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Drawing the Line: The Origin of The American Containment Policy in East Asia

J. E. Talbott

Robert M. Blum

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that the defendant had not acted "dishonourably, that is to say his honour both as a citizen and an officer remains untarnished," but also wrote that his "conduct has sometimes been unworthy of a human being." The punishment decreed by the court was light (p. 133).

In Turkey, British attempts to bring to justice those officials responsible for the Armenian massacre of 1915 and other apparent beasts failed through the death or dispersion of witnesses and changed political circumstances. The draft Treaty of Sèvres with its war trials provisions was replaced by the Treaty of Lausanne, in which those provisions were dropped. In the other defeated countries, Austria held two trials, resulting in acquittals. Bulgaria actually convicted eleven members of the ousted war cabinet, but only after a long trial that seemed to "savour more of revenge on the part of the present Agrarian Government in power than of abstract justice" (p. 153). Several hundred courts martial were held, with many convictions. In June 1923 The Agrarian Government was overthrown, its leader, Alexander Stamboliski killed, and the trials ended. No trials were held in Hungary.

Opinion as to this record is divided. One view was pointedly summarized by Albert Speer in what seems an attempt to shift moral blame from himself for the slave-labor program he ran in Germany during the Hitler years. He wrote in his diaries in Spandau Prison after the war that "it would have encouraged a sense of responsibility on the part of leading political figures if after the First World War the Allies had actually held the trials they had threatened for the Germans involved in the forced-labor program of that era" (p. 173). Another is the American view during the Second World War that it was politically necessary to have some active display of

adherence to an international criminal law that holds those responsible for a vicious aggression personally liable for their exercise of governmental discretion. The British argued then in favor of summary executions of captured Nazi leaders, and courts martial by German tribunals for "ordinary" war criminals. Willis concludes that the "new law" created for Nuremberg, applying international law directly to the defeated country's leaders, can be seen as laying the foundation of a new legal order in international relations; but he notes generally that moral and legal "flaws" and changes in world opinion as memories of the horrors of Nazi Germany have receded, have permitted a resurgence of legal and political doubts.

The book is not deep in its legal analysis, Willis is not a lawyer. It is wise and deep in its analysis of the politics and diplomacy of the war crimes issue of the First World War. Since lawyers cannot understand their own discipline without a knowledge of social and political context any more than political scientists and military men can understand theirs without knowledge of the legal context, this book is most highly recommended to all.

ALFRED P. RUBIN
The Fletcher School of Law
and Diplomacy

Blum, Robert M. *Drawing the Line: The Origin of The American Containment Policy in East Asia*. New York: Norton, 1982. 273pp. \$22.95

Ten years ago, while working as a historian for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Robert M. Blum ran across some papers stashed in safes in a neglected corner of the Capitol Building. Among them were transcripts of the Committee's executive-session hearings. One that piqued Blum's interest dealt

with a 1949 arms-bill amendment providing the Truman administration with 75 million dollars in unvouchered funds to be spent in "the general area of China."

Historians have previously dismissed the amendment—Section 303 of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949—as merely a sop to the China bloc, a gesture that had little impact on China in particular or Asian policy in general. But Blum thinks Section 303 stimulated, with respect to Southeast Asia, the US policy of military containment by proxy. Simply having the funds on hand, he argues, pushed the Truman administration's policy in an activist direction, gave impetus to *Drawing the Line*.

If not actually in disarray in 1949, the makers of Asian policy were certainly on the defensive. Against them was drawn up a loose but noisy coalition of China-bloc adherents, isolationists, economizers, partisan Republicans, and maverick Democrats. If they did not howl with one voice, most were out for blood; in the lead, the friends of Chiang Kai-shek demanded to know why the Democrats had "lost China."

The State Department's efforts to respond to its critics' charges only made things worse. Senator Styles Bridges (Rep., N.H.), a leader of the China lobby, called the China White Paper issued in August 1949 evidence that "the Chinese war was lost in Washington."

Wherever the war had been lost, the virtual collapse of the Nationalists forced on the Truman administration the need for a new China policy. Dominant figures at State, including the Secretary, Dean Acheson (who doesn't get high marks in this book), leaned toward what Blum calls "a passive Titoist policy"—waiting upon events to produce a Sino-Soviet split that the United States could then turn to its advantage.

