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COMMENTS ON FOUR BOOKS  
ON THE READING LIST  
&  
TWO RESEARCH PROJECTS

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Allen S. Whitting, China Crosses the Yalu, Stanford University Press,  
Stanford, California, 1960. Lover again

The Korean war catapulted "New China" into an important force in international relations. In the words of Professor Whitting, the consequences of the conflict put the Peoples Republic of China (PRC) as a "force to be reckoned with in Asia" having demonstrated that the Government in Peking under Mao Tse-tung was "willing and capable to defend its interests against U.S. opposition". The war bedevilled Sino/US and Sino-UN relations. The entry of PRC into the war was therefore a major international event. To have a better perspective of the circumstances surrounding and leading to Peking's involvement as perceived by a western scholar, China Crosses The Yalu has been studied.

In this book, Whitting provides an interesting and at times illuminating background, