How We Forgot the Cold War

A HISTORICAL JOURNEY ACROSS AMERICA

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS
BERKELEY LOS ANGELES LONDON

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Introduction

FORGETTING THE COLD WAR

In 1991, only a few hours after the USSR collapsed, Congress began making plans for organizing the official memory of the Cold War. The 1991 Defense Appropriations Act included $10 million for the creation of a "Legacy Resource Management Program" that would "inventory, protect and conserve the physical and literary property" of the Cold War so that future generations could understand and appreciate its meaning and significance.[1]

Conservatives dominated the proceedings that followed. Their effort to shape public memory of the Cold War deployed powerful tools of political and cultural persuasion. The ideological apparatus engaged in this effort was famously influential and effective: Fox News, the *Wall Street Journal,* the *National Review,* the *Weekly Standard,* the Heritage Foundation, an endless stream of op-eds and opinion pieces, and of course the voices of leading senators and congressmen as well as that of the Republican president.

Their message: the Cold War was a good war, like ~~World War II.~~ George W. Bush explained it in his 2003 State of the Union address, in which he drew an analogy between defeat of the Soviets and defeat of the Nazis: both the Nazi and Soviet regimes had been led by "small groups of men [who] seized control of great nations, built armies and arsenals, and set out to dominate the weak and intimidate the world. In each case, their ambitions of cruelty and murder had no limit. In each case, the ambitions of Hitlerism, militarism, and communism were defeated by the will of free peoples, by the strength of great alliances, and by the might of the United States of America."[2] The history of the twentieth century is thus a history of the battle between freedom and totalitarianism, good and evil, and it has two chapters: in the first, FDR led the Allies to victory over Nazi Germany; in the second, Reagan led the Free World to victory over the Soviet Union.

Liberals, meanwhile, lacked the conservatives' ideological zeal. Although they had been equal advocates of the Cold War, their priorities did not include claiming victory. Nor did they put forward an alternative interpretation of the meaning and significance of the collapse of the USSR.

This book is about the conservatives' argument—we can call it "the good war framework"—and about the way that argument was presented to the public at historical sites, museums, and monuments. It's also about what happened to that argument: it failed. Despite the immense effort by conservatives to shape public memory of the Cold War, their monuments weren't built, their historical sites have had few visitors, and many of their museums have shifted their focus to other topics. The public did not embrace a heroic story of the triumph of good over evil in the Cold War. The result: what I call "forgetting the Cold War."

What explains this forgetting? How can we understand the complex mixture of public indifference, skepticism, and apparent resistance to what historians have termed "Cold War triumphalism"?[3] And what are the implications for our understanding of the power of official ideology and well-funded media to influence our view of the past? To answer these questions, I examine the conservative efforts to shape public memory.

One thing is clear at the outset: this forgetting the Cold War is not part of a general turn away from recent American history on the part of the public. In fact it coincided with the unprecedented celebration of victory in World War II and of "the greatest generation" that fought it. One and a half million people now visit Pearl Harbor annually and wait in line for hours to see the USS *Arizona* Memorial. Award-winning historical films and TV miniseries on World War II have been seen by millions of Americans.

And it's not just World War II. The country experienced a massive outpouring of public emotion at the unveiling of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., which for more than two decades has been one of the most visited monuments in Washington. And beyond World War II and Vietnam, thousands of new memorials, Erika Doss found, have been created in the past few decades. Andreas Huyssen wrote not long ago that "the notion of the monument as memorial" has "witnessed a triumphal return." History museums in the United States recently reported 100 million annual visitors. And a survey conducted by Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen found that while the public didn't like the history they had been taught in school, they did like the history they saw in museums. An astounding 57 percent of Americans said they had visited a history museum or historical site in the previous year.[4] So the public's failure to embrace Cold War triumphalism has nothing to do with a dislike of historical sites or museums.

From the beginning of the Cold War until its end, all U.S. presidents, Republican as well as Democratic, had the same policy toward the USSR and China: "containment" and "deterrence." While each described communism as a totalitarian enemy bent on our destruction, all accepted the existence of communist rule within the borders established at the end of World War II, and all were committed to fighting any expansion of communist power beyond those borders—and to threatening nuclear war at moments of crisis.

But conservatives always offered an alternative to this consensus: instead of containment, they said, the United States should seek "rollback"; instead of accepting the status quo of Soviet (and Chinese) power, the United States should pursue victory over communism. This position was argued by Douglas MacArthur at the beginning of the Cold War, by Barry Goldwater in the middle, and by Ronald Reagan near the end.

The Republican right lost all the big policy battles of the Cold War. Republican presidents, as well as Democrats, rejected their arguments. During the Korean War, when MacArthur argued there was "no substitute for victory," Truman fired him and accepted a stalemate. Eisenhower failed to support freedom fighters in Hungary in 1956. Kennedy negotiated an end to the Cuban Missile Crisis that included a pledge not to invade and overthrow Castro. Johnson and Nixon fought another limited war in Vietnam, eventually lost, and then Nixon negotiated détente with the Soviets and the opening to China. The Cold War consensus had been a liberal, "realist" one. Even the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Soviet Union did not bring a rethinking of this history to the mainstream. That made it all the more important for conservatives to make the case retrospectively that they had been right to call for rollback.

Although the Cold War is being forgotten, the country is full of memorial sites of different kinds—museums, monuments, official historic landmarks. But these have received virtually no critical attention. Roy Rosenzweig and Warren Leon ask us to consider, in contrast, the critical attention "lavished on a widely circulated history book on a similar topic." A big Cold War book—John Lewis Gaddis's *The Cold War: A New History*—was the subject of more than a dozen serious and thoughtful reviews, some of them extensive: 1,600 words in the *Washington Post,* more than 5,000 in the *New York*

Review. But as Rozensweig and Leon point out, "a blanket of critical silence has surrounded" history museums and historical sites.[5]

I report here in some depth on almost two dozen Cold War museums, monuments, and historical sites and discuss briefly several dozen more (see map 1). The diversity of sites and objects on display is remarkable: a bomb crater in Nevada that's listed on the National Register of Historic Places; a gigantic mound of radioactive waste, which the public is invited to climb, at a former nuclear weapons plant in Weldon Spring, Missouri; a disarmed ICBM in its silo, open to visitors, permitted under the SALT treaty as a museum exhibit. In what follows I analyze the messages in official tours and the official explanations. Most of these places started out with the conservative interpretation—places like the Nevada Test Site and the Titan Missile Museum in Arizona, which make the case in different ways that nuclear deterrence protected freedom, and the Greenbrier Bunker in West Virginia, which shows how Congress, and thus democracy, would have continued to function after a nuclear war. I also describe the unofficial things that sometimes happened on the official tours—the arguments that broke out, the doubts expressed, and the challenges voiced by ordinary people.

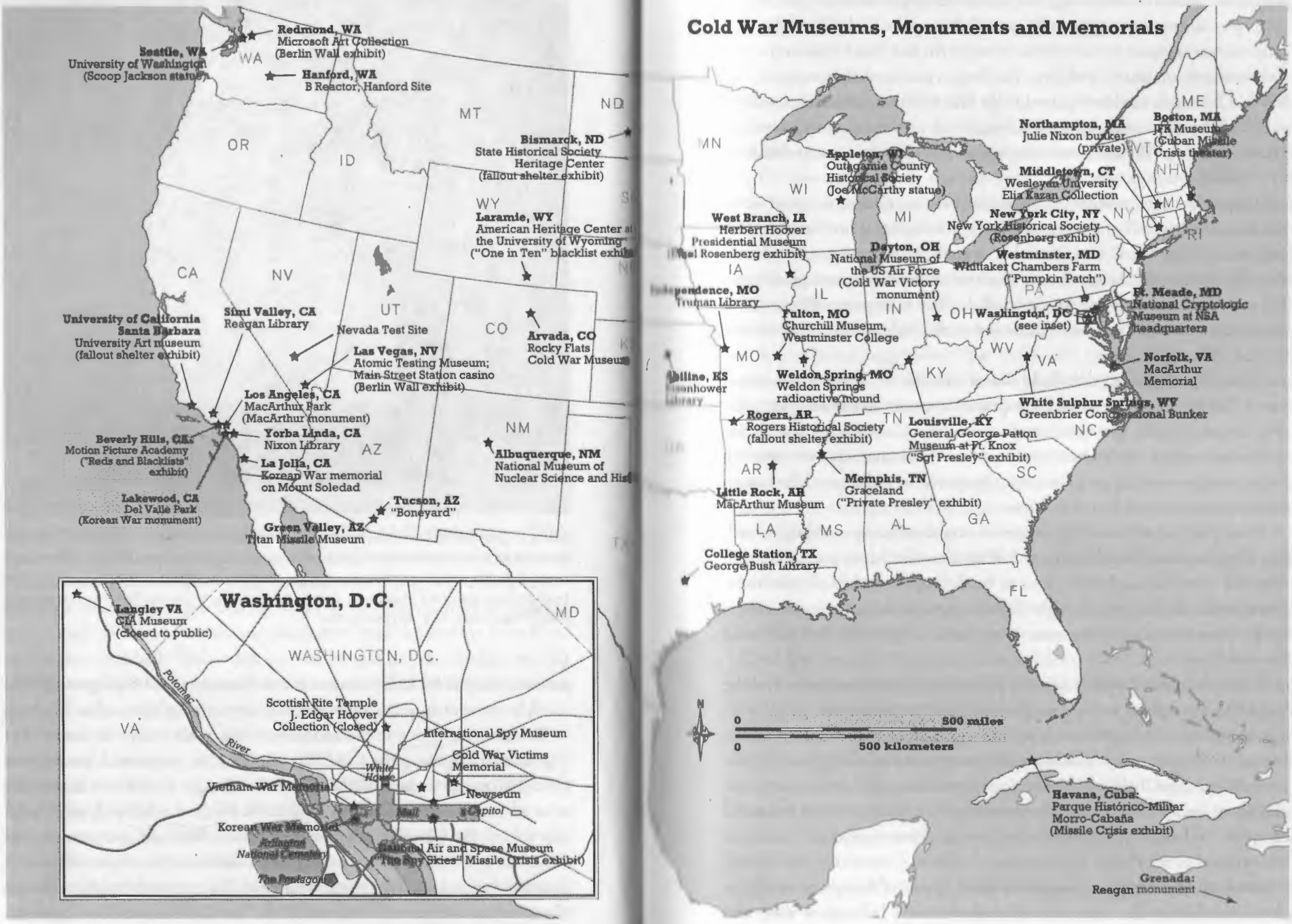
Among the dozens of official Cold War memorial sites in the United States, one type is notably missing: the victory monument. We have such monuments for other wars. Currently the leading example is the World War II Memorial on the Mall in Washington, D.C., dedicated in 2004. "Victory on Land, Victory at Sea, Victory in the Air," it proclaims. It's a vast stone plaza, longer than a football field. Visitors enter through two forty-three-foot-high triumphal arches bearing huge victory wreaths held by gigantic bronze eagles. The text, emblazoned in granite, includes a quote from General George Marshall: "Before the sun sets on this terrible struggle our flag will be recognized throughout the world as a symbol of freedom on the one hand and of overwhelming force on the other."[6]

I found only one Cold War victory monument in the entire country, at the National Museum of the Air Force. This is a granite marker, ten feet high, which bears the legend "Victors in the Cold War," and explains, "The Cold War Didn't Just End . . . It Was Won" (figure 1). That is precisely the conservative message. A memorial to the Strategic Air Command (SAC), this monument displays a mailed fist holding lightning bolts and an olive branch against a field of clouds on a shield. However, this SAC memorial is not located on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., but rather in the memorial garden at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, outside Dayton, Ohio. It was

FIGURE 1. Cold War Victors monument: "The Cold War Didn't Just End . . . It Was Won." Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, OH. This 10-foot monument is located not on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., but rather in an Air Force memorial garden outside Dayton, Ohio, and was privately funded by veterans of the Strategic Air Command. It seems to be the only Cold War victory monument in the country. (U.S. Air Force photo)

privately funded by SAC veterans and dedicated at a SAC reunion in May 2008. It is one of more than five hundred memorials in the garden.[7]

