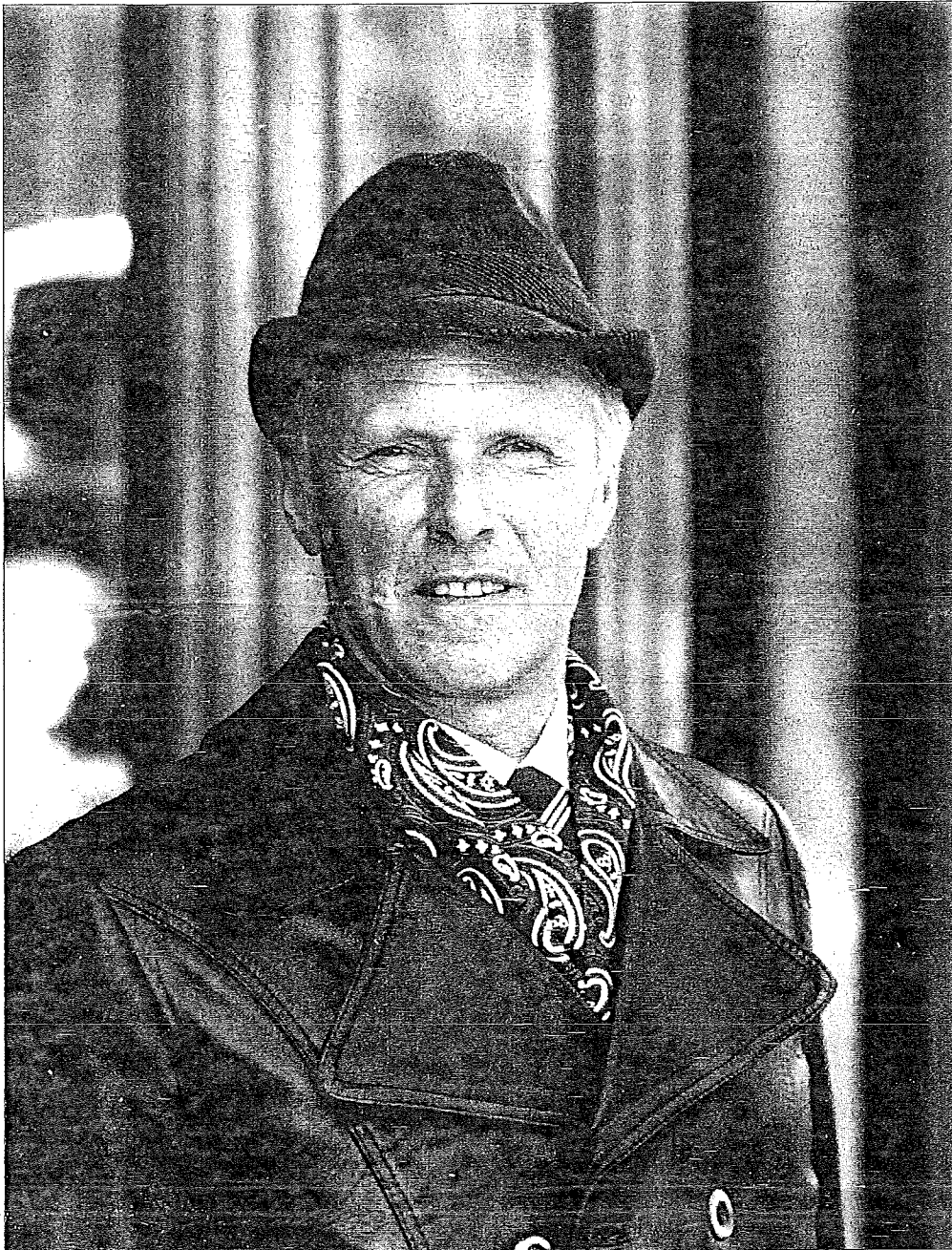


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А.А. Фурсенко. Нью-Йорк, 1981. Фото Джейн Ломбард

РОССИЯ и США: познавая друг друга

Сборник памяти академика Александра Александровича Фурсенко



RUSSIA and THE UNITED STATES: perceiving each other

In Memory of the Academician Alexander A. Fursenko

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The Perils of Prophecy: American Predictions About Russia's Future Since 1881

Since the late nineteenth century the most prominent and influential American experts on Russia have often claimed to know its future. Russia, American journalists, diplomats, and scholars have predicted, was headed for a revolution that almost all of them believed would lead to the creation of a liberal democracy. These prophecies have often proved false in substance and inaccurate on timing. More important, the influential predictions have blinded many Americans to Russian realities that did not conform to the wishful forecasts and they have helped to incline many Americans toward hostile, confrontational postures toward Russian governments. As a result, the prophets have helped to distort U.S. perceptions and policies, to inflame tensions with Russian governments, and to provoke counterproductive reactions. Yet Americans have continued to believe they know the destiny of Russia and can help to bring it into being.

This essay attempts to illuminate the origins and effects of American inclinations to prophesy about Russia by focusing on three experts: (1) journalist and activist George Kennan, who encouraged Americans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to have faith that the tsarist autocracy would be replaced by a government modeled on the United States of America; (2) diplomat George F. Kennan, who most famously predicted in the late 1940s that a policy of containment would lead to the break-up or mellowing of the Soviet system in the near future but later cautioned against foreign promotion of regime change in Russia; and (3) scholar and diplomat Michael McFaul, who persistently assumed in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries that the end point of Russia's political evolution must be liberal democracy, championed U.S. support for democratic forces in Russia, and ultimately urged the United States to confront the Russian government, which he predicted would not endure.

In addition to describing the three experts' major prophecies and analyzing the impact of their predictions, this essay suggests that Americans' tenacious attachment to beliefs about Russia's future should be understood in the context of a prophetic political culture closely intertwined with American national identity. Prophecy beliefs have been central to many Americans' thinking about their place in the world since Puritans founded colonies in New England that they believed would be the seat of a future divine metropolis. In the late nineteenth century, when the United States emerged as a world power and Americans first embraced the cause of redeeming Russia, religious beliefs still figured importantly in many Americans' visions of the future, underpinning a strong sense of America's special identity and its mission to extend "civilization" around the earth. Although apocalyptic Biblical prophecies continued to fascinate many Americans, especially increasingly influential evangelical Christians, public discussion of the U.S. role in the world grew more secular in the twentieth century. During the Cold War and on into the post-Cold War era, U.S. foreign policy experts tended to speak of "modernization" rather than "civilization", yet their teleological views continued to place the United States at the "end of history". In this long-term context, many American predictions about Russia's future can be seen as part of a broader "political theology" that affirms America's mission in the world¹.