Putting together an Asian policy was

complicated by the customary intramural and interdepartmental struggles within the bureaucracy, sharpened by personal rivalries and antagonisms. At the State Department, Far Eastern experts pushed the Titoist line and viewed with circumspection France's attempt to reestablish itself in Indochina; advisers on Western Europe warned against crossing the French, crucial allies in the incipient cold war. State and the Department of Defense, in the person of Louis Johnson, its pugnacious Secretary, clashed over the extent to which the United States should continue to back Chiang, the Pentagon urging money and military hardware for Formosa against Foggy Bottom's demurrals.

Into the spring of 1950 the Truman administration steered between committing itself to either a Titoist policy toward the Chinese mainland or a pro-Nationalist policy with respect to Formosa. Administration leaders were well aware, however, that what their friends might regard as prudence, their enemies regarded as drift. They were driven, Blum thinks, by the sense of an urgent need to *do* something—anything that might muffle or reduce the drumfire of domestic criticism aimed at their Far Eastern policy.

By early 1950 Acheson and his top-level advisers were emphasizing the importance of holding the line against Communist advances in Indochina. Foreign Service officers and visitors to the State Department had given plenty of advice against assisting the French. In May 1949 Charles Reed, chief of the division of Southeast Asian Affairs, wrote that "The chances of saving Indochina [were] slim." The distinguished French scholar-diplomat Paul Mus warned that Ho Chi Minh had "the complete support of the Vietnamese, except for a few hundred . . . presently

(sic) backing Bao Dai," a judgment with which *Newsweek's* Indochina correspondent Harold Isaacs, in off-the-record discussions with State Department officials, concurred.

But the need to answer charges of a weak China policy with a strong Southeast Asia policy overrode such warnings. And demonstrating the Administration's resolve was made easier by having funds for the support of active measures in the region ready to hand. Once the Military Assistance Program passed Congress—without raising from any member questions as to the wisdom of Administration policy—executive-branch papers on the use of Section 303 funds proliferated. On 9 March 1950, nearly four months before the outbreak of the Korean war, Acheson sent to Truman a note requesting from the 303 fund 15 million dollars for aid to Indochina. More requests followed. Having failed in China, Blum concludes, the US government was determined to succeed in Indochina.

In view of the overwhelming pressures on the Truman administration for taking action in Southeast Asia and the obsession with monolithic Communism that gripped American policymakers for the following two decades, Blum may exaggerate the stimulus Section 303 gave to American involvement in Indochina. Nevertheless, his exhaustively researched and well-written book makes an important contribution to our understanding of the origins of the American containment policy in Asia.

J.E. TALBOTT

University of California, Santa Barbara

Handel, Michael I. *The Diplomacy of Surprise: Hitler, Nixon, Sadat*. Cambridge, Mass: Center for International Affairs, Harvard University, 1981. 360pp. \$22.50 paper \$11.95

Betts, Richard K. *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1982. 318pp. \$24.95 paper \$9.95

Diplomatic surprise cannot be used lightly. It is an act of last resort, when leaders find their flexibility limited by ideology, inertia, or the constraint of popular expectation. When these foreclose a radical policy departure, or threaten its graduated pursuit, surprise is a way to break out. It has a cost. The price of a new international configuration, or a new policy initiative, may be the overthrow of alliance agreements and a deep shock to public confidence. If the stakes are high enough, leaders take the risk. Surprise gives them strategic advantage.

Michael Handel illustrates these conditions in a close study of three cases: the Nazi-Soviet agreement of 1939, Nixon's trip to China, and Sadat's peace proposals, culminating in his visit to Jerusalem in 1977. These were bilateral surprises, not merely unexpected individual initiatives or minor *faits accomplis*. They were diplomatic moves of major significance, having profound impact on the international configuration. In each case, *both* sides, hitherto opponents, decided their foreign policies must be revised. Handel traces the way by which the two parties came together. It is a straight-forward account of these courtships and their consummations.

The story of the preparation of 180-degree diplomatic changes of course does not tell us why the element of surprise was not lost. Handel does not explore this question. His short answer is that the intelligence data were there. To be sure, there was lots of smoke, some deliberate deception, and many signals that could be read in contradictory ways. In the final analysis, however, it was (and most properly) political judgments