The low attendance at this and most of the other memorial sites—what I am calling forgetting the Cold War—has led the people who manage the official memory of the Cold War to make changes of different kinds. The most common change has been to shift the focus of exhibits to more popular topics: the Churchill Memorial in Fulton, Missouri, for example, has moved away from being a museum about Churchill's "Iron Curtain" speech there announcing the beginning of the Cold War; now it is mostly about the blood, sweat, and tears of Britain in World War II. SAC once had a museum, in Nebraska between Lincoln and Omaha, that displayed B-52 bombers and


Cold War Museums, Monuments and Memorials
Seattle, WA
University of Washington
(Scoop Jackson statue)
Redmond, WA
Microsoft Art Collection
(Berlin Wall exhibit)
Hanford, WA
B Reactor, Hanford Site
Bismarck, ND
State Historical Society
Heritage Center
(fallout shelter exhibit)
Laramie, WY
American Heritage Center at
the University of Wyoming
("One in Ten" blacklist exhibit)
University of California
Santa Barbara
University Art museum
(fallout shelter exhibit)
Simi Valley, CA
Reagan Library
Nevada Test Site
Las Vegas, NV
Atomic Testing Museum;
Main Street Station casino
(Berlin Wall exhibit)
Arvada, CO
Rocky Flats
Cold War Museum
Los Angeles, CA
MacArthur Park
(MacArthur monument)
Beverly Hills, CA:
Motion Picture Academy
("Reds and Blacklists"
exhibit)
Yorba Linda, CA
Nixon Library
La Jolla, CA
Korean War memorial
on Mount Soledad
Albuquerque, NM
National Museum of
Nuclear Science and His
Lakewood, CA
Del Valle Park
(Korean War monument)
Tucson, AZ
"Boneyard"
Green Valley, AZ
Titan Missile Museum
Washington, D.C.
Langley VA
CIA Museum
(closed to public)
WASHINGTON, D.C.
Potomac River
Scottish Rite Temple
J. Edgar Hoover
Collection (closed)
International Spy Museum
Cold War Victims
Memorial
White House
Vietnam War Memorial
Newseum
Capitol
Mall
Korean War Memorial
Arlington
National Cemetery
National Air and Space Museum
("The Sky's Missile Crisis exhibit)
The Pentagon
Northampton, MA
Julie Nixon bunker
(private)
Boston, MA
JFK Museum
(Cuban Missile
Crisis theater)
Appleton, WI
Outagamie County
Historical Society
(Joe McCarthy statue)
Middletown, CT
Wesleyan University
Elia Kazan Collection
West Branch, IA
Herbert Hoover
Presidential Museum
(Ethel Rosenberg exhibit)
New York City, NY
New York Historical Society
(Rosenberg exhibit)
Dayton, OH
National Museum of
the US Air Force
(Cold War Victory
monument)
Westminster, MD
Whittaker Chambers Farm
("Pumpkin Patch")
Independence, MO
Truman Library
Fulton, MO
Churchill Museum,
Westminster College
Washington, DC
(see inset)
Ft. Meade, MD
National Cryptologic
Museum at NSA
Headquarters
Abilene, KS
Eisenhower
Library
Weldon Spring, MO
Weldon Springs
radioactive mound
Norfolk, VA
MacArthur
Memorial
White Sulphur Springs, WV
Greenbrier Congressional Bunker
Rogers, AR
Rogers Historical Society
(fallout shelter exhibit)
Louisville, KY
General George Patton
Museum at Ft. Knox
("Sgt Presley" exhibit)
Memphis, TN
Graceland
("Private Presley" exhibit)
Little Rock, AR
MacArthur Museum
College Station, TX
George Bush Library
0
500 miles
0
500 kilometers
Havana, Cuba:
Parque Histórico-Militar
Morro-Cabaña
(Missile Crisis exhibit)
Grenada:
Reagan monument

defined its mission as "ensuring the American people remember the vital role SAC played in maintaining world peace" during the Cold War.[8] But that museum was replaced in 1998 by the Strategic Air and Space Museum, which focuses mostly on space travel. Even the Reagan presidential museum in Simi Valley, California, has downplayed Cold War triumphalism with a striking new building displaying Air Force One, the jet used by all presidents from Nixon to George W. Bush, including Carter and Clinton—an apolitical exhibit if there ever was one.

A second change is evident at some of the former nuclear weapons factories that, after the fall of the Soviet Union, initially became official sites for celebrating Cold War victory. Now they operate primarily to reassure visitors that the cleanup of radioactive contamination from weapons production was successful, so you won't get cancer there. That's the point of the tours at Hanford in eastern Washington State and at the Weldon Spring radioactive mound west of St. Louis.

Other sites claiming to be Cold War memorials in fact have other purposes. The San Diego cross, on the highest mountaintop outside the city, is one. Its sponsors describe this forty-foot cross as a Cold War memorial. But that claim is only a legal pretext advanced by Christian activists who want to keep a religious symbol on government property, in violation of the constitutional separation of church and state.

Meanwhile other Cold War memorial sites slumber on unchanged, with low attendance and little energy: the Whittaker Chambers pumpkin patch National Historic Landmark seems to be the least visited of all official national historical sites, even though Chambers remains a hero to conservatives for his claim that communist spies, most notably Alger Hiss, had infiltrated the New Deal.

While the central issue here is the conservative interpretation—that the Cold War was a good war—I found some sites that present the public with other arguments about the meaning and significance of the Cold War. On my travels I found many fascinating and unexpected exhibits critical of the conservative view: in Abilene, Kansas, the Eisenhower Library includes a display about his warning against "the excessive power of the military-industrial complex." In Laramie, Wyoming, the American Heritage Center had an exhibit critical of the House Un-American Activities Committee's (HUAC's) requirement that former communists name names of former comrades to prove their loyalty. The New York Historical Society had a show about the

Rosenberg case that displayed new evidence that Ethel was innocent, along with a real electric chair from Sing Sing, where she was executed.

The two chapters in Part I look at arguments about the end of the Cold War, where the strongest case can be found for the conservatives' "good war" interpretation. Parts II through IV, organized chronologically by decade, discuss specific sites and along the way provide a brief history of the Cold War.

In Part V three alternative approaches to telling the public about the Cold War are presented, each of which offers contending views of the conservatives' good war framework. They demonstrate in different ways what a good museum can accomplish: they all show that the meaning and significance of the Cold War continues to be debated, that historians and journalists and ordinary people disagree over how and why it was fought. Was communism innately militarily aggressive? Was the Soviet Union implacably bent on world domination? Would the Soviets really have attacked us if we hadn't threatened to destroy them? Wouldn't nuclear war have to be waged primarily against civilians—and didn't that make it wrong? Didn't preparing for nuclear war undermine our moral and political values, democracy and respect for human life? Could a simple, dramatic disarmament agreement have changed our expectations and made wider disarmament workable? Wasn't the Cold War a disastrous waste of resources needed for humane projects? The big questions, of course, are whether the Cold War was inevitable and whether it was necessary at all.[9]

The first of the alternative approaches will be found at Rocky Flats outside Denver, where a group of citizens and former workers plan to open (in 2012) a Cold War museum that presents both sides of the debate over the former plutonium weapons factory there. While the federal government has done nothing to commemorate this site, except to open a wildlife refuge on part of the land of the former factory complex, the citizens' group will present the story of America's most dangerous and expensive industrial accident, which occurred in 1979 when Denver was threatened with a Chernobyl-like incident and fifteen thousand demonstrators called for closing the plant. With both sides being presented, visitors will be invited to debate the issues for themselves.

Another approach to this kind of museum-as-debate will be found at the Paley Center for Media in Beverly Hills, in a planned exhibit on the

anniversary of CNN's award-winning series *Cold War.* The approach of Ted Turner's documentary team was to give equal time to the Russians—presenting Russian experts and "witnesses" explaining their motives and reasons and their ideas about the Cold War. Again, viewers are invited to decide for themselves which interpretations are more convincing.

And third, the most amazing of all Cold War exhibits is found at the Truman Presidential Library in Independence, Missouri. Whereas most presidential museums argue that their president was right, the Truman museum tells visitors he might have been wrong—about the Soviets' motives and about the kind of challenge posed by the USSR in the years immediately following World War II. The museum explains Truman's position and then declares, with astonishing frankness, that "there are other ways of looking at the subject." Viewers are presented with material critical of the president, written by commentators at the time and more recently by historians—all of whom take up the question, "Was the Cold War necessary?" By inviting visitors to think about alternative interpretations, the Truman Library demonstrates the history museum at its best—a bright light in the often dim world of Cold War commemoration.

ONE

Hippie Day at the Reagan Library

When the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library and Museum in Simi Valley, California, announced it would hold a "hippie contest" one Saturday, I wondered what it would take to win. Dress in tie-dye and refuse to get a job? Put on bell-bottoms, take LSD, and jump out the window? Grow long hair and give the finger to your country, while decent kids were risking their lives defending freedom thousands of miles away?[1]

The hippie contest was part of a daylong "fun-in" (their term) to celebrate the opening of an exhibit titled "Back to the 60s." As visitors went through the library gates that morning into the beautiful tree-lined courtyard, we were greeted by a kindly woman giving out free samples of Ding Dongs (a Twinkie-like confection). Frisbees were also being handed out, bearing the motto "Back to the 60s, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library." Is that really what it was like in the sixties—free frisbees and Ding Dongs for everyone? Handed out by Reagan's people?

According to conservative ideology, victory in the Cold War was the work of one man above all others: Ronald Reagan. Alone among presidents, he refused to accept the continued existence of the USSR. That is the argument John Gaddis makes in *The Cold War,* the definitive statement of the conservative interpretation. Reagan famously described the Soviet Union as an "evil empire." That's why he sought to "hasten [its] disintegration."[2]

The story has been told a thousand times. Indeed, if you Google "Reagan won the Cold War," you get 150,000 results. It was Reagan who stood at the Berlin Wall and proclaimed, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" It was Reagan who funded the mujahadeen to fight the Soviets in Afghanistan, wearing the Red Army down in its own Vietnam-like quagmire. It was Reagan who ordered a massive military buildup, including "Star Wars," that

his supporters claim drove the Soviet Union to bankruptcy. And when the Berlin Wall fell, it was Reagan who got the credit.

Margaret Thatcher put it most bluntly: "Ronald Reagan won the Cold War without firing a shot." Bob Dole, running for president in 1996, told the Republican National Convention, "Were it not for President Reagan, the Soviet Union would still be standing today." Dinesh D'Souza summed up the conservative consensus in the *National Review* when Reagan died: "Reagan won and Gorbachev lost.... In the Cold War, Reagan turned out to be our Churchill: it was his vision and leadership that led us to victory."[3]

Thus if Cold War victory were going to be celebrated anywhere, the Reagan Library should be its white-hot heart. But the Reagan Library has never held a "Cold War Victory" festival in its courtyard. Instead, it had Hippie Day.

The library courtyard on Hippie Day was teeming with activity: in one corner, dozens of kids were hard at work tie-dying T-shirts; the results of their labors hung on lines around the courtyard, drying. The tie-dye would be featured in the day's climactic event: the hippie contest.

Onstage in the courtyard, an Ed Sullivan look-alike was introducing a Beatles sound-alike group. They wore the collarless black suits of the early lovable-lads-from-Liverpool period but said nothing about the benefits of LSD or being more popular than Jesus. "The sixties," "Paul" remarked, "when boys liked girls, and girls liked boys, and the only one swinging both ways was Tarzan."

While the group played "She Loves You," the photo studio under the arcade offered visitors two different ways to have their pictures taken. You could put on combat fatigues (which they provided) and pose in front of a Vietnam battlefield mural, or you could put on hippie garb (of which they had an impressive assortment) and pose with life-size standup figures of the Beatles in their Sgt. Pepper outfits. The action was with the Beatles; all the kids wanted to be hippies, not soldiers. What would Nancy Reagan say about that?

Reagan's political ascent, as the museum exhibits explain, began during the 1964 presidential campaign, when he gave a half-hour TV speech supporting Goldwater. His message was apocalyptic: "We are faced with the most evil enemy mankind has known in his long climb from the swamp to the stars." "Freedom" was fighting a worldwide battle to the death against "the ant heap of totalitarianism." If we lost this battle, "a thousand years of darkness" would follow.[4]

Reagan was so much more effective than Goldwater at delivering the message that, as Rick Perlstein has shown, a group of party leaders decided that night he would make a better candidate.[5] They started him on the road to the White House with a campaign for governor two years later. Any serious exhibit about Reagan and the sixties would put "the speech" at its center, on a big screen in a darkened theater, where visitors could savor that historic night.