I. George Kennan and Tsarist Russia

In the first century after the American declaration of independence from England, when American-Russian relations were generally friendly and the two countries were tacit allies against the British Empire, few Americans championed the transformation of the Russian autocracy into a democracy. Although Bible-citing prophets in the 1850s launched a long apocalyptic tradition of identifying Russia with the evil forces the United States would defeat in order to usher in a millennium of Christian republicanism, most Americans who thought about Russia viewed it as a benevolent Christian empire developing along a path parallel, rather than identical, to America's path². That changed after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881, which prompted a number of journalists and political activists to proclaim that the "nihilists" who killed the Tsar admired the United States and to predict that the influence of American political principles would help to emancipate Russia from tsarist despotism³.

¹ Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Redeemer Nation: The Idea of America's Millennial Role* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Paul Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More: Prophecy Belief in Modern American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992); Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" *The National Interest* (Summer 1989); George Shulman, *American Prophecy: Race and Redemption in American Political Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

² Boyer, *When Time Shall Be No More*, 84–6, 154–7; Norman Saul, *Distant Friends: The United States and Russia, 1763–1867* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1991).

³ David S. Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire": The Crusade for a "Free Russia" since 1881* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 1, 12–14.

The journalist and explorer George Kennan, who had been friendly with Russian government officials since his first trip to Siberia in 1865–1867, at first rejected the new indictments of Russia. However, after investigating the Siberian exile system in 1885–1886 Kennan converted to the cause of the Russian revolutionaries he encountered. Having lost his faith in Calvinist theology in the 1870s, Kennan had longed for a new faith and now he had found it. In hundreds of lectures and scores of magazine articles over the next three decades, Kennan repeatedly urged Americans to believe that Russian revolutionaries worshipped the United States and would remake Russia in the image of America when they were freed from the prison of the tsarist regime. In 1893, for example, Kennan declared in a widely read magazine article that “Russia will not always be a despotism. Sooner or later the authority of the autocrat will give way to the authority of the people”, who “share our love of freedom” and “look to us for sympathy while they wait for the dawn of a brighter day”⁴.

Kennan’s predictions, often conveyed through colorful, dramatic, memorable stories, exerted a wide and deep influence on American popular thinking about Russia. Already in 1892 one newspaper editor concluded that “for most people in the United States the gospel according to Kennan has become the truth about Russia”. In the following years, Kennan continued to influence American expectations about the form Russian institutions would take when Russians gained their freedom. When Nicholas II, facing a powerful revolutionary movement in the fall of 1905, reluctantly signed the October Manifesto granting his subjects civil liberties, American editors and cartoonists immediately concluded that Russia was being transformed overnight from an oppressive autocracy into an enlightened nation modeled on the United States. The idea that the darkest autocracy in the Old World was destined to be regenerated by the bright light of America had a powerful appeal to many Americans and helped to eclipse anxieties about defects in American democracy⁵.

Kennan’s harsh criticisms of the Russian government made him an enemy of tsarist officials, who forced him to leave St. Petersburg when he tried to visit in 1901, and a hero to many in the revolutionary movement⁶. But his predictions that a revolution would usher in a democracy modeled on the United States were deeply misleading. When the revolution of 1905 culminated in a socialist-inspired general strike and an armed uprising in Moscow many Americans were bitterly disillusioned⁷. Kennan seems to have shared some of the disappointment: at one point in 1914 he thought that fifty years might pass before Russia would enjoy liberty. Yet after the outbreak of war in Europe Kennan joined in a new upsurge of enthusiasm about the anticipated emancipation of Russia. In 1915, for example, he reiterated his

⁴ Foglesong, *The American Mission and the “Evil Empire”*, p. 14–18; George Kennan, “A Voice for the People of Russia”, *Century*, Vol. XLVI (July 1893), p. 472.

⁵ Foglesong, *The American Mission and the “Evil Empire”*, p. 26, 31–33.

⁶ Including Bolsheviks who years later would recall his exposure of the Siberian exile system with warmth and admiration: John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), p. 79, 86, 111.

⁷ Arthur W. Thompson and Robert A. Hart, *The Uncertain Crusade: America and the Russian Revolution of 1905* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1970).

teleological vision that the Russian common people were “advancing along the same path that we ourselves have followed”. This vision was not founded on recent close study: Kennan had been unable to visit Russia since 1901. Instead, it was founded, as he explained in July 1914, on an unreasoning belief in the Russian people⁸.

When the war-strained autocracy collapsed in February 1917, Kennan hailed the “complete triumph of democracy”, dismissed the possibility of “any serious internal dissension”, and predicted that the change of government would soon bring “a complete regeneration of the people”. Influenced by Kennan’s long publicity campaign, many Americans embraced the notion that Russia was being uplifted by rays of light from the shining city upon a hill. The ideas that ordinary Russians had always been “democratic at heart” (as President Wilson asserted in April 1917), that the February revolution had created an American-inspired democratic government, and that Russians would now fight Germany with a new democratic zeal had significant impacts on U.S. foreign policy: they facilitated the U.S. entry into the Great War and influenced the massive U.S. financial support for the Provisional Government’s war effort. If Wilson and his closest advisers on Russia had not been so convinced that Russia’s democratic future had arrived they might have been more cautious, less insistent on Russia’s continuation in the war, and more sympathetic to Russian popular desires for peace⁹.

Americans’ high hopes soon gave way to mounting anxiety over antiwar demonstrations and the rising popularity of socialist radicals in Russia. Yet even the Bolshevik seizure of power in the fall of 1917 did not cause Kennan to lose his faith in a Russian democracy. Characterizing the Bolsheviks as German agents enabled Kennan to hold on to his belief that genuine Russians admired America and would welcome U.S. aid to help them regain their liberty. When Secretary of State Robert Lansing, who regarded Kennan as America’s foremost expert on Russia, asked in May 1918 for his advice about a possible intervention in Russia, Kennan predicted that even a small military expedition to eastern Siberia would inspire popular anti-Bolshevik uprisings that “might bring about the overthrow of the Bolsheviks everywhere”. After Czechoslovakian soldiers secured control of the Trans-Siberian Railway that summer, Kennan further predicted to Lansing that with “the overthrow of class tyranny” in eastern Siberia “the regeneration of Russia as a true democracy will begin”¹⁰.

