from the White House to halt and plentiful signs that a massive Chinese force had already infiltrated the Korean peninsula. But while his subordinates scrambled to rally their reeling men, MacArthur moved swiftly to salvage his military reputation and his hopes for the Presidency.

What the general proposed was a massive escalation of the war. UN troops would not only "blockade the coast of China" and "destroy through naval gunfire and air bombardment China's industrial capacity to wage war" but would also "release existing restrictions upon the Formosan garrison" of Chiang Kai-shek, which might lead to counter-invasion against "vulnerable areas of the Chinese mainland." Above all, MacArthur urged that no fewer than 34 atomic bombs be dropped on what he characterized as "retardation targets" in Manchuria, including critical concentrations of troops and planes. Even this soon seemed insufficient. MacArthur later added that had he been permitted, he not only would have launched as many as 50 atomic bombs but also would have used "wagons, carts, trucks, and planes" to create "a belt of radioactive cobalt" that would neatly slice the Korean thumb from China. "For at least 60 years," he said, "there could have been no land invasion of Korea from the north."

MacArthur insisted that the "only way to prevent World War 3 is to end the Korean conflict rapidly and decisively"—as if a massive, atomic attack upon the world's most populous nation would not, in itself, constitute World War 3. When the Truman administration rejected his proposals, the general announced that he was not being allowed to win — "An enormous handicap without precedent in military history." The UN had to "depart from its tolerant effort to contain the war to the area of Korea" and accept his strategy to "doom Red China," an opponent "of such exaggerated and vaunted military power."

MacArthur conveyed similar sentiments to his conservative allies in Congress, writing House Minority Leader Joseph Martin that he was only trying to "follow the conventional pattern of meeting force with maximum counter-force, as we have never failed to do in the past," and concluding: "There is no substitute for victory." Martin gleefully aired the great man's views in a speech in Brooklyn, thundering, "If we are not in Korea to win, this administration should be indicted for the murder of thousands of American boys." He added that "the same State Department crowd that cut off aid" to Chiang in 1946 now opposed invading China because this would show up their earlier mistakes. The only way to "save Europe and save Asia at the same time" was "to clear out the State Department from top to bottom." After Martin repeated MacArthur's views on the House floor, Truman finally removed the general from his command. But the move seemed only to confirm that something was very wrong.

The right seized the opportunity to renew — and expand — its charges of *dolchstoss*. Republican Senator William Jenner of Indiana bellowed from the floor of the Senate that "this country today is in the hands of a secret inner coterie which is directed by agents of the Soviet Union. We must cut this whole cancerous conspiracy out of our government at once. Our own choice is to impeach President Truman and find out who is the secret invisible government which has so cleverly led our country down the road to destruction." Nixon, his new colleague, agreed in barely coded language, attacking "the whining, whimpering, groveling attitude of our diplomatic representatives who talk of America's fear rather than of America's strength and America's courage." He claimed that "top administration officials have refused time and time again to recognize the existence of this fifth column" Or "to take effective action to clear subversives out" of the government.

Douglas MacArthur now became the martyred Siegfried, stabbed in the back by weaklings at home who were for some reason afraid of victory. It was the fault of these "whimpering," "soft," "cowardly," "lavender" "appeasers," so *unnatural* they were willing to "murder" American boys to cover up their own misjudgments. Communist treachery and appeasement were blended seamlessly with an emerging, postwar sex panic.

An entire, seemingly plausible narrative of treason was now firmly established. The conspiracy of spies, or sexual deviants, or both, had now expanded beyond Alger Hiss to include pretty much the entire State Department and maybe the rest of the executive branch. Taft, launching his third run for the Republican nomination, offered to name MacArthur as his Vice President, and the general, while still harboring hopes of winning the nomination himself, agreed on the condition that he would have a voice in foreign policy and be put in charge of national security.

In their desire for power, Republican centrists soon joined this rightwing chorus. John Foster Dulles, now Eisenhower's Secretary-of-State designate, denounced the very strategy of containment that he had helped to formulate and promised to "roll back" Communism everywhere, including in Eastern Europe. Eisenhower himself refused to disown McCarthy, even after the senator had impugned the patriotism of his long-time friend and mentor, George Marshall.

The Republican platform that Ike ran on in the fall of 1952 was a freefall into fantasy, a fatal compact by party moderates with a rightwing that would eventually push them into extinction. For the first time since the Civil War era, one major American political party charged another one with treason. Democrats were accused of having "shielded traitors to the Nation in high places" and creating "enemies abroad where we should have friends." Democrats were responsible for all "110,000 American casualties" in Korea, where they had "produced stalemates and ignominious bartering with our enemies" that "offer no hope of victory." Republicans promised to "repudiate all commitments contained in secret understandings such as those of Yalta which aid Communist enslavements."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

THE COMPLETE PHOTOGRAPHER
475 14TH ST., ASTORIA & 303 S. HOLLADAY, SEASIDE
325-0759 736-3686

THE COLUMBIAN CAFE
1114 MARINE DR.
ASTORIA

On The Air
NORTH COAST COMMUNITY RADIO
KMMU
91.9 FM
Making Waves