Instead, on Hippie Day, Reagan's speech ran on a small TV set in a museum gallery dominated by a VW Beetle painted pink and decorated with yellow flowers and butterflies, surrounded by life-size white plaster figures wearing hippie garb, posed working on signs for a demonstration. The signs read, "Vets for Peace in Vietnam," "Hey Hey LBJ—how many kids did you kill today?," "We shall overcome," and "Tyranny is always dependent on a silent majority"—the latter a response to Nixon's speech proclaiming himself spokesman for the silent majority. Reagan built his political career by attacking the people who carried these signs, which made this part of the exhibit incredible.

The TV set playing Reagan's historic 1964 convention speech was set up in a replica of a middle-class sixties living room, with modern furniture and posters on the walls that said "Surfing Party," "Hootenanny," and "Sock It to Me." I don't know of any families that had a "Sock It to Me" poster in the living room.

The problem that seems to face museums like the Reagan Library is that few people will visit if all they're going to get is right-wing ideology about Cold War victory. To attract visitors, they need to find something people will drive twenty or thirty miles to see—something like Hippie Day. The folks at the Reagan Library seemed to think people were still interested in the Beatles but not in Reagan's role in defeating communism. Of course, the version of the sixties on display here lacked the confrontational edge of the original, and it was nothing like the way Reagan portrayed the decade, nor did it have anything in common with Republican ideology that sees Reagan's role in history as equivalent to FDR's in leading the free world to defeat the totalitarian enemy.

Later in the day, the hippie contest began. The entrants were a dozen sweet kids, virtually all girls and all around ten years old. They came onstage, happy and excited, wearing their newly tie-dyed T-shirts and bell-bottoms, sandals,

headbands, and beads. One by one they walked across the stage, flashed the peace sign, and shouted "Peace!" Nobody seemed to remember that Nancy had denounced her daughter Patti Davis as "nothing but a damn hippie."[6]

"Let's hear it for these wonderful kids in their hippie outfits," the announcer shouted. "Everybody here is a winner!"

It's not that the Reagan Library neglects Reagan's claims regarding the fall of the Soviet Union. The story is there, with a big multiscreen video history of the entire Cold War narrated by Reagan—among the new exhibits introduced in 2011. And of course the Reagan Library exhibits feature the Berlin Wall, which the *National Review* called "the most visible, stark symbol of the Cold War divide, a gray, cold tombstone to human freedom."[7]

It's not just the right that found the Berlin Wall a potent symbol of an abhorrent system. John Le Carré wrote in 1989 about standing at the wall "as soon as it started going up" and staring at "the weasel faces of the brainwashed little thugs who guarded the Kremlin's latest battlement." "I felt nothing but disgust and terror," he continued, "which was exactly what I was supposed to feel: the Wall was perfect theatre as well as a perfect symbol of the monstrosity of ideology gone mad." And Chalmers Johnson described the fall of the Berlin Wall as "one of the grandest developments in modern history."[8]

The Reagan Library is the nation's central place for commemorating the fall of the Berlin Wall. The museum has no fewer than three displays about it. A segment of the "real" wall, three and a half feet wide and ten feet high, weighing six thousand pounds, is displayed outdoors on a terrace (figure 2). The marker doesn't tell you much about the wall, but it does say the display of the segment of it here was "made possible through the generosity of Carl and Margaret Karcher." Carl was the founder of Carl's Jr., a member of the John Birch Society, and the biggest funder of California's Briggs Initiative, the 1978 proposition that would have required firing all gays and lesbians from employment as public school teachers. Even Reagan opposed it, and it didn't pass.

At the library's dedication in 1991, two years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Reagan highlighted the segment on display. Before an audience that included Bob Hope, Arnold Schwarzenegger, and Jimmy Stewart, Reagan said, "Visitors to this mountaintop will see a great jagged chunk of that Berlin Wall, . . . hated symbol of, yes, an evil empire, that spied on and lied to its citizens, denying them their freedom, their bread, even their faith. Well,

FIGURE 2. Tourists at the Berlin Wall exhibit, Reagan Library, Simi Valley, California. (photo by David Weiner)

today that will all exist only in museums, souvenir collections and the memories of a people no longer oppressed."[9]

A second Berlin Wall exhibit at the Reagan Library is part of a replica of Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin, with a mannequin of a "resolute" U.S. Army MP on one side, standing in front of a huge American flag and a sign that reads, "Achtung! You are leaving the American sector." On the other side of the gate is a gigantic Soviet flag; "an East German border guard stands menacingly," the pocket guide declares.[10] It's a popular background for photos of family members—some of which are posted online at personal websites.[11] When I was visiting, the only comment I heard on this exhibit was a woman complaining to her husband, "They said the wall here was real, but it's a fake!" (I explained that the "real" one is outside in back.) As for the East German border guard, when I asked a couple of teenagers whether he looked "menacing" to them, they told me, "Not really." Raised on horror movies and violent video games, they are used to much more demonic villains.

The wall text here declares, "From 1961 to 1989, the Soviet goal was clear: to 'bury' the decent and free democracies of the West in the name of Communism. The crimes of Communist regimes against civilians resulted in the deaths of 100 million people. President Reagan identified this as the essence

of an 'evil empire,' yielding nothing but death and destruction where it comes to power. The Cold War ended when the Soviet Union finally heeded Ronald Reagan's demand to 'tear down this wall.'" That's the message in a nutshell: Reagan told them to do it, and they did.

After Checkpoint Charlie comes a side gallery on the Cold War featuring a video in which Reagan says, "At my first presidential press conference, I said, 'They reserve unto themselves the right to commit any crime.'" The Soviet goal, according to Reagan, was "a one-world Soviet state." To put a stop to this, Reagan says, "I decided we had to send a strong message"—so we invaded Grenada! Not only did this help prevent a one-world Soviet state; within a couple of years the Soviet Union itself collapsed. No less than Margaret Thatcher provides the conclusion to the video: "In ending the Cold War, Ronald Reagan deserves the most credit." I'm furiously taking notes, then look around to find myself alone in an empty room.

Grenada gets its own very small display at the library. The wall text reads, "US rescues 800 US medical students," next to a button labeled "Press button to learn more." In Grenada, on the other hand, a big monument commemorating Reagan's invasion can be found outside the airport (figure 3). It was dedicated in 1986 by Reagan himself. The monument reads, "This plaque expresses the gratitude of the Grenadan people to the Forces from the United States of America and the Caribbean who sacrificed their lives in liberating Grenada in October 1983." However, the monument was erected not by the people of Grenada but by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States.[12]

The Cold War room at the Reagan Library is mostly empty because it's a side gallery on the walkway to what the library rightly bills as its biggest attraction, literally and figuratively: the Air Force One exhibit, the "Flying White House" that went on display in 2005. The signs on the freeway say, "Ronald Reagan Presidential Library & Air Force One." They do not say, "Reagan Library and Berlin Wall Exhibit." Here, Reagan's "dream" is described not as tearing down the Berlin Wall but as having "this magnificent aircraft here at his Library"—and that dream, the library declares, "has finally come true. We are privileged to have this national treasure and honored by the trust the United States Air Force has placed in us to share it with the American people."[13]

The Air Force One exhibit is completely apolitical. Conservative ideology is nowhere to be found in the 90,000-square-foot, $30 million display. Reagan's "Flying White House," visitors learn, was used by every president

FIGURE 3. Invasion of Grenada monument in Grenada. The marker reads, "This plaque expresses the gratitude of the Grenadan people to the Forces from the USA . . . who sacrificed their lives in liberating Grenada in October 1983." It was erected not by the people of Grenada but rather by the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States. (photo by Robert Kitay)

from Nixon to George W. Bush, including Carter and Clinton—and thus is hardly a monument to Reagan's unique role in winning the Cold War, which is not mentioned. Instead, visitors learn that Reagan flew more miles in this plane than any other president and that it was in this plane that he "officially started the Daytona Beach, Florida, NASCAR race via phone." He is quoted as saying, from Air Force One, "Start your engines, Daytona."[14]

As for souvenirs of the Berlin Wall, the gift shop sells a paperweight with the inscription, "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!" It's $49. But it's only one of thirty-three "desk items" for sale. Other paperweights are inscribed with other quotations from the president, including one for $39 that says, "There is nothing as good for the inside of a man as the outside of a horse."[15]

Does Reagan really deserve credit for the collapse of the Soviet Union? It's true that there's "Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!," which is featured prominently, and appropriately, at the library. An uncompromising voice of freedom spoke—and totalitarianism crumbled. But what happened in

Berlin in fact was something quite different. Michael Meyer was *Newsweek*'s bureau chief in Germany and Eastern Europe in 1989 and wrote about it in his book *The Year That Changed the World.* Chance, he says, played a huge part in bringing down the Berlin Wall; what happened was mostly an accident. It began when Hungary decided to open its border with Austria. East Germans thus for the first time had an exit route to the West, and tens of thousands departed every day. East German leader Egon Krenz decided he had to do something to stem the tide; he concluded that, if travel to the West was not banned, East Germans would return after visiting. So he announced freedom of travel, to begin "immediately"—by which he meant the next day, with some kind of "appropriate" controls.

But on November 9, 1989, as soon as the announcement was made, East Germans headed for Checkpoint Charlie, where a border guard decided to open the gate. What happened next is what we call "the fall of the Berlin Wall." As the historian Gerard DeGroot explained, "History pivoted on the misinterpretation of a word. Krenz called it a 'botch.'"[16]

Conservative writers claim that the fall of the wall was the result of a longer-term process, also instigated by Reagan: a massive military buildup by the United States that set off a new round of the arms race that bankrupted the USSR. But these claims, as Sean Wilentz writes in *The Age of Reagan,* have "little credible evidence" to back them up. "New expenditures by the Soviet Union in the face of Reagan's buildup were not especially heavy in the 1980s," he writes, "and certainly were not enough to cause major damage to its already wracked economy." Scholars examining the Soviet archives that were opened in the nineties found no evidence of any "panicky response to the Reagan rearmament that led to Soviet economic or political depletion."[17]

Moreover, the skyrocketing defense budget of the Reagan White House was based on "manifestly exaggerated estimates of the Soviet Union's military superiority," Wilentz writes, "which were later proved wrong." A sizable portion of the Reagan defense increase was "consumed by fraud, waste, and mismanagement." Meanwhile the weapons Reagan so passionately promised—the $15 billion MX missile system and the $26 billion Star Wars program—were never deployed.[18]

The claim that Reagan's aggressive military budget and bellicose rhetoric forced Kremlin leaders to come to the bargaining table is equally unsupported by evidence. The change was the work of Gorbachev, who came to power in March 1985. "Without Gorbachev," Wilentz writes, "it is conceivable that the Soviet Union might have carried on for decades, its nuclear deterrent strong enough to ward off threats from the West, its conventional forces powerful enough to contain rising discontent within its own satellites in eastern and central Europe."[19]

George H. W. Bush said pretty much the same thing on the tenth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Instead of praising Reagan, he gave credit to the Soviet leader. "We can never repay the debt we owe Mikhail Gorbachev," Bush declared at a ceremony in Berlin in 1999. "History still hasn't given him the credit he deserves, but it will."[20]

One more thing: when Reagan proposed the Star Wars missile defense system in 1983—also featured at the library—he did not say his goal was "to hasten the disintegration" of the USSR (John Gaddis's words). He said his goal was "introducing greater stability" in the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. He said, "We seek neither military superiority nor political advantage."[21] Those quotes are not displayed on the wall at the Reagan Library.

In private communications with Soviet leaders Reagan was even clearer. He wrote Gorbachev's predecessor, Konstatin Chernenko, in 1984, "I have no higher goal than the establishment of a relationship between our two great nations characterized by constructive cooperation. Differences in our political beliefs and in our perspectives on international problems should not be an obstacle to efforts aimed at strengthening peace and building a productive working relationship."[22] You might call that policy "détente."