Once again Kennan’s forecast did not come true. Foreign intervention in the Russian Civil War did not bring about liberation from Bolshevism. To some extent it contributed to the Red victory by provoking a nationalistic reaction and providing ammunition for Bolshevik propaganda depicting Whites as tools of their imperialist masters, including Uncle Sam. In January 1920, after the Red Army had largely defeated Admiral Kolchak’s White forces in Siberia, Kennan complained to Lansing

⁸ Foglesong, *The American Mission and the “Evil Empire”*, p. 48; George Kennan, “The Russian People: Repression and Oppression”, *The Outlook*, 18 July 1914, p. 647.

⁹ Foglesong, *The American Mission and the “Evil Empire”*, p. 50.

¹⁰ David S. Foglesong, *America’s Secret War Against Bolshevism: U.S. Intervention in the Russian Civil War, 1917–1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), p. 163.

that the U.S. force sent to eastern Siberia had been "passive" instead of actively assisting "the loyal Russians" who fought to free Russia from Bolshevism¹¹. Yet Kennan still did not abandon his hopes. In September 1920, he called attention to an offensive by the last remaining White armies in Crimea and declared that General Wrangel's campaign "may be the beginning of a really national uprising against the despotic oligarchy which has ruled Russia for nearly three years". Even more improbably, Kennan wrote, "In Siberia such an uprising seems to be already in progress"¹².

Kennan was not alone in predicting the demise of the Bolshevik regime. The *New York Times*, for example, reported on 91 occasions between November 1917 and November 1919 that the Soviet government had fallen or was about to fall. And in August 1920 Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby issued a statement, drafted by anti-Bolshevik socialist John Spargo, that the U.S. policy of not recognizing the Soviet regime was founded in part on confidence that it did not represent the Russian people and would not endure. Although Kennan thus was not unique in seeing what he wished to see, it was especially striking that a man who had traveled so widely in Russia and learned so much about the country was so badly and persistently wrong. As Kennan's biographer commented, Kennan yearned so ardently for a liberal democracy in Russia that he was unable to accept other possible outcomes¹³.

II. George F. Kennan and Soviet Russia

When George Kennan died in 1924, his distant relative, born on the same day and named after him, was a student at Princeton University. Although the two Kennans met only once, a strong connection developed between them. The elder Kennan, who had no children of his own, viewed his namesake almost as a surrogate son. The younger Kennan, in turn, felt destined to carry on the life work of his predecessor. After graduating from Princeton, George F. Kennan entered the U. S. Foreign Service and, with his distinguished forebear in mind, chose to study Russian. By 1931, when Kennan was completing postgraduate study of Russian language and history with Russian exiles in Berlin, he had developed definite views about the Soviet Union. The Soviet and American systems were inherently opposed, he wrote to a friend, and any attempts to find a middle ground between them, such as resuming diplomatic relations, were "bound to be unsuccessful". The conflict was so sharp, Kennan forecast, that "within twenty or thirty years either Russia will be capitalist or we shall be communist". That prediction, which underestimated the longevity of the Soviet system by three decades, suggested that Kennan had ab-

¹¹ George Kennan to Robert Lansing, January 24, 1920, Box 8, George Kennan Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

¹² George Kennan, "The Situation in Southeastern Russia", *The Outlook*, 22 September 1920.

¹³ Walter Lippmann and Charles Merz, "A Test of the News", *The New Republic*, August 4, 1920; Markku Ruotsila, *John Spargo and American Socialism* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), Chapter 7; Frederick Travis, *George Kennan and the Russian-American Relationship, 1865-1924* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1990), p. 345.

sorbed the anti-Bolshevik outlook embodied in the Colby Note and propagated by his namesake¹⁴.

The young diplomat grew less certain about the shape of the future after President Franklin Roosevelt decided to resume diplomatic relations with Russia in 1933 and the State Department sent Kennan to open the U. S. Embassy in Moscow. Meeting Soviet officials who sought to reconstruct Russian life on a "finer and sounder" basis led his views of the Soviet system to become more complex than the simple, preconceived hostility he expressed in 1931. While the United States was mired in a confidence-shaking depression, the U.S.S.R. was industrializing rapidly under the Five Year Plans. Impressed by the vitality and energy he observed, Kennan explained to his sister in 1935 that Soviet society believed it was "going somewhere". Although he thought that belief a delusion, he confided that "some of the visions of the more intelligent communist leaders" were "impelling" and "inspiring"¹⁵. Witnessing the Stalinist purges, which took the lives of most of his Russian friends, re-sharpened Kennan's antipathy to the iniquity of the Soviet regime. In addition, the frustrations of dealing with the Soviet bureaucracy prompted him to reflect on how little had changed since tsarist times¹⁶.

Yet as he looked back on the first years of American-Soviet diplomatic relations in 1938, Kennan felt not absolute despair but a wistful sense that U.S. diplomats' efforts to overcome "Soviet mistrust and antagonism" had failed only by a "narrow margin". In addition, he fondly remembered interactions with Soviet leaders, especially Soviet Army generals, who enjoyed association with foreigners, sought to learn from the outside world, and hoped to throw off Communist Party control, he believed. Thus, Kennan's memories of the 1930s left him with some hope that Americans could help to shape Russia's future.

When the United States and the Soviet Union became allies in the struggle against Nazi Germany many Americans hoped that a new Russia would emerge from the war as a result of a religious revival the Soviet regime permitted and the influence of wartime contacts between Russians and Americans. In those years Kennan made new predictions about the future of Russia. Writing from a diplomatic post in Portugal in 1942, Kennan declared that the inevitable failure of Bolshevik attempts to replace spiritual faith with their materialistic doctrine was "obvious to all of us who have been brought up in a Christian atmosphere" — a striking statement from a man who had shown little personal interest in religion in the preceding decades. After Kennan returned to Moscow in 1944 he became increasingly excited by indications that the spirituality of the Russian people could be a foundation for opposition to Soviet totalitarianism. As the war against Germany ended he predicted

¹⁴ Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, p. 11-12, 48, 58.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 79-94; Kennan, "Fair Day, Adieu!" (1938) in Box 25, George F. Kennan Papers, Seeley G. Mudd Manuscript Library, Princeton.