As for the "Reagan Doctrine"—U.S. military aid to anticommunist forces around the world seeking the "rollback" rather than the "containment" of communism—visitors to the library are told that Reagan's "unshakeable lifelong opposition to communism . . . helped to free hundreds of millions of people around the globe." But the Reagan Doctrine's role in hastening the demise of the Soviet Union is exaggerated at the library and by conservative writers.[23] In Nicaragua, U.S. support for the Contras led to perhaps 200,000 deaths but didn't hurt the Soviet Union and was abandoned at the insistence of Congress. In the meantime the Reagan White House sent arms to the Contras, paid for with the proceeds from selling weapons to Iran in exchange for the release of hostages—the "Iran-Contra Affair"—which did a lot more damage to the Reagan administration than it did to the USSR. (The library display on Iran-Contra says only that it happened "without his knowledge.") In another prong of the so-called Reagan Doctrine, the United States supported the anticommunist rebels in Angola led by Jonas Savimbi, but that also had virtually no effect on the Soviet Union.

The strongest case for the Reagan Doctrine leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union can be found in U.S. support for the mujahadeen in Afghanistan, which of course is emphasized in the exhibits at the Reagan Library. But even with that argument, two major problems arise. First, support for the mujahadeen began before Reagan. It was started by the Carter administration—although the Jimmy Carter Library in Atlanta doesn't mention that.[24] Second, and more important, that support wasn't significantly increased until 1986, a year after Gorbachev had come to power and was already reversing Soviet policy and beginning withdrawal from Afghanistan.

And the official premise of the Reagan Doctrine turned out to be faulty. In its original formulation, antidemocratic left-wing regimes were described as incapable of change and thus required force to overthrow them, while antidemocratic right-wing regimes were described as open to peaceful transformation. But support for the right in Afghanistan led to a vicious civil war, the triumph of the Taliban, and the rise of Bin Laden, and the notion that regimes on the left could be changed only by military force was definitively disproven—by the case of the Soviet Union.

The greatest weakness at the Reagan Library concerns Reagan's meeting with Gorbachev in 1986 at Reykjavik, where the president proposed phasing out all "offensive" missiles. The exhibit in Simi Valley doesn't give the president the credit he deserves. Something monumental almost happened at Reykjavik. Reagan sincerely dreamed of a world without nuclear weapons. Eric Hobsbawm, perhaps the greatest left-wing historian of the twentieth century, writes that, at Reykjavik, Reagan's "simple-minded idealism broke through the unusually dense screen of ideologists, fanatics, careerists, desperados and professional warriors around him." The president "let himself be convinced" by Gorbachev that the two superpowers could live in peace. For practical purposes, Hobsbawm concludes, the Cold War ended at Reykjavik—and we should not "underestimate the contribution of President Reagan."[25]

More than thirty places in the United States in addition to the Reagan Library display segments of the Berlin Wall, and these displays present a stunningly wide range of interpretations: one treats its graffiti as art; another treats the whole thing as a joke. And size matters: there are competing claims over who in the United States has the biggest section of the Berlin Wall. The Newseum in Washington, D.C., says it does; the Wende Museum in L.A. says it does. L.A. wins, with ten segments compared to the Newseum's eight. However, the Newseum claims it has the largest section of "unaltered" wall segments, as well as a real East German guard tower.[26]

The Kennedy Library in Boston has a segment of the Berlin Wall, because Kennedy went to the wall just after it was built and said, "Ich bin ein Berliner." When the wall went up, Kennedy and the other Western leaders said they were outraged, but, as Tony Judt explains, "behind the scenes many Western leaders were secretly relieved." Berlin had been the focus of official anxiety and unsuccessful diplomacy for three years. Now "Western leaders privately agreed that a wall across Berlin was a far better outcome than a war"—because "whatever was said in public, few Western politicians could seriously imagine asking their soldiers to 'die for Berlin.'" Dean Rusk explained simply and clearly that the wall was not a bad thing for the West: "the probability is that in realistic terms it would make a Berlin settlement easier."[27] And Kennedy himself said in private, "A wall is a hell of a lot better than a war."[28] That fact is missing from every exhibit on the Berlin Wall.

There's another segment of the Berlin Wall at the Nixon Library in Yorba Linda, but according to the Reaganites, Nixon doesn't merit any credit because he pursued détente with the Soviets rather than victory over them. There's a segment of the Berlin Wall at Westminster College in Fulton, Missouri, where Churchill gave his "Iron Curtain" speech—but that was fifteen years before the wall was built.[29]

The George H. W. Bush Library in College Station, Texas, has outdone all of them. The entrance displays a monumental bronze statue of five horses jumping over the rubble of the Berlin Wall (figure 4). The entire sculpture is thirty feet long and weighs seven tons. The sculptor explains, "The horses simply represent humanity and the sculpture represents a victory of the human spirit." He also says the sculpture received the CIA's Agency Seal Medallion for "Best Artistic Expression of the end of the Cold War."[30]

Bush of course was president when the wall fell. The text here claims that he "was very instrumental in . . . the coming down of the Berlin Wall." But in fact he was completely surprised by the events in Berlin.[31] The website www.berlin-wall.net sells a photo titled "Presenting the Berlin Wall to Vice President Dan Quayle." It's actually just a small piece, but that piece is not on display at the Dan Quayle Museum in Huntington, Indiana. In his now-forgotten 2000 presidential campaign, Quayle did claim to have "participated in winning the cold war" as vice president.[32]

FIGURE 4. "The Day the Wall Came Down," sculpture at the George Bush Library, College Station, Texas. It's thirty feet long and weighs seven tons. The sculptor says, "The horses simply represent humanity and the sculpture represents a victory of the human spirit." It received the CIA's Agency Seal Medallion for "Best Artistic Expression of the end of the Cold War." (photo courtesy of George Bush Presidential Library and Museum)

Microsoft has a segment of the wall in its art collection at its Redmond, Washington, campus, outside of Seattle (figure 5). That wall segment, and the rest of the collection here, can be seen by the public by appointment only, and tours are offered one Thursday per month. Visitors learn that the official Microsoft collection includes, in addition to the Berlin Wall section, 4,500 works of art hanging in more than one hundred Microsoft buildings around the world, where they are "displayed for the benefit and enjoyment of Microsoft employees, their guests and our customers." Visitors also learn that the Microsoft Art Collection, including the Berlin Wall section, "represents an important aspect of the culture at Microsoft." That's because, "in partnership with artists and the business community, the Collection takes a leadership role in shaping culture."

And there's more: Microsoft believes that art in the work environment, including its chunk of the Berlin Wall, "enhances employee morale, leads to networking opportunities, reduces stress, increases creativity and productivity, broadens employee appreciation of diversity, encourages discussions and

FIGURE 5. Berlin Wall segment in the Microsoft Art Collection, Redmond, Washington. Wall text reads, "Is this Art?" Answer: yes. It contains "a richly colored, energetic and tightly-composed abstraction." Ronald Reagan is not mentioned. (photo courtesy of Microsoft Art Collection, Accession Number 1996274)

expression of opinions," and "evidences the company's interest in improving quality of life in and outside of the company."[33] So the Berlin Wall section on display here helps make the eighty thousand Microsoft employees happier, more productive workers.

Microsoft's 12-foot-high, 4-foot-wide, 3.5-ton section of the Berlin Wall was a gift from Daimler-Benz AG of Germany, presented to Bill Gates when he visited the Mercedes corporate headquarters in Berlin. The German company "wanted to establish a long-term strategic partnership involving software technology . . . for future in-car computers."[34] Of course it didn't require the fall of the wall for Mercedes to do business with Microsoft, but the 3.5-ton gift does symbolize the victory of capitalism in a big way.

This segment of the wall, like the others, is covered with graffiti. The Microsoft exhibit guide opens with the question, "Is this Art?," pointing out that many people "customarily think of graffiti as little more than urban vandalism." Microsoft wants viewers to know that "the Wall attracted artists—unknown and well-known— . . . whose efforts ranged from scribbled words to complex compositions." This particular chunk contains "a richly colored, energetic and tightly-composed abstraction—a collage of urban graphic gestures."[35] So it belongs in an art collection. Ronald Reagan, however, is not mentioned in Microsoft's exhibit text.

At the other end of the spectrum of cultural capital, another graffiti-covered piece of the Berlin Wall is on display in Las Vegas, at the Main Street Station casino, in the men's room. It's behind a row of three urinals. "Of all the Berlin Wall chunks in museums and memorials across America, we think this one is the most fun," declared the guidebook *Roadside America,* which bills itself as "a caramel-coated-nutbag-full of odd and hilarious travel destinations." Their piece was titled "Pee at the Berlin Wall."[36]

This site was named "Las Vegas' number two historic bathroom" by the Travel Channel in its *Las Vegas Top 10 Bathrooms* documentary and is featured at the Cheapo Las Vegas website.[37] To get there you leave the glitter and crowds on the strip and head downtown—and downscale—to what is politely termed the "budget" area of the city's tourist attractions. Main Street Station has a Victorian/Gay Nineties décor and offers rooms "at the mid-range of the low end" of downtown Las Vegas, as one gambler there explained it to me. The hotel for some reason is a favorite of visiting Hawaiians and of serious gamblers who come for what I was told was one of the most liberal craps games in town.

On the way to the men's room you pass the quarter slots and video poker and $5 blackjack tables. The piece of the Berlin Wall in the men's room is about four feet high and six feet long. You're not really supposed to urinate on the wall but rather in the standard urinals attached to it. Above the wall and the row of urinals is a plaque reading, "Gentlemen: The Berlin Wall . . . over 100 people were killed trying to escape to freedom." The plaque does not mention Reagan. The hotel says that women who want to see the wall can ask a security guard to make sure the coast is clear. The urinal/Berlin Wall is featured at the website Urinal.net, "the best place to piss away your time on the internet."[38]

In 2009, on the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the wall, a commemorative "art event" was held in Los Angeles, not far from the Reagan Library. Described as "the most ambitious commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall outside of Germany," the event was staged across the street from LACMA, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, by the Wende Museum, a wonderful Culver City repository of artifacts of Cold War life in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.[39] The event was in two parts: "The Wall Along Wilshire," segments of the real wall billed as "the longest stretch of the Berlin Wall in the world outside of Berlin," on display across the street from LACMA, indefinitely; and "The Wall Across Wilshire," a three-hour event at which "60 feet of specially-constructed material" were erected blocking the street, "bringing traffic to a stop for three hours on one of the busiest and most important thoroughfares in Los Angeles" (figure 6). At midnight on November 8, 2009, "select segments of the Wall" were "destroyed by invited dignitaries" and by a wild crowd.[40] A street party followed. The twelve-hundred-word press release didn't mention Ronald Reagan.

The art part of the project consisted of commissions to artists to paint the two "Berlin Walls" with images expressing "their creative response to the Walls in our lives." Among the artists selected were Shepard Fairey, who did the iconic Obama "Hope" poster, and a French muralist named Thierry Noir. In interviews with the *Los Angeles Times,* Fairey said his painting on the wall in L.A. was an "antiwar, anti-containment piece" that "makes a parallel to the Wall of Palestine." Noir said his painting would draw an analogy between the Berlin Wall and the border wall between the United States and Mexico—the point being that "every wall is not built forever."[41]

FIGURE 6. The Wende Museum's "Wall Across Wilshire" event to commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Los Angeles, November 9, 2009. The artists said the wall that separated East and West Berlin is like the walls today separating Israel and Palestine and the United States and Mexico. (photo by Antoine Themistocleous/The Wende Museum)

So the wall separating East and West Berlin, communism and freedom, is like the wall separating Israel and Palestine and the one separating the United States and Mexico. The Berlin Wall prevented victims of communism from reaching freedom in the West, the way the Israeli wall prevents victims of Zionism from returning to their homes in Palestine, the way the U.S. border wall prevents Mexicans from entering their historic territory. That's the meaning of the fall of the Berlin Wall "in our lives" today, according to "the most ambitious commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall outside of Germany." Back at the Reagan Library in Simi Valley, one can only imagine the dismay at the range and diversity of public commemorations of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War.

TWENTY-ONE

Harry Truman's Amazing Museum

Who started the Cold War? Did the Cold War have to be militarized, or could it have been limited to an economic and political contest? Did it have to be organized around nuclear weapons promising "mutually assured destruction"? Were there alternatives in the beginning, in 1947–48? These are questions Harry Truman faced when he ascended to the presidency after FDR's death. Truman's defenders give him credit for seeing the aggressive nature of the Soviet threat and for his firm and uncompromising response, especially the creation of NATO, a military alliance to defend Western Europe from Soviet attack. Truman's critics ever since 1947 have argued that the Soviet Union was concerned primarily with the defense of its own borders, with preventing another German invasion. In this view, the "Eastern bloc" countries were occupied by the Red Army and ruled as Soviet satellites primarily as a buffer zone between Russia and Germany—bad for the Poles, the Hungarians, and the rest but not a threat to West Germany, Italy, or France.