¹⁶ Frank Costigliola, "Kennan Encounters Russia, 1933-1937", in Choi Chatterjee and Beth Holmgren, ed., *Americans Experience Russia: Encountering the Enigma, 1917 to the Present* (New York: Routledge, 2013), p. 50-66; Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, p. 97, 110.

that if Russians' religious feelings could be "activated by outside influence, the danger to the regime would be incalculable". Two months later he informed a fellow diplomat that he considered the leaders of the Orthodox Church "the only group who may some day prove to be politically a match for the people in the Kremlin". Those predictions disregarded important realities: the Orthodox Church's historic subordination to the state in Russia; the timidity of some of the top Orthodox leaders who survived the vicious persecution of the prewar years; the close supervision of the church by the Soviet secret police; and the desire of many religious believers for unity rather than conflict between the church and the Soviet state. In making the predictions, then, Kennan was not being a clear-eyed prophet. Instead, in expressing hopes shared by many other American Christians, Kennan anticipated a major theme in American Cold War propaganda and popular culture: the notion that Americans could, especially through radio broadcasts, mobilize Russians' religious sentiments and even inspire them to revolt against their atheist rulers¹⁷.

In the aftermath of the war a deeply ambivalent Kennan vacillated between optimism about the salvation of peoples in the Soviet bloc and pessimism about the ability of foreigners to promote positive changes there. Conscious of his namesake's travels across Siberia, in June 1945 Kennan journeyed to Siberia to investigate popular attitudes. Although momentarily encouraged by Russian train passengers' lively interest in the U.S. magazine *Amerika*, Kennan by the end of his journey grew deeply disturbed by how Russians believed the propaganda of the Soviet government and thereby placed themselves in its hand. Dejected, Kennan concluded in a report on his trip that it would be best "to leave the Russian people ... to work out their own destiny in their own peculiar way"¹⁸. Yet Kennan had too much of the spirit of the crusader in him to despair for long. When the State Department asked him to provide an interpretive analysis of Stalin's election speech in February 1946, he responded with the fervent "*Long Telegram*". In contrast to his report on his trip to Siberia eight months earlier, Kennan juxtaposed the friendly Russian people to the xenophobic Communist Party, argued that the Russian people were emotionally distant from Communist doctrines, and asserted that the internal soundness of the regime was not assured. Thus, while the telegram conventionally has been seen as setting the conceptual foundation for the U.S. strategy of "containment", Kennan also articulated key assumptions that would underpin U.S. efforts for the "liberation" of the Russian people¹⁹.

¹⁷ Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"*, p. 91–2; Jonathan P. Herzog, *The Spiritual-Industrial Complex: America's Religious Battle Against Communism in the Early Cold War* (New York: Oxford UP, 2011).

¹⁸ George F. Kennan, "Trip to Novosibirsk and Stalinsk, June 1945", Box 181, W. Averell Harriman Papers, Library of Congress; quoted in Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"*, p. 104–5; published in slightly altered form in George F. Kennan, *Sketches From a Life* (New York, 1989), p. 91–110.

¹⁹ Kennan telegram, February 22, 1946, in Barton J. Bernstein and Allen J. Matusow, ed., *The Truman Administration: A Documentary History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 198–212, esp. p. 200–201, 210.

The "*Long Telegram*" has often been treated as an accurate and prophetic analysis. Kennan's approved biographer, John Lewis Gaddis, for example, has written that in the aftermath of the war Kennan had "a visionary's perspective on the future" and that the telegram "was the geopolitical equivalent of a medical X-ray". Yet the prophecies were to some extent of the self-fulfilling sort. For example, his forecast that Soviet international economic policy would be dominated by the "pursuit of autarchy" disregarded the strong Kremlin interest in a large loan or other financial assistance from Washington, which would continue until the Kremlin concluded in the summer of 1947 that the Marshall Plan was designed by Kennan and others to exclude the U.S.S.R. and drive a wedge between it and its East European satellites. The fundamental flaw of the "*Long Telegram*" was its essentialism, its positing that Soviet policy stemmed from innate traits (insecurity, xenophobia, "oriental secretiveness and conspiracy") that made it "impervious to logic of reason". Kennan thereby downplayed and dismissed contingency and interaction in the shaping of Soviet decisions. He would soon come to regret advising that the U.S. should not bother to negotiate with the Soviet Union²⁰.

A year and a half later Kennan reiterated many of his points in an article in the prominent journal *Foreign Affairs*: The most famous prophecy in the article — that "containment" of Soviet expansionism would lead to the break-up or mellowing of the U.S.S.R. in "ten to fifteen years" — deeply influenced U.S. public thinking about the Cold War²¹. However, Kennan greatly underestimated the durability of the Soviet system, which began to mellow forty years later. By then Kennan believed that what most needed to be contained was "not so much the Soviet Union as the weapons race itself" and the profligate American way of life²². Yet when revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989 brought the demise of the Soviet empire there, Kennan wrote in his diary that he "saw it coming" and recalled his assertions in the late 1940s that "Russian Communism as an ideology had entirely lost its hold on the Soviet people"²³. (In reality, as scholars have shown, many Russians continued to have faith in communism or socialism long after the 1940s²⁴.) Two years later, when the Soviet Union itself disintegrated, U.S. leaders claimed that "containment" worked — a claim that

²⁰ Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, 215, 228; "Long Telegram" in Bernstein and Matusow, ed., *The Truman Administration*, p. 204–5, 203, 210.

²¹ "X" [George F. Kennan], "The Sources of Soviet Conduct", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (July 1947), p. 566–582. For two indications that readers focused on the forecast of a Soviet break up or "doom", see Ernest Lindley, "The Article by 'X'", *Washington Post*, July 11, 1947, and Lillian Peterson, "The Cold War", *Washington Post*, September 14, 1947.

²² George F. Kennan, "Containment Then and Now", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 65, No. 4 (Spring 1987), p. 885–890, quote on p. 889.

²³ December 3, 1989 entry in Frank Costigliola, ed., *The Kennan Diaries* (New York: Norton, 2014), p. 602–3.

²⁴ See, for example, Alexei Yurchak, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton, 2005).

has been refuted by scholars who have shown how late Soviet leaders' values and ideas, more than Western pressures, caused the Soviet collapse²⁵.

Most important for the purposes of this essay, Kennan exaggerated the U.S. ability to promote change inside the Soviet Union. "It is entirely possible," he asserted, "for the United States to influence by its actions," including "informational activity," internal developments within Russia²⁶. That line of thinking led toward a dramatic expansion and intensification of U.S. propaganda targeting the Soviet Union, including the creation of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberation, both of which Kennan helped to found. U.S. "psychological warfare" and covert operations did not achieve the results Kennan expected. Instead, they alarmed the Kremlin, exacerbated communist terror campaigns, and spurred an escalation of anti-American propaganda²⁷. The Soviet propagation of a widespread popular belief that the U.S.S.R. faced dangerous and insidious external enemies tended to unify the people and the government in a spirit of militant resistance²⁸. Yet in the last years of Stalin's rule it became an article of faith for many Americans that U.S. propaganda could make the Russian people America's allies and inspire them to revolt against the Kremlin²⁹.

Reacting against the vogue of "liberation" in America, Kennan warned that U.S. propaganda and political warfare could be counterproductive. In 1952, upon being designated Ambassador to the U.S.S.R., Kennan explained at a press conference that a change of regime in Russia "has got to come through the efforts of the Russian people themselves and if another great country gets in it and tries to bring it about and tries to tell people what to do, it's going to confuse that whole issue and perhaps to the detriment of the very things which we would like to see in Russia"³⁰. Despite his wisdom about the need for American self-restraint, Kennan was not able to restrain himself consistently. Frustrated by the isolation of Western diplomats from contacts with Russians in Moscow, Kennan told reporters in Berlin that the situation reminded him of when he was interned in Nazi Germany after

Pearl Harbor. The angered Soviet government declared him *persona non grata* and demanded his recall, fifty-one years after the tsarist government had expelled his namesake. The Kremlin banished him, Kennan explained, because he "was coming too close to the exposure of some of their frauds and outrages", and because Russian popular enthusiasm for the United States and for him personally made his presence in Moscow a threat to the regime³¹.

Unlike George Kennan the elder, George Frost Kennan did not believe that Russia's future would center on the adoption of democracy. He loathed the corrupt mass democracy in the United States, emphasized that Russians were unfamiliar with the concepts of democracy, and predicted in 1951 that Russia would not have a popular representative government corresponding to American democracy "within our time". Although Kennan encouraged Americans to envision "the kind of Russia which we would prefer to see" and let that vision guide U.S. policy, his own vision focused more on the revival of an old Russian spirituality and culture than on the establishment of a democratic government³².

III. Michael McFaul and Post-Soviet Russia

In contrast to George F. Kennan's doubts, when the Soviet Union finally broke up in 1991, many Americans hoped and believed that Russia would make a rapid transition to democracy. An American poll around the time of the abortive *putsch* in August 1991 indicated that only a slight majority of Russians preferred democracy to authoritarian rule. Yet journalists and politicians made it an article of faith that the courageous opposition to the *putsch* in Moscow and Leningrad meant that there had been a broad popular revolution in favor of freedom, democracy, and a market economy³³.

One of the most knowledgeable and influential American champions of democracy in Russia was Michael A. McFaul. After studying International Relations and Russian for his B.A. and M.A. at Stanford, McFaul switched to focus on great power influence on Southern African liberation in his Oxford dissertation (1991), then returned to Russian studies due to the excitement of revolution in the USSR. Not content merely to study revolution and democracy, McFaul actively promoted democratizing reforms as a consultant to the National Democratic Institute (NDI) from 1990 to 1996, as a field representative for NDI in Moscow in 1992, and as director of the Russian Domestic Politics Program at the Moscow Carnegie Center, 1994–1995. Although the NDI, like the International Republican Institute, was in principle prepared to provide guidance to Russians of all political parties, it developed

²⁵ Vladislav Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Andrei Grachev, *Gorbachev's Gamble: Soviet Foreign Policy and the End of the Cold War* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2008), esp. p. 3–6.

²⁶ Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct", p. 581.

²⁷ Vojtech Mastny, *The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years* (New York: Oxford UP, 1996), p. 195.

²⁸ Elena Zubkova, *Russia After the War: Hopes, Illusions, and Disappointments, 1945–1957*, translated and edited by Hugh Ragsdale (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), p. 82–6, 126; Лельчук В. С., Пивовар Е. И. Менталитет советского общества и «холодная война» // Отечественная история. 1993. № 6. С. 63–78. See also Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 6, and Timothy Johnston, *Being Soviet: Identity, Rumour, and Everyday Life under Stalin, 1939–1953* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

²⁹ David S. Foglesong, "Roots of 'Liberation': American Images of the Future of Russia in the Early Cold War, 1948–1953", *International History Review*, Vol. XXI, No. 1 (March 1999), p. 57–79.

³⁰ Kennan remarks at a press conference, April 1, 1952, Records of the Policy Planning Staff, Box 48, RG 59, National Archives II, quoted in Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"*, p. 115.

³¹ Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, p. 466–471; Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"*, p. 111.

³² Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"*, p. 122–3; George F. Kennan, "America and the Russian Future", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (April 1951), p. 351–370 (quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 107).

³³ Foglesong, *The American Mission and the "Evil Empire"*, p. 203–4.

close partnerships with two liberal parties: *Yabloko* and *Russia's Choice*. Advising or coaching leaders of those parties, McFaul had a close-up view of their weaknesses. He also observed the need to insulate Russian liberal reformers from the democratic process, through which many Russian voters expressed their dislike of the changes in their country in the 1990s, including higher prices for staples, increased unemployment, rising crime, and a rushed privatization program that enriched a small number of well connected individuals³⁴.

In addition to being an activist, McFaul was a scholar, one of the most influential political scientists in the field of "transitology" that flourished in the 1990s. Like many other transitologists, McFaul posited that Russia was in transition toward a democratic society that would more closely resemble the United States. The work of these scholars thus illustrated the observation of political scientist Ido Oren (in a different context) that "American political science is ideological, and its unacknowledged, underlying ideal is *America*". As Oren explained, the ostensibly objective discourse of political science serves to reaffirm American identity in relation to other states. That function helps to explain the deep attachment of political scientists to theories that are challenged by developments that do not conform to their ideas³⁵.