You might expect the Truman Library in Independence, Missouri, to make the case that Truman was right—the way the Reagan Library, the JFK Library, the LBJ Library, and all the rest make the case for their presidents. You might expect the Truman Library to instruct visitors on the significance of the Soviet threat in the late 1940s, and the wisdom of the Truman Doctrine and the creation of NATO. But the Truman Library contains a huge surprise: it tells visitors that Truman might have been wrong.

The Truman Library is unique among presidential libraries in that it informs visitors that historians are divided about the president's decisions, and still debating them. That fact is declared at the beginning of the exhibits in

what the historian Benjamin Hufbauer rightly calls "a remarkable text." It is worth quoting in full because it is "so antithetical to the displays at most other presidential libraries."[1]

> The years of Harry Truman's presidency are crowded with significant and controversial events. No single, universally accepted account of this period exists. Historians and non-experts alike bring a variety of perspectives to the study of these momentous times. Sifting through the same evidence, they often reach conflicting conclusions.
>
> This exhibition presents one interpretation of the Truman presidency. There are other ways of looking at the subjects presented here. As you visit the galleries, you will encounter flipbooks that highlight some of these alternative views. These different viewpoints are reminders that the history of the Truman years is not settled. It is constantly being disputed, reviewed and revised. New research continually emerges to challenge accepted facts and alter the story. . . . . The diverse voices in this exhibition also acknowledge an important truth: History never speaks with one voice. It is always under debate—a manuscript that is continually being revised, and is never complete.[2]

The room "How the Cold War Began" features a nine-screen video documentary outlining the Cold War's origins, accompanied by wall text. The history here is the standard version, but the wall text concludes with a startling sentence for anyone who has visited other presidential libraries: In announcing the Truman Doctrine in March 1947, the president included "a broad pledge to 'support free peoples resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.' Years later, critics argued this sweeping language helped guide the nation into a conflict in Vietnam that did not involve America's national security."[3]

This acknowledgment of critics is elaborated in a flip book of dissenting views titled "Was the Cold War Necessary?" (figure 36). (The "flip books" are three-ring binders with pages that visitors can flip through.) This collection starts with contemporaries like Henry Wallace and includes more recent comments by historians. The introductory page reads as follows: "Some historians question the wisdom of the President's actions during the early Cold War years. They argue that a less confrontational approach toward the Soviets—one which sought to understand the fears the Soviet Union had about its vulnerability to invasion from the West—might have prevented a long and costly confrontation that lasted decades." Of course not all visitors read the flip book. But as Hufbauer writes, "The very fact that it exists" has genuine significance.[4]

FIGURE 36. Truman Library "Dissenting Views" flip book, "Was the Cold War Necessary?" (photo by Bruce Mathews, courtesy of the Harry S. Truman Library)

In the same room with the flip book "Was the Cold War Necessary?" visitors find an exhibit titled "Architects of Containment," describing the ideas of George F. Kennan and others. The "Featured Document" here is George Kennan's Long Telegram from Moscow, written in February 1946. It provided the rationale for the policy of containment that was followed for the next forty years: Kennan described the foreign policy of the USSR as a combination of the traditional Russian fear of the West with a new fanaticism coming from "Marxist dogma." Even worse, he said, the Kremlin was "impervious to logic or reason." But Stalin was "highly sensitive to the logic of force," and he knew the USSR was far weaker than the United States. Outside the Soviet bloc, Kennan argued, communism could gain support only by feeding on what he called "diseased tissue." The solution, he concluded, was to strengthen democratic institutions everywhere, maintain U.S. military superiority, and wait for the eventual demise of the USSR.

Kennan's Long Telegram was the center of an exhibit at Princeton's Firestone Library gallery in honor of Kennan's one hundredth birthday. Kennan was Princeton class of '25. Princeton's press release declared that the Long Telegram "ranks in the annals of U.S. foreign policy documents with Washington's Farewell Address, the Monroe Doctrine and Wilson's Fourteen Points." The exhibition, Princeton proudly proclaimed, featured "the

8,000-word, 17-page telegram . . . on display for the first time in its entirety—in an 18-foot case."[5]

Next at the Truman Library comes the exhibit "10 Fateful Months," which started in fall 1949: the Soviet A-bomb blast, the Chinese revolution, the invasion of South Korea, and the rise of McCarthyism. Fears that American cities could become the next Hiroshimas are documented with the Civil Defense booklet "Just in Case Atom Bombs Fall." The Korean War exhibit reports not only that 54,000 Americans died there but also that more than a million Koreans and Chinese died. Counting the dead on the other side is profoundly significant, and is missing from the Vietnam exhibits at other presidential libraries.

Even more remarkably, the exhibit reports that "late in the war," Truman "received several bitter letters from parents of American soldiers killed in Korea." One display case exhibits a Purple Heart sent to Truman by William Banning, along with a "poignant and stinging letter" expressing the wish that the president's daughter had been killed in Korea as Mr. Banning's son had been.[6] You won't find anything remotely like that in the Nixon Library's Vietnam exhibit—even though combat medals were also returned to the White House late in that war.

The Korean War gets one entire wall, which includes a video monitor showing documentary footage and photos of the war and "soundsticks" where visitors listen to a four-minute loop of veterans recalling their experiences.[7] It's hard to convey just how traumatic the Korean War was, and the exhibit doesn't really succeed. Sarah Palin, for one, conceded that she "didn't really understand why there was a North Korea and a South Korea" when she ran for vice president in 2008.[8] Undoubtedly she wasn't the only American who didn't understand, in 2008 or indeed in 1950. Korea in 1950 was "truly obscure," as Derek Leebaert writes: "never before an American interest, never a European possession, always a byword for savagery."[9]

But after the victory of the communists in China and the Soviet A-bomb test, the invasion of South Korea by the Communist North prompted Truman to mobilize a UN defense of the South. The museum explains that part, and it suggests that, as Leebaert writes, "the war became a protracted agony"—partly because the South Koreans were led by the corrupt and unpopular government of Syngman Rhee and because U.S. troops proved to be outnumbered and unequal to fighting the Communists.[10]

The exhibits do not mention the horrifying firepower the United States unleashed on a small country. Between 1950 and 1953, the United States dropped as many bombs on Korea as it dropped in all of World War II, "leaving hardly a building standing in the northern and central parts of the country, and driving much of the population quite literally underground." The navy played its part with unprecedented shelling of coastal areas. The city of Wosun, according to Jon Halliday and Bruce Cumings, was bombarded around the clock from the sea for forty-two days and nights, "the longest sustained naval or air bombardment of a city in history," according to one admiral.[11] And yet North Korea did not give up.

General Douglas MacArthur gets a great deal of coverage at the museum. The World War II hero who was at the time heading the U.S. occupation of Japan, MacArthur was named commander in chief of the UN forces in Korea after the North invaded. When all seemed darkest for the United States, in September 1950, MacArthur made his "breathtaking" move: the amphibious Inchon landing, which placed a marine division 150 miles behind enemy lines. He then demanded "unconditional surrender" and sent U.S. forces across the 38th parallel toward the Chinese border, confident the Chinese would not intervene. He was wrong; Chinese troops crossed the Yalu River and forced the Americans into "the longest retreat in U.S. military history."[12] In 1951, American dead and wounded totaled 100,000, and most of them had been drafted. In the first year and a half of the Korean War, America suffered as many casualties as in the first twenty months of combat in World War II—and suddenly it looked like the American force could be annihilated and the entire Korean peninsula taken over by the Chinese. MacArthur had made "a mistake of apocalyptic proportions," David Halberstam wrote; he led American forces to "an epic disaster."[13] That judgment is missing from the museum.

MacArthur now made it clear that he wanted war with China: there was "no substitute for victory," he declared.[14] Truman of course wanted no war with China. MacArthur's defiance of the president in April 1951 led Truman to assert civilian control over the military and fire MacArthur. MacArthur replied that it was "a new and heretofore unknown and dangerous concept that the members of our armed forces owe primary allegiance or loyalty to those who temporarily exercise the authority of the executive branch of the government rather than to the country and its Constitution which they are sworn to defend. No proposition could be more dangerous."[15]

The general returned to immense adulation. At his first stop, Hickam Field in Hawaii, 100,000 cheered him; in San Francisco, half a million showed up

for his speech. Next came Washington, where a White House staffer circulated a mock "Schedule for Welcoming General MacArthur":

12:30 wades ashore from submarine. . . .
12:40 Parade to the Capitol with General MacArthur riding on an elephant
1:00 General MacArthur addresses members of Congress
1:30–1:49 applause for General MacArthur
1:50 Burning of the Constitution
1:55 Lynching of Secretary [of State Dean] Acheson
2:00 21-atomic bomb salute.[16]

MacArthur's address to the joint session of Congress—his "old soldiers just fade away" speech—was wildly successful. Long the "darling of the far right," MacArthur had "never altered his contempt" for FDR, Stanley Weintraub writes, and "he was rigidly hard-line in his doctrinaire anti-Communism."[17] The right hoped he would be their candidate for president in 1952 against the increasingly unpopular Truman. He declined, and in the 1952 Republican primary the moderate Eisenhower faced Senator Robert A. Taft, who had been a leading opponent of the New Deal. Taft ran as a supporter of MacArthur and nearly won the nomination in one of the most bitter convention battles in Republican history. Taft was rumored to have planned to offer the vice presidential slot to MacArthur, and he did get MacArthur named keynote speaker at the 1952 Republican National Convention. But despite conservative enthusiasm for using atomic bombs to defeat world communism, the USSR's successful A-bomb test in 1949 convinced Truman that containment rather than victory should be America's policy in the Cold War.

At the Truman Library the MacArthur controversy is given its own section, which includes wall-mounted soundsticks that provide two-minute audio excerpts from Truman's national television and radio address announcing the firing of the general and another featuring MacArthur's speech to Congress. The museum displays eleven documents about MacArthur, totaling thirty-three pages, whereas the rest of the Korean War gets four documents totaling eight pages.

The museum also displays a "Dissenting Views" flip book on the MacArthur controversy, and three of the eleven documents exhibited are letters from ordinary people to Truman opposing his action. One example: "Just because the mule is symbolic of Missouri doesn't mean you have to be the biggest jackass in the history of the United States" (from Mrs. Joan Rountree, of Buffalo, New York).[18]

Finally there are the comment books. The Truman Library has a total of forty-seven volumes of comments written by visitors. MacArthur is a big topic, according to Hufbauer, who found this exchange on facing pages:

> I was a soldier in occupied Japan when Pres. Truman fired General MacArthur for trying to win the Korean war! . . . This event has stuck in my craw ever since. Howard, Washington USA.
>
> I disagree. I served under MacArthur in WWII. He had an excessive ego. He thought he could disobey orders of his commander in chief. And Harry did the right thing when he fired him—hey Howard, read your Constitution.[19]

The comment books also discuss the "Dissenting Views" flip books:

> What an excellent way to get the message across that there are tough questions we Americans need to ask and there are no quick answers.
>
> I like the different perspectives.
>
> I like this museum. You get to see both sides of this issues.

And of course there are the inevitable critics:

> Too much political correctness has crept into the library's exhibits, along with much Monday morning quarterbacking.[20]

MacArthur has his own memorial half a continent away, and it's considerably grander than Truman's. It has four buildings, not just one, located at "beautifully landscaped" MacArthur Square in downtown Norfolk, Virginia. The museum is housed in Norfolk's nineteenth-century city hall, a National Historic Place. As the memorial guide explains, "A monumental rotunda is the General and Mrs. MacArthur's final resting place. They lie surrounded by inscriptions, banners and flags heralding his long and glorious career. Nine separate galleries arranged in two levels circle the rotunda and tell the story of General MacArthur." Of course the museum also has a gift shop, which "displays General MacArthur's 1950 Chrysler Imperial limousine which he used from 1950 to the end of his life." A visit to the MacArthur Memorial, the website declares, can "renew your faith in those American values of

Duty-Honor-Country, values which motivated Douglas MacArthur as he served our nation through some of its greatest crises and finest hours."