In much of his academic writing, especially in the monograph that earned him tenure at Stanford, McFaul was cautious about predicting Russia's future. In *Russia's Unfinished Revolution* (2001), he acknowledged that there was no empirical reason to assume electoral democracy was a way station on the road to liberal democracy and he recognized that cultural and historical forces could sustain illiberal institutions and norms for years, even decades. However, as the title suggested, he still focused on the completion of a revolution begun in 1991. "We may have been overly optimistic to expect that a liberal democracy would be installed in the Soviet Union or Russia only a decade after political liberalization began", he conceded. Yet he remained hopeful and closed with the prediction that "the battle for liberal democracy in Russia will be a long one". Twenty years earlier, political scientist George Breslauer systematically analyzed five different images of the Soviet future, including "elitist liberalism", "socialist democracy", and "Russite-fundamentalist reaction". In contrast, McFaul did not seriously consider any possible Russian future other than democracy³⁶.

McFaul's commitment to the battle for democracy strongly affected his subsequent depictions of Russia and his assumptions about America's ability to influence

the future. Late in 2001 he published an article in *Foreign Affairs* whose title, "*America's Real Russian Allies*", recalled the idea of the early 1950s that the U.S. could make the Russian people its ally in the Cold War struggle. Much like George F. Kennan in the 1940s, McFaul posited a divergence between the Russian people and their government, asserted that the people were more pro-American than their rulers, and urged an expansion of U.S. propaganda to influence Russian attitudes. Unlike Kennan in the early 1950s, who had warned that zealous intervention in politics in a foreign country could be counterproductive, McFaul disregarded the possibility of a major backlash. Underestimating Russian popular disillusionment with the United States in the wake of the 1990s turmoil, the eastward expansion of NATO, and the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999, McFaul asserted that the U.S. example continued to shine brightly in Russia. In contrast to the more complex perspective in *Russia's Unfinished Revolution*, McFaul and his co-author Timothy Colton downplayed the uniqueness of Russian culture and championed a triumphalist universalism reminiscent of the euphoric illusions of the late 1980s and early 1990s³⁷.

During the presidency of George W. Bush McFaul took the role of activist critic, welcoming the administration's rhetorical commitment to the spread of democracy around the world but complaining that it did not sharply criticize President Vladimir Putin for moving Russia toward autocracy and did not do enough to promote democracy there. In numerous op-ed pieces in American newspapers, McFaul expressed his convictions in bold and simple terms. Writing for academic audiences McFaul did more to acknowledge contrasting evidence but promoted the same basic policy recommendations. In a book he wrote jointly with two Russian scholars, for example, McFaul conceded that Putin enjoyed solid, stable support while moving Russia in the wrong direction, yet he insisted that the forces of modernization and international integration eventually would push Russia in a democratic direction. In a 2005 paper on "regime change", similarly, McFaul acknowledged that denunciation of the Russian government's actions probably would not have made a difference, yet he urged "condemnation of Russia's antidemocratic policies" in order to embolden reformers inside Russia who were still fighting for democracy. He asserted that U.S. silence weakened democratic forces in Russia but did not explain how U.S. words or aid could strengthen those weak forces instead of provoking a crackdown on them³⁸.

³⁴ McFaul commencement address at Anglo-American School, Moscow, May 26, 2012; McFaul talk at Stanford University, June 15, 1995; Michael A. McFaul, "American Efforts at Promoting Regime Change in the Soviet Union and then Russia: Lessons Learned", CDDRL Working Paper Number 44, September, 2005.

³⁵ Ido Oren, *Our Enemies and US: America's Rivalries and the Making of Political Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), p. 172.

³⁶ *Russia's Unfinished Revolution* (2001), p. xi, 309, 335–7, 370–1, 363; George W. Breslauer, *Five Images of the Soviet Future: A Critical Review and Synthesis* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978). For a perceptive critique of McFaul's book see Joel M. Ostrow, "Leadership, Democracy and Society: Books About Russia 10 Years After the Fall", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 54, No. 8 (December 2002), p. 1339–1365, esp. p. 1343.

³⁷ Timothy Colton and Michael McFaul, "America's Real Russian Allies", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 80, No. 6 (November/December 2001), p. 46–58.

³⁸ Michael McFaul, Nikolai Petrov, and Andrei Ryabov, *Between Dictatorship and Democracy: Russian Post-Communist Political Reform* (Washington, DC: Carnegie, 2004), p. 1–2, 293–7; McFaul, "American Efforts at Promoting Regime Change in the Soviet Union and then Russia: Lessons Learned", CDDRL Working Paper Number 44 (September, 2005), p. 42–3. McFaul espoused similarly contradictory positions in a book he co-authored with James Goldgeier, *Power and Purpose: U.S. Policy Toward Russia After the Cold War* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 2003); see esp. p. 335, 350, 364. Many U.S. experts on Russia shared McFaul's views. See especially the indictment of the "rollback of Russian democracy" in the Council on Foreign Relations report, *Russia's Wrong Direction: What the United States Can and Should Do* (March 2006).

The backlash soon began. In January 2006, for example, Putin asserted that “foreign secret services” were financing nongovernmental organizations in Russia, foreshadowing later moves to bar foreign funding of NGOs involved in politics. In the same month, Putin declared that unnamed “Sovietologists” who did not understand what was happening in Russia deserved a terse response: “To hell with you”³⁹. In a major journal article the next year McFaul recognized that when conditions were not ripe — when local democratic activists were not strong and local media were not independent — “foreign assistance to try to foster breakthrough might even be counterproductive”. Yet his enthusiastic interpretation of the Orange Revolution in Ukraine at the end of 2004 appears to have sustained his optimism about the democratization of Russia. In Ukraine, he wrote, imports from the West, especially of election monitoring techniques and resources, had tipped the balance of power from a semi-autocratic regime to its democratic challengers. If it could happen in Ukraine, why not in Russia?⁴⁰

In other publications McFaul made it clear that his universalist ambitions remained ardent and that a liberal democratic teleology continued to be central to his thinking. His ultimate goal was nothing less than to make autocracy as antiquated as imperialism and slavery. Echoing the famous proclamation by Francis Fukuyama about the “end of history” twenty years earlier, McFaul argued that there was no longer a legitimate alternative to democracy, that even dictatorships had to claim they were democratic or moving toward democracy. (This underestimated the ideological resourcefulness of authoritarian leaders, who could mobilize support precisely in resistance to the liberal universalism he championed.) In a guide for how to advance democracy abroad McFaul used “analogies from the past” to guide his “speculations about the future” and his policy prescriptions. Most notably, he argued that U.S. diplomats should see the successful engagement of General Secretary Gorbachev by President Reagan and Secretary of State Shultz as a model for engaging autocratic state leaders and democratic social activists simultaneously. (This analogy neglected the differences between the conciliatory Gorbachev, who led an overstretched, declining superpower, and the defiant Putin, who led a resurgent regional power⁴¹.)