All this is in Norfolk because MacArthur didn't want to be buried in Arlington National Cemetery. In 1961 he arranged to give the city of Norfolk all his "trophies, medals, prizes, decorations, uniforms, flags, swords, battle souvenirs, personal papers, documents, records and other personal memorabilia." In exchange, the city restored its historic 1850 city hall to house this collection.

The collection is big: the MacArthur archives contain two million documents, 86,000 photos, and 111 motion picture films. It also contains the general's collection of 5,000 books, "augmented by gifts and purchases of books concerning the General, his times, and his associates." In the museum, nine permanent galleries display MacArthur's "treasures" including "19th and 20th century medals, flags, paintings, weapons. . . . [P]orcelain, Jade and Cloisonne are also displayed." Of course the museum also displays "the General's trademark military cap, corncob pipe, and sunglasses." Note: the MacArthur Memorial in Norfolk has no "Dissenting Views" flip books.

There's one other thing missing: the MacArthur Memorial doesn't have an exhibit on the Truman-MacArthur controversy. Indeed it barely mentions Korea.[21] Once again, World War II is everything; the Cold War has been forgotten.

I asked Charlie Knight, curator of the MacArthur Memorial in Roanoke, where to find an exhibit presenting MacArthur's side of the controversy with Truman. He explained that you have to go to a different MacArthur memorial site: the MacArthur Museum of Arkansas Military History in Little Rock's MacArthur Park. Little Rock is MacArthur's birthplace. Here visitors can read a roomful of wall text that begins, "On April 11, 1951 President Harry S. Truman relieved General Douglas MacArthur from all his commands for publicly criticizing governmental policies in the Korean War. MacArthur received a hero's welcome home while Truman was widely scorned. The subsequent controversy created an enduring debate over the issue of civilian authority over the military, limited war versus total war and the containment of communism. The dismissal of MacArthur by Truman created a political controversy which remains today."[22] That's not bad.

Many cities in the United States and around the Pacific have MacArthur Parks, but the one with the biggest and best Cold War–era monument is Los Angeles (figure 37). The name was changed from Westlake Park in 1942 in honor of the general's World War II exploits. But the MacArthur Memorial

FIGURE 37. MacArthur Memorial, MacArthur Park, Los Angeles. The memorial was erected after President Harry Truman removed MacArthur from command in Korea. It displays his famous motto, "No substitute for victory"—a veiled criticism of Truman for accepting a stalemate in Korea rather than following MacArthur's strategy of going to war against China. (photo by David Weiner)

in the park dates from the Cold War, indeed from the period immediately after his firing by Truman in 1951: fund-raising began in 1952, and the monument was completed in 1955.

It's an amazing structure: the inevitable bronze statue is displayed against a curving wall containing quotes from the general, including his famous motto, "No substitute for victory"—a veiled criticism of Truman for accepting a stalemate in Korea rather than following MacArthur's strategy of going to war against China. But the amazing part is not the text; it's the mirror pool that lies in front of the statue: it contains "islands" representing the Philippines—"which MacArthur helped liberate," as the *Los Angeles Times* explained helpfully in 1951. Note: the pool does not contain a representation of the Korean peninsula.

Fund-raising for the MacArthur Memorial in MacArthur Park in Los Angeles was led by the conservative and Republican political forces in the city: Norman Chandler, publisher of the *L.A. Times;* David Hearst, publisher of the city's Hearst paper, the *Herald-Express;* the president of the Bank of

America; Mayor Fletcher Bowron, a onetime liberal fighting an attack by McCarthyites; and the secretary of the AFL Central Labor Council, who had been fighting the Reds in the city's CIO unions.[23] In related news, the *L.A. Times* reported that "the National Collegiate MacArthur Clubs" had unanimously endorsed the proposed memorial, on the grounds that MacArthur Park was "now taking the place of Pershing Square as a meeting place for Red-tinged soapbox orators to sell their wares. We feel such a statue will serve as a warning that America is awake." The organization claimed members on sixteen college campuses, including Pepperdine.[24]

And when the memorial was finally completed, the *L.A. Times* made the politics behind it perfectly clear in a page 1 story. "There is very good reason to believe we would not be in our present fix had MacArthur been allowed to drive the China Reds out of Korea," the editorial columnist Bill Henry wrote. Formosa was the issue of the day at that point, and MacArthur was quoted as saying, "As a matter of military urgency under no circumstances must Formosa fall under Communist control. Such an eventuality would at once threaten the freedom of the Philippines and the loss of Japan and might well force our frontier back to the coast of California, Oregon and Washington." The writer concluded, "This is a serious situation, the aftermath of the sorry muddle in Korea which cost MacArthur his job and the free nations a solid victory."[25] The monument might not refer to Korea, but its backers certainly did.

If the MacArthur Memorial in Los Angeles's MacArthur Park provided a rallying point for Republicans and anticommunists in the mid-1950s, by the 1990s it had a different meaning: a 1997 headline read "Filipino Veterans Chain Selves to Statue in Protest." Forty Filipino World War II veterans were protesting the denial of benefits they had been promised under the GI Bill at the end of the war. Explaining why he had chained himself to the statue of his former commander, seventy-five-year-old Aniceto Montaos said, "My only regret is that MacArthur has died. If he were alive today, I know that he wouldn't abandon us."[26] Once again, it was World War II that was a living thing, while the Cold War went unmentioned.

The MacArthur Memorial in Roanoke presents the sharpest possible contrast to the Truman Library in Independence. The Roanoke memorial exemplifies the history museum as celebration of heroism: visitors are invited to view the general's battle trophies and thereby "renew their faith" in his values. The Truman Library takes the opposite approach, informing visitors, "This exhibition presents one interpretation of the Truman presidency. There are other ways of looking at the subjects presented here." It's a simple idea—but, especially in the context of Cold War commemoration, a thrilling one.

Conclusion

HISTORY, MEMORY, AND THE COLD WAR

Most historians' work on memory deals with the past people can't forget—the Holocaust, the Civil War, Pearl Harbor. This book deals with a past that people seem to have trouble remembering—or don't want to remember, at least not the "good war" framework for the Cold War that they have been told about by conservatives.

An example: the "Cold War Victory Medal," proposed by the usual lineup of conservative groups, was approved by Congress in 1992 (figure 38). The medal was to commemorate military service during "the historic victory in the Cold War," and anyone who served in the military between September 2, 1945, and December 26, 1991, was eligible. The medal consists of an allegorical figure of Freedom in a landscape "suggestive of the Fulda Gap, the anticipated point of attack by Communist forces in Europe during the Cold War." It includes a sword, an eagle, a rising sun, and the inscription "Promoting Peace and Stability."[1] The medal can be purchased for $24.95 from Foxfall Medals of Madison, Virginia.

But the legislation did not require the Department of Defense to issue the medal, and it never has. Apparently the Pentagon did not consider the Cold War worth commemorating. That became official policy in 2002, when an official statement was released: "The Department of Defense will not be creating a Cold War Service medal, and commemorative medals being sold by private vendors are not authorized for wear on military uniforms."[2]

It gets worse: the same Department of Defense announcement informed interested parties that the only official Cold War service commemoration was the Cold War Recognition Certificate, established by Congress in 1998, issued by the army, and signed by Donald Rumsfeld. Those eligible, however, included not only everyone who served in the military between 1945 and

FIGURE 38. Cold War Victory Medal, for sale by Foxfall Medals of Madison, Virginia. An allegorical figure of Freedom sits in a landscape "suggestive of the Fulda Gap, the anticipated point of attack by Communist forces in Europe during the Cold War." The Pentagon in 2002 prohibited wearing it on military uniforms. (© Foxfall Medals, photo by David Weiner)

1991 but also everyone employed by the federal government anytime during those forty-six years. The Cold War Veterans Association, which had lobbied for the medal, pointed out that "this includes temporary employees of the Postal Service during the Holiday season, and thus the potential number of eligible is very large—perhaps in excess of 50 million people."[3]

Other efforts to commemorate the Cold War continue, with the same results they've always had. Twenty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a bill was introduced in the Senate—as it had been many times in previous years—"to require the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a theme study to identify sites and resources to commemorate and interpret the Cold War." Senator Harry Reid of Nevada told his colleagues that the United States prevailed over the USSR because of "the technological achievement, patriotism, and sacrifice of the people of the great State of Nevada." In case that sounded too parochial, he quickly added, "and of others throughout the Nation."[4]

"The time has come," Reid said, "to recognize and honor those Americans who toiled in relative obscurity to bring us victory during this most dangerous conflict in our Nation's history." He listed several "obvious Cold War sites of significance": "intercontinental ballistic missile launch sites; flight training centers; communications and command centers, such as Cheyenne Mountain, Colorado; and nuclear weapons test sites, such as the Nevada Test Site." He concluded, "A grateful Nation owes a debt of supreme gratitude to the silent heroes of the Cold War."[5]

Several months later, a Senate subcommittee held a hearing on a number of bills regarding memorials and national parks. Along with Harry Reid's Cold War memorial bill, another bill under consideration would "revise the boundary of the Martin Van Buren National Historic Site." Hillary Clinton testified in favor of that one but didn't say anything about the Cold War memorial proposal. But then she was the senator from New York, and the Cold War bill seemed to focus more on Nevada. That bill was never voted on.[6]

There is an American Cold War Museum, but as of this writing (2012), it exists only on the Internet (at www.coldwar.org) and in a mobile exhibit of artifacts related to the U-2 incident of 1960.[7] The pilot who was shot down in that incident was Francis Gary Powers, and his son is the current head of the museum. The website declares, "The Cold War Museum will lease a modest size two story building and secure storage facility at Vint Hill, located in Fauquier County, Virginia," fifteen miles southeast of Dulles airport. Two local industrial development authorities are offering the museum nine months of free storage space and putting up $100,000 "to renovate a 2000 sq ft building for museum use."[8] And its mission statement says nothing about celebrating victory or honoring those who defended freedom; it says only that the museum is "dedicated to education, preservation, and research on the global, ideological, and political confrontations between East and West."[9]

Meanwhile a bill to designate this Cold War Museum as the "National Cold War Museum" was introduced in the House in 2008 by Representative Tom Davis, in whose district the office of the Cold War Museum is found. His bill had no cosponsors, and no hearings were held to consider its merits. Since then the proposed legislation has been not been reintroduced.[10]

Why did the conservatives' "good war" framework for understanding the Cold War recede in visibility in American culture—despite massive efforts to keep it in the foreground? When Lynne Cheney, wife of the former vice

president, was chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1987, she offered an explanation. An official pamphlet titled *American Memory* opened with her statement, "A refusal to remember . . . is a primary characteristic of our nation."[11] That explanation, however, has been disproven by the "memory boom," by the "Greatest Generation" phenomenon, and by the survey finding that 57 percent of Americans said they had visited a history museum or historical site in the past year.[12]

Historians have been writing about memory for a while now, but Cold War memory seems to offer an exception to the approaches they have taken and the theories they have offered. In the volume *Memory and American History,* David Thelen writes that historical memory is "profoundly intertwined with the basic identities of individuals, groups and cultures."[13] One thinks, for example, of the "rebel" identity claimed by today's neo-Confederates. In the case of Cold War memory, however, people have not intertwined their identities with the official story.

David Blight's award-winning work on Civil War memory describes the successful construction of a "mythic" war, in which the public was persuaded that slavery did not underlie the conflict and that Confederate soldiers fought just as heroically as Union troops.[14] In the case of the Cold War, however, efforts at mythmaking have not met any significant popular embrace.

Emily Rosenberg's recent study of Pearl Harbor in American memory explores conflicts over how "Pearl Harbor" should be represented, and who should control remembrance. She emphasizes the significance of "memory activists" who contested the meaning of those events. In contrast, Cold War memory has exhibited neither instability nor contestation.[15] It's the persistent absence of popular battles over its meaning that needs to be explained. The memory activists engaged with the Cold War have either focused on tangential issues, like the Christian defenders of the hilltop cross in San Diego who claimed it was a Korean War monument, or emphasized the post–Cold War cleanup of weapon sites rather than the original mission of those sites. Other memory activists have been completely ineffective, like the advocates of the Cold War victory medal.

Rosenberg highlights the instability of popular memory in the case of Pearl Harbor, shifting from a call for vigilance in the 1950s to an argument for a better intelligence agency in the 1970s to a warning in the 1980s against an "economic Pearl Harbor." But in the case of Cold War museums, the only instability I found was in the shift away from the Cold War entirely to more popular topics: the Winston Churchill Memorial shifted its original focus—the Iron Curtain speech—to its current emphasis on recalling the "blood, sweat and tears" of the Battle of Britain.

Benedict Anderson wrote about the construction of "imagined communities," exploring how people have developed a sense of belonging to a group—usually a nation—for which they were willing to fight and die.[16] Cold War ideologists constructed such an imagined community; they called it "the free world." But here I have documented the apparent skepticism of the public about their past membership in it.

David Lowenthal writes in *The Past Is a Foreign Country* about "uses" for "memories of imaged idealism and heroic sacrifice." They include the way present-day ideas can be said to be valid because of their similarity to ideas in the past. Andreas Huyssen makes a related argument when he sees today's "memory culture" invoking a stable past whose qualities are absent from our present.[17] Neither of these approaches helps explain the distinctive phenomena surrounding Cold War memory.

Edward Linenthal writes in *Sacred Ground* about memorial sites "where Americans of various ideological persuasions come . . . to compete for ownership of powerful national stories and to argue about the nature of heroism [and] the meaning of war."[18] What is striking about the Cold War memorial sites is that this type of competition for ownership has not taken place.

Erika Doss documented and analyzed the "memorial mania" that has swept the country over the past few decades—"thousands of new memorials to executed witches, enslaved Africans, victims of terrorism, victims of lynching, dead astronauts, aborted fetuses. . . ." These, she argued, reveal "heightened anxieties about who and what should be remembered in America" and testify to "the fevered pitch of public feelings such as grief, gratitude, fear, shame or anger." Kirk Savage too has argued that historical monuments today "are expected to be . . . journeys of emotional discovery."[19] But the Cold War monuments and museums discussed here are an exception. They were not created as the result of "an urgent desire" to remember the emotions provoked by "tragedy and trauma"; instead they had a narrow ideological origin and a didactic intent.

Following Doss's lead in examining the feelings and emotions invoked at memorial sites, it seems the dominant emotional note in a great deal of Cold War memorialization has shifted from triumph to reassurance. At places like the Nevada Test Site, Hanford B Reactor, the Titan Missile Museum, and Missouri's radioactive mound, the message started out as a triumphant one: good defeated evil in the Cold War. But the central emotion has changed: visitors

are told that the dangers at former nuclear weapons sites are not serious, and that the remaining hazards are being managed, monitored, and cleaned up by experts. But this official reassurance is not completely convincing, and in any case it's far from the more intense emotions—grief, fear, shame, anger—evoked at the more successful sites Doss examines. Perhaps that helps explain why the Cold War memorials emphasizing reassurance have aroused so little enthusiasm in comparison to the monuments she analyzes.

Alison Landsberg's work on "prosthetic memory" shows how museums can enlist media to give visitors an experience that provides "a more personal, deeply felt memory of a past event through which he or she did not live." For example, museums of slavery or the Holocaust make it possible for "these memories to be acquired by anyone, regardless of skin color [or] ethnic background." That, she argues, "creates the conditions for ethical thinking" by "encouraging people to feel connected to, while recognizing the alterity of, the 'other.'"[20] The purpose of the Victims of Communism Museum was something like that—to give visitors the experience of victims of the Gulag, of Mao's Great Leap Forward, and so on, so that they could identify with them and commit themselves to the fight to end communism in China and elsewhere. But that museum was never built, and instead the sponsors settled for a traditional memorial statue that has no power to shape the imagination or experience of visitors.

This failure of conservative Cold War commemoration is all the more remarkable in light of the continuing triumph of "the Age of Reagan." The effort to construct a public memory around the "good war" framework for the Cold War was undertaken by the same political and media forces that convinced Americans it was morning in America. It was part of the same ideological campaign that transformed a once marginal movement into a hegemonic power that dominated American life for at least three decades. It drew on half a century of political rhetoric describing a world struggle between freedom and its enemies, rhetoric that was shared by both parties and that went largely unchallenged. But we have seen that control of the mainstream media, and power over the framing of public discourse, did not bring popular acceptance of this message. The problem is to sort out the elements of popular apathy, skepticism, and resistance that led to the failure of what should have been an ideological success story, at least according to theorists of hegemony.

The simplest explanation focuses on the lack of deaths in the Cold War as the reason for popular refusal to accept the triumphalist view. The most

successful memorials, Ian Gambles writes, commemorate atrocities or death on a large scale. The Cold War, he argues, "offers almost none of these . . . because it was essentially a period of peace" in the United States, because "what conflict there was tended to be limited, managed, and elsewhere."[21]

The Cold War memory activists understood that requirement and framed their projects precisely in terms of a huge death toll: the Victims of Communism Memorial has always claimed 100 million victims, which, they have always pointed out, was a larger number than any other struggle in world history. One hundred million is "surely the largest number of victims ever commemorated in one monument," Savage observes.[22] And numbers count in claims for significance: the Korean War Memorial advocates argued for decades that they deserved a monument equal to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial because their war had almost as many casualties. Even the pumpkin patch National Historic Landmark was justified on the grounds that millions of lives were at risk in the Cold War. The question is why some claims regarding the meaning and significance of massive death are embraced while others are greeted with skepticism.

Another explanation, also suggested by Gambles, lies in what he calls "the dearth of powerful symbols." He found "almost nothing to express the meaning of the Cold War in symbolic form."[23] Pearl Harbor has the battleship *Arizona,* the Civil War has Gettysburg, the Alamo has the Alamo. But this argument neglects the fact that, for the Cold War, we have an obvious and powerful symbolic object: massive segments of the Berlin Wall, its most powerful rhetorical image, from Kennedy ("Ich bin ein Berliner") to Reagan ("Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall!"). It may not have the emotional power of the USS *Arizona* memorial, but its display in all the presidential museums of the era, and dozens of other places, testifies to its significance, if not to its popularity, as a symbol.

But the notion that monuments require actual relics, or that they occupy "sacred ground," is an obsolete one. The Lincoln Memorial stands on a site that didn't even exist in Lincoln's lifetime: the site was dredged from the Potomac by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1914. While other Lincoln museums display actual relics—the clothes he was wearing when he was assassinated, the clock from his office, his stovepipe hat—the Lincoln Memorial contains no such objects. "It is pure representation," Savage writes: a colossal statue, and the words of the Gettysburg Address carved into one wall.[24]

Another possibility is suggested by Michael Kammen's provocative argument that "memory is more likely to be activated by contestation, and

amnesia is more likely to be induced by the desire for reconciliation."[25] The lack of contestation of the conservative framing of the Cold War is significant, at least in the public sphere (again with a few notable exceptions), but "the desire for reconciliation" does not seem to be a factor here—at least not between the mainstream and the right in America. The exemplary case of reconciliation through silence came on Pearl Harbor's tenth anniversary in 1951, which coincided with the rise of Japan as a new ally against the USSR and China and a crucial base in the Korean War. But reconciliation with Russia since 1991 can hardly explain the current status of Cold War commemoration. The problem here is the opposite: not official silence but rather two decades of official noise, greeted by public indifference.

Another approach can be found in John Bodnar's argument that the federal government's interest in commemorating patriotism and national unity is often contested by local activists with different concerns. Their memorial observances often express ethnic or class consciousness or regional identity.[26] That describes some of the Rocky Flats case. But for the rest of Cold War commemoration, we do not find vernacular challenges to official ideology.

The lack of popular engagement with the conservative celebration of Cold War victory more likely stems from skepticism over its premises and resistance to its conclusions. People may not accept what Eric Hobsbawm described as the "nightmare scenario of the Muscovite super-power poised for the immediate conquest of the globe, and directing a godless 'communist world conspiracy,' ever ready to overthrow the realms of freedom." People may find implausible the notion that—Hobsbawm again—"the globe was so unstable that a world war might break out at any moment, and was held at bay only by unceasing mutual deterrence."[27] Cold War strategists insist that "deterrence worked," but the public may not find that argument convincing. As Gambles writes, "It seems uncomfortably as if it might all have been a gigantic waste of time, money, and commitment."[28]

Nobody in the mainstream media, or Congress, or the White House, ever said the Cold War was a gigantic waste. Indeed the message addressed to the public, by Democrats and Republicans alike, was always the opposite. The official message is that it was all worth it, because we won and they lost. And yet this message does not seem to have been accepted. Acceptance is the key here, as M. I. Finley suggested. Of course many official claims made about the past are inaccurate and some are completely false. That, Finley writes, is "irrelevant," as long as the claims are accepted.[29] In the case of the officially sanctioned Cold War memory, that acceptance has been refused.

The heart of the conservative argument about the Cold War is that it represented a struggle between good and evil. Here especially the public would be justified in skepticism. U.S. support for unpopular dictators around the world was well known. It isn't hard to see why Cubans might support Fidel and Che against Batista and the United States, or why Vietnamese might fight with Ho Chi Minh against the United States. And it is hard to take seriously the argument that American communists posed a fatal threat to the survival of the country. McCarthyism is seen almost universally as a blot on our history, an affront to freedom rather than a defense of it.

Although conservatives have triumphed politically for the past several decades, the Cold War is hardly the only issue where the public has refused to accept conservative arguments. The right has argued that the Environmental Protection Agency represents government bureaucracy at its worst, but opinion polls show that people overwhelmingly want more protection for the environment, not less. Ditto for OSHA and job safety. The right has argued that deficit reduction should take precedence over job creation; public opinion holds the opposite. The right wants to cut taxes on the rich; a big majority of the public would be happy to tax the rich. All of this has been true from the beginning of the Reagan administration. In this respect, public skepticism about the conservative interpretation of the Cold War is part of a broader pattern rather than an exception to it.

"The lessons of Vietnam" provide a vivid example of popular skepticism about the "good war" framework in conservative Cold War commemoration. Americans had been told that in the Vietnam War the United States was engaged in a struggle of good against evil, but the Saigon government that the United States supported didn't seem to represent "good." Americans were told that communism was innately aggressive, but the communists seemed to be winning in Vietnam because they had more popular support among the Vietnamese than we did. Americans were told the Soviet Union was implacably bent on world domination, but Vietnam seemed to be mostly a civil war among the Vietnamese. Americans were told the Soviets would attack us if we didn't threaten to destroy them, but the Soviets didn't threaten us over Vietnam. And if none of those arguments was true for Vietnam, maybe they weren't true for the rest of the Cold War either.

Critics might respond that Reagan defeated "the Vietnam syndrome." Indeed it was Reagan himself who coined the phrase "Vietnam syndrome"

FIGURE 39. Visitor at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, Washington, D.C. More than 72 million people have visited since it opened in 1982. A monument to loss, it suggests the extent of resistance to conservative Cold War commemoration. (photo by Skyring, wikipedia.org)

when he charged during the 1980 campaign that the Carter administration was "completely oblivious" to the Soviet threat. He also said U.S. troops could have defeated the communists in Vietnam, but Nixon (and LBJ) had been "afraid to let them win."[30] Reagan's 1984 landslide was the result of an economic boom, not a response to his arguments about the "Vietnam syndrome" or his efforts to defeat the USSR around the world. In fact those efforts led to the greatest crisis of his administration, the Iran-Contra affair, when support for anticommunist forces in Nicaragua in defiance of a congressional ban nearly brought down his administration. The fact is that Reagan's revival of the Cold War never had significant popular support.[31]

Across the landscape of Cold War commemoration, there is one exception to the pattern described here of popular indifference and skepticism, one public monument that aroused passionate and widespread public enthusiasm: the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (figure 39). It provides the sharpest possible contrast to the failed Victims of Communism Memorial. More than 72 million people have visited the Vietnam Memorial since it opened in 1982, according to the National Park Service—an incredible number, equivalent to almost one in four Americans.[32] Notably, it is the one monument of the Cold War era that resolutely denies a triumphant interpretation of the conflict. With its sunken black granite walls carrying the names of all 58,000 Americans who died in the war, the memorial steadfastly refuses to celebrate heroism in a battle between good and evil. That's precisely why the design was greeted with unprecedented opposition from the right.