During the presidency of Barack Obama McFaul gained opportunities to implement his ideas, first as the top Russia expert on the National Security Council staff and then as U.S. Ambassador in Moscow. After the severe deterioration of U.S. — Russian relations in the last years of the Bush administration, when con-

servative and neoconservative officials had pushed for tougher criticism of Russian “backsliding” on democracy as well as the integration of more parts of the former Soviet Union into NATO, McFaul sought to “reset” relations. He believed that the U.S. could cooperate with Russia in areas where the two countries’ interests coincided while simultaneously criticizing Russian internal policies and supporting opponents of the Kremlin. Between 2009 and 2012 the cooperative track of the two-track approach brought important successes, including Russian facilitation of U.S. transportation of supplies to forces in Afghanistan, Russian acceptance of tougher sanctions against Iran, and Russian entry into the World Trade Organization⁴².

While McFaul spearheaded the “reset” from the NSC, Russian experts on the U.S. scrutinized McFaul’s writings and noted how his ideas about advancing democracy made him closer to neoconservatives than to the pragmatic Obama. Russian journalists and policymakers, including Putin, also familiarized themselves with McFaul’s books and articles about democratization and revolution⁴³.

From the beginning of McFaul’s ambassadorship in January 2012 relations grew more acrimonious. Nervous about anti-Putin demonstrations in Moscow by young, Westernized professionals, the Kremlin escalated anti-American propaganda and launched a campaign to harass and vilify McFaul. Undeterred, the unconventional ambassador conspicuously met with and vigorously expressed moral support for anti-Kremlin activists. In response, Russian media accused McFaul of inciting revolution and Putin denounced his Embassy for working with the opposition to undermine him. (Although McFaul has denied that he tried to foment revolution, he came to think Putin genuinely believed the U.S. was “out to get him.”) Some mid-level Obama administration officials questioned why McFaul was roiling relations with the Kremlin. However, McFaul continued to promote policies and to make gestures that were consistent with American ideals and played well in U.S. domestic politics but further strained relations with the Kremlin. In March 2012, for example, he pushed for the release of \$50 million in U.S. aid “to advance accountable government and to strengthen civil society” in Russia. A year later he helped arrange for the U.S. delegation to the Sochi Olympics to feature LGBT activists as a rebuke to a Russian law against the dissemination of homosexual propaganda among minors and an affirmation of liberal American values⁴⁴.

⁴² Angela Stent, *The Limits of Partnership: U.S.–Russian Relations in the Twenty-First Century* (Princeton University Press, 2014), p. 214–8.

⁴³ Бондарев В. В. Майкл Макфол — «старший директор по России» // США — Канада. 2010. № 3. С. 85–99; Самуйлов С. М. Россия и администрация Барака Обамы // Свободная мысль. 2010. № 11. С. 71–86; David Remnick, “Watching the Eclipse”, *New Yorker*, August 11/18, 2014, p. 52–65. Samuilov astutely observed that American exceptionalism, sustained in part by contrasts of democratic America to authoritarian Russia, made it difficult to maintain a consensus in the U.S. in favor of the “reset” policy.

⁴⁴ Julia Ioffe, “Dosvedanie to All That”, *New Republic*, Vol. 244, Issue 23, March 3, 2014, p. 28–31; Robert L. Strauss, “A Chill in the Air”, *Stanford*, May/June 2014, p. 60–68 (quotation on p. 66); Remnick, “Watching the Eclipse”, esp. p. 54, 64–5; David Herszenhorn, “U.S. Seeking Use of Funds to Aid Russian Democracy”, *New York Times*, March 15, 2012.

³⁹ Steven Lee Myers, “Putin Says Foreigners Use Private Groups to Meddle in Russia”, *New York Times*, January 26, 2006; Peter Baker, “Russian Relations Under Scrutiny”, *Washington Post*, February 26, 2006.

⁴⁰ Michael McFaul, “Ukraine Imports Democracy: External Influences on the Orange Revolution”, *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (Fall 2007), p. 45–83.

⁴¹ Michael McFaul, “The Missing Variable: The ‘International System’ as the Link between Third and Fourth Wave Models of Democratization”, in Valerie Bunce, Michael McFaul, and Kathryn Stoner-Weiss, ed., *Democracy and Authoritarianism in the Postcommunist World* (New York: Cambridge UP, 2010), p. 3–29; Michael McFaul, *Advancing Democracy Abroad: Why We Should and How We Can* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), esp. p. 233, 145, 172–6.

McFaul's tactics did not help make Russia more democratic. Some Russian activists declared that U.S. words and actions had damaged the opposition to Putin, particularly by making it easier to depict opposition activists as pro-American subversives. Putin's denunciations of alleged American meddling in Russia helped him to win re-election in 2012 by mobilizing working-class Russians outside the most Westernized cities. And after the election the Kremlin clamped down on NGOs, closed the U.S. Agency for International Development, and drove NDI and IRI out of the country⁴⁵. But none of that changed McFaul's mind. Instead, amid one of the worst crises of the post-Soviet era, the conflict over Ukraine in 2014, McFaul asserted that the clash derived from the fact that the U.S. "did not fully win the Cold War", called for a moral and ideological struggle like the Cold War, predicted that the United States (together with democratic-minded Russians) would "win this new conflict", and forecast that his strategy of confrontation would hasten the demise of Putin's autocracy⁴⁶.

In the wake of the costly war in Iraq and amid the winding down of the exhausting war in Afghanistan only a few Americans shared McFaul's zeal for a new ideological battle⁴⁷. On the other side, Putin seized on Western statements about domestic challenges to his rule to raise again the specter of a fifth column of traitors, while Russian approval of climbed above 80 % in a wave of patriotic enthusiasm over the reunification of Crimea with Russia⁴⁸. However, prominent American journalists and politicians continued to depict Putin as vulnerable and to forecast his demise. For such journalists and politicians, as for McFaul, belief in a democratic future for Russia continued to be essential to the affirmation of America's special role in the world⁴⁹.