The design also explains why the memorial has had such a massive popular response. As Maya Lin herself declared in her often-quoted design entry, the memorial speaks only of "loss." It does so without explanatory text. Visitors descend as they walk, while the wall gets taller, until it is ten feet high; at the center, at the angle where the two walls meet, the names of the dead surround us and fill our field of vision from top to bottom, left to right. Above and on both sides, we see only the names, and our own reflections, in the black wall. The 72 million people who have visited the Vietnam Veterans Memorial suggest the depth of Americans' rejection of conservative Cold War commemoration.[33]

Epilogue

FROM THE COLD WAR TO THE WAR IN IRAQ

The conservatives failed to persuade the public to understand the Cold War as a good war, a battle between good and evil, a battle the United States won because Ronald Reagan and his allies never accepted liberal ideas about containment and coexistence and détente. Despite their best efforts, the Heritage Foundation, the *National Review,* the *Weekly Standard,* and the rest of the Republican right lost their ideological struggle, launched after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, to convince Americans to think of Reagan's victory over communism as equal to FDR's victory over fascism. The conservatives' museums weren't built, their monuments have been neglected, their ideas mostly forgotten.

But not everyone forgot about the conservative interpretation of the Cold War. Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, and a few of their cohort remembered: America should use its power to defeat and destroy its enemies, not negotiate with them to maintain the status quo or preserve the balance of power (figure 40). After the fall of the Soviet Union, they waited. Then came 9/11, which gave them the pretext they needed. The ideas they had developed during the Cold War were finally put into action—in Iraq.

The foreign policy that led to war in Iraq had been developed over the previous thirty-five years by the faction of the Republican Party that had opposed détente with the Soviet Union. As James Mann shows in *Rise of the Vulcans,* his history of Bush's war cabinet, "the bifurcation of history into Cold War and post–Cold War" for Cheney and Rumsfeld was "ultimately artificial."[1] Cheney and Rumsfeld had always favored preemptive action against enemies. They had argued for decades that a superpower could do what it wanted without the approval of allies or international organizations, and without fear of what others might call "blowback." And they repeatedly

FIGURE 40. Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld in 1975, when Rumsfeld worked as White House chief of staff for President Ford and Cheney was his assistant. The two had opposed détente with the Soviet Union, arguing that the United States should use its power to defeat its enemies, not preserve the balance of power. That notion became the basis thirty-five years later for the U.S. invasion of Iraq. (AP photo/Harvey Georges)

proclaimed that these invasions and wars could be justified as benevolent actions bringing democracy to people oppressed by evil dictators.

After Gerald Ford was defeated in 1976, Cheney and Rumsfeld were out of the White House and had no place in the executive branch for the next thirty years. Cheney became a congressman from Wyoming; Rumsfeld found employment as CEO of Searle Pharmaceuticals. But once Republicans were back in the White House in 1981, Cheney and Rumsfeld were there too, at the heart of the top secret continuity-of-government exercises that would guarantee the survival of a commander in chief during a nuclear war with the Soviets. For the thirty years that they had been out of the White House, Mann writes, Cheney and Rumsfeld "were never far away. They stayed in touch with defense, military, and intelligence officials, who regularly called upon them." They were, he writes, "part of the permanent hidden

national-security apparatus of the United States—inhabitants of a world in which Presidents come and go, but America keeps on fighting."[2]

The striking thing about Cheney's and Rumsfeld's work is that George W. Bush as president started out in the opposite camp. During the 2000 campaign, in the presidential debates, Bush called for a level of "humility" in American foreign policy, and said, "I just don't think it's the role of the United States to walk into a country [and] say, 'We do it this way; so should you.'" Of course that had been the policy of his father when he was president: build alliances, pursue limited but achievable goals; push Saddam out of Kuwait, but don't overthrow his regime or occupy his country.

But once the weak and inexperienced new president appointed Cheney and Rumsfeld, they quickly reeducated him in the ideology the Republican right had proclaimed since the beginning of the Cold War: Eisenhower and Nixon—and his own father, George H.W. Bush—had been wrong. Alliances and international organizations did not guarantee security; instead they restricted America's ability to pursue its interests and achieve its goals. It was not "realism" to negotiate with enemies but weakness. America was not a country like others with interests and security concerns; it was a city on a hill, a beacon of goodness. Bush could be another Jimmy Carter, who had been powerless before the Muslim students holding Americans hostage, or he could be another Reagan, triumphant in a fifty-year struggle against evil. He could be a wimp, or he could be a warrior.

The new president decided he didn't want to be a wimp.

So Saddam was cast in the same role as Stalin and Khrushchev and Brezhnev: an evil tyrant whose regime should not simply be contained. He could be overthrown and therefore should be overthrown. But Congress was incapable of decisive action, diplomacy was a distraction, arms control worthless, and "world opinion" contemptible. The American people should be told that they were in danger and that eliminating the source of danger would also liberate the suffering victims of tyranny abroad.

Rumsfeld in particular had been arguing the conservative Cold War line since the Ford years, when he served as secretary of defense. There he "did more than anyone else to block détente," Mann reports, "and to stiffen American policy toward the Soviet Union." He had always been skeptical about arms control and accommodation with the USSR. Ford and his secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, had continued the Nixonian policy of détente that had so aroused the Republican right, which mobilized in the 1976 primaries to challenge Ford's reelection—with the candidacy of Ronald Reagan.

Cheney at that point was Ford's chief of staff, but he personally opposed détente, and privately urged Ford to abandon it. Reagan fought hard in the primaries, arguing that détente had permitted the Soviets to pull ahead of the United States militarily. Reagan actually defeated Ford in the North Carolina primary—the first time a Republican incumbent president had ever lost a primary election. Ford at first defended détente as "in the best interest of the country," but, Mann reports, "Cheney turned Ford around," and the president accepted the Reaganite platform at the Republican National Convention.[3]

After Ford's defeat in 1976, Cheney went back to Wyoming and ran for Congress. In the House, he always voted for big increases in the military budget and the development of new weapons systems like the MX missile. When the *Washington Post* described him as a "moderate"—a designation many politicians yearn for—Cheney bitterly demanded a correction, stating he was a "conservative."[4]

But although Cheney and Rumsfeld understood the Iraq War in terms of their old Cold War conservative ideology, they quickly came to appreciate the ways the post-9/11 world was different. Thus there arose on the Republican right the phenomenon that became known as "Cold War nostalgia."[5] Even President Bush started saying that during the Cold War we could rely on our enemies; we knew them to be risk-averse and open to negotiation to preserve the status quo—while our new enemies were ruthless and uncompromising and bent on our destruction. Of course that's the opposite of what the same people were saying in the 1970s and 1980s. But that's the way it often is with nostalgia. Someday there will be a museum of the Iraq War, and it should open with a section on the Cold War origins of Bush's policy.

NOTES

Most of the monuments, museums, memorials, and other sites described in this book I visited myself, but for some I relied on published sources, Internet sources, and interviews. In particular I was never able to get a seat on the Hanford tour—the very few available are taken shortly after they are posted on the web—so I relied on the accounts of others who took the tour. In other cases, exhibits I was interested in had already closed by the time I discovered them—in particular, "Private Elvis" at Graceland, which closed the week after I read about it—so I relied on the exhibit website as well as on published accounts. The notes indicate the sources I consulted and interviews I conducted. All quotations of tour guides come from my contemporaneous notes unless otherwise indicated.

INTRODUCTION

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2. "George W. Bush's Third State of the Union Address," http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/George_W._Bush's_Third_State_of_the_Union_Address. See also Arnold Beichman, "The Cold War Was as Much a 'Just War' as World War II," in *CNN's Cold War Documentary: Issues and Controversy,* ed. Arnold Beichman (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2000), xiv.

3. Ellen Schrecker, ed., *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuses of History after the Fall of Communism* (New York: New Press, 2004). Tony Judt uses the term to

describe John Lewis Gaddis's interpretation: Judt, "A Story Still to Be Told," *New York Review,* Mar. 23, 2006. On the distinctive Cold War conception of "freedom," see Eric Foner, *The Story of American Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1999).

4. Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010); Andreas Huyssen, "Monumental Seduction," in *Acts of Memory: Cultural Recall in the Present,* ed. Mieke Bal, Jonathan Crewe, and Leo Spitzer (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 191; Warren Leon and Roy Rosenzweig, eds., *History Museums in the United States: A Critical Assessment* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), xvi; Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen, *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 180, 234.

5. Judt, "A Story"; Leon and Rosenzweig, *History Museums,* xi–xii. Since the publication of that book, there have been a few notable exceptions. Edward Rothstein writes about history museums for the *New York Times;* the *Journal of American History* now runs half a dozen exhibition reviews twice a year.

6. For critiques, see Kirk Savage, *Monument Wars: Washington, D.C., the National Mall, and the Transformation of the Memorial Landscape* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 298–303; and Doss, *Memorial Mania,* 197–207.

7. "SAC Memorial," www.b-47.com/news/sac_memorial.htm; "Preserving Missile Heritage," www.afmissileers.org/SACBACK.jpg. See memorial park map at www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/shared/media/document/AFD-060705-004.pdf; SAC is in section B1 (accessed Apr. 25, 2011). The same monument can also be found on the grounds of the Strategic Air and Space Museum in Ashland, Nebraska.

8. Strategic Air and Space Museum, www.sasmuseum.com/about-us/history/.

9. See Philip Green, *Deadly Logic: The Theory of Nuclear Deterrence* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), esp. 258–59. One of the architects of the Cold War, George Kennan, argued that it had not been necessary. In 1989, after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Kennan said, "I believe it would have happened earlier if we had not insisted on militarizing the rivalry." For Kennan, the USSR "posed little military threat to the West." He thought the whole thing would have been different—no threats of mutual annihilation—if the United States had relied "mostly on economic and political means to resist communist expansion"—what Kennan meant by "containment." Kennan, quoted in Mark Atwood Lawrence, "Friends, not Allies," review of *The Hawk and the Dove: Paul Nitze, George Kennan, and the History of the Cold War* by Nicholas Thompson, *New York Times Book Review,* Sept. 13, 2009, 22.

1. HIPPIE DAY AT THE REAGAN LIBRARY

1. Websites accessed Nov. 17, 2009, unless otherwise noted. Portions of this chapter were originally published in the *LA Weekly,* Sept. 20–26, 1996, 16–17.

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3. Dole, quoted in Ellen Schrecker, ed., *Cold War Triumphalism: The Misuse of History after the Fall of Communism* (New York: New Press, 2005), 4; other quotes in Dinesh D'Souza, "Russian Revolution: How Reagan Won the Cold War," *National Review,* June 6, 2004, www.nationalreview.com/flashback/dsouza200406061619.asp/.

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5. Rick Perlstein, *Before the Storm: Barry Goldwater and the Unmaking of the American Consensus* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1961), 499–504.

6. Kitty Kelly, *Nancy Reagan: The Unauthorized Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991), 224.

7. Paul Kengor, "'That Wall': Reagan's Prodding," *National Review,* June 12, 2007, http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/221231/wall/paul-kengor. In contrast to the conservative interpretation, the leading historian of the Berlin Wall emphasizes the way it served both American and Soviet geopolitical interests: Frederick Taylor, *The Berlin Wall: A World Divided, 1961–1989* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006).

8. John Le Carré, Introduction to *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold* (New York: Pocket Books, 1991), x (introd. dated "December 1989"); Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire* (New York: Metropolitan, 2004), 19.

9. Robert Reinhold, "4 Presidents Join Reagan in Dedicating His Library," *New York Times,* Nov. 5, 1991. Those in attendance also included Reagan's defense secretary, Caspar W. Weinberger, his interior secretary, James G. Watt, and his attorney general, Edwin Meese III.

10. Reagan Library, "Permanent Galleries," www.reaganlibrary.com/airforceone/dtc_home.asp?gid=7.

11. See, for example, www.flickr.com/photos/43527262@N00/451100387, www.flickr.com/photos/30501224@N05/2867879751/.

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13. Reagan Library, "Air Force One," www.reaganlibrary.com/airforceone/.

14. Reagan Library, "Welcome to the Air Force One Pavilion," www.reaganlibrary.com/details_f.aspx?p=LM2023EAF1&h1=3&h2=7&lm=libraryandmuseum&args_a=cms&args_b=33&argsb=N&tx=18&sw=ex_af1. The NASCAR race looms large at the Reagan Library: in 2011 it opened a display featuring the car that won the race Reagan started from Air Force One. Michele Willer-Allred, "NASCAR Show Car Goes on Display at Reagan Library," *Ventura County Star,*

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EPILOGUE

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