Conclusion

Predictions were central to the speaking and writing of all three of the American experts on Russia discussed in this essay. In the late nineteenth century George Kennan repeatedly told stories about events in the past — such as the celebration of the centennial of the Declaration of Independence in a Russian prison in 1876 — that he asserted revealed the likely future of a post-tsarist Russian government.

⁴⁵ Ellen Barry, "New U.S. Envoy Steps Into Glare of a Russia Eager to Find Fault", *New York Times*, January 23, 2012; Sergei S. Mitrokhin quoted in David Herszenhorn, "U.S. Seeking Use of Funds to Aid Russian Democracy"; Stent, *The Limits of Partnership*, p. 253.

⁴⁶ Michael McFaul, "Confronting Putin's Russia", *New York Times*, March 23, 2014.

⁴⁷ Pew Research Center polls in March 2014 showed most Americans averse to deep involvement in Ukraine. Three days after McFaul's op-ed, President Obama declared in Brussels that "the contest of ideas continues" and embraced a triumphalist ideological interpretation of the ending of the Cold War, but that seemed an aberration from his usual pragmatism. Obama address to European youth, March 26, 2014.

⁴⁸ Address by President Putin, 18 March 2014.

⁴⁹ See, for example, John McCain, "Obama Has Made America Look Weak", *New York Times*, March 14, 2014; Thomas L. Friedman, "Follow the Money", *New York Times*, April 1, 2014.

His namesake was less inclined to storytelling but equally inclined to forecasting the future. In January 1982, commenting in his diary about his warnings that Reagan administration policies increased the danger of nuclear war, George F. Kennan wrote: "My role ... was that of a prophet". Although Kennan referred specifically to his speeches and writing in the preceding year, he recognized that prophecy had been at the heart of his public influence throughout his life. "It was for this that I was born", he noted⁵⁰. In contrast to the increasingly Cassandra-like Kennan, Michael McFaul's predictions tended to be much sunnier, but he focused even more than the two Kennans on Russia's future prospects or trajectory.

Many of the predictions made by these three highly intelligent Americans, each of whom lived and traveled in Russia for years, turned out to be inaccurate or at least not realized in the time frame they anticipated. More important, their predictions misled the American public and prodded the U.S. government to adopt confrontational policies toward Russian governments that had counterproductive effects. Each of the men left Russia on bad terms: the elder Kennan was expelled in 1901, the younger Kennan was declared *persona non grata* in 1952, and by the time he resigned McFaul's words and gestures poisoned his relations with the Kremlin (as well as alienating much of Russian society)⁵¹. All three of the experts became close to specific groups of Russians that they thought embodied hopes for a future better than that under the then current government. Those personal attachments strongly affected their perspectives and predictions.

Among the three experts only George F. Kennan adapted his views following disappointing developments. Although he remained deeply ambivalent in the early 1950s about his and America's ability to promote change in Russia, he had learned to be more cautious about predicting the future. "We must admit with respect to the future of government in Russia, we see 'as through a glass, darkly,'" he admonished Americans in 1951. Moreover, he continued, "it is not our business to pre-judge the question. It is not necessary for us, merely in order to shape our own conduct in a way conducive to our own interests, to decide what we admittedly cannot really know. We should allow, here, for all possibilities, and should exclude none"⁵². Instead of presuming to be able to foretell Russia's future, preaching to Russians about how to realize it, and denouncing Russia's government for obstructing fulfillment of the prophecy, Kennan had learned, Americans should recognize the limits of their influence over developments in Russia and focus above all on making the United States the shining example to the world that it often claimed to be.

Almost fifty years later, in one of his last major statements before his death, Kennan reiterated his admonition, this time to Americans who had witnessed the failure of efforts to transform Russia in the 1990s. "They are not going to become

⁵⁰ Costigliola, ed., *The Kennan Diaries*, p. 538; see also Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, p. 654, 660.

⁵¹ Julia Ioffe, "The Undiplomat", www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/05/30/michael_mcfaul, accessed 8/9/2014; Remnick, "Watching the Eclipse", p. 59.

⁵² George F. Kennan, "America and the Russian Future", *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (April 1952), p. 351–370, quotation on p. 368.

like us”, Kennan declared flatly, urging Americans to get away from the habit of condescendingly lecturing Russians about how they should govern themselves like Americans did. As Kennan recognized, though, this habit is rooted in American national identity, in Americans’ tendency to see themselves “as the center of political enlightenment and as teachers to a great part of the rest of the world”⁵³. The fact that Kennan had to repeat his admonition and that after his death in 2005 it went unheeded by American democracy promoters attested to how deeply the drive to remake Russia continued to be bound up with many leading Americans’ prophetic orientation and their propagation of a messianic identity for the United States.

William G. Rosenberg

Is Social Memory a “Useful Category of Historical Analysis”?¹

Introduction: The «Memory Industry» and my Apologies to Joan Scott

When Joan Scott presented her seminal piece on gender as “a useful category of historical analysis” at the American Historical Association meetings more than 25 years ago, gender was still commonly used by historians in the grammatical sense of classification and distinction. A still small group of feminist social historians had just begun to understand gender in terms of the social qualities associated with sex (although “constructed” was still mercifully absent from their vocabulary), and to stress, as Scott put it, “the relational aspect of normative definitions of femininity”. Her discussion both of the concept and of the historiography led quickly to the additional problems of subjectivity, experience, identity, and representation — all categories that are now well reflected (some might even say over reflected) in the literature. Scott’s own seminal contribution to the discussion was to suggest how gender was an essential point of entry into understandings of power and politics, and how its judicious use in these and other traditional areas of historical exploration could decode the political and social meanings embedded in various kinds of human interaction².

Like gender, social memory has had its seminal theorists, but in contrast to the ways gender opened important new avenues of historical enquiry, social memory exploded into the literature with very little analytical reflection. Despite the complexity of the concept and the inherent imprecision of the term itself, the presence

¹ An earlier version of this essay was prepared for the St. Petersburg Institute of History International Colloquium on Historical Memory and Society in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union; June 25–29, 2007.

² Joan Wallach Scott, «Gender: A Useful Category of Analysis», *American Historical Review* 91:5 (December, 1986), as republished in *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988).

⁵³ Richard Ullman, “The US and the World: An Interview with George Kennan”, *The New York Review*, August 12, 1999, p. 4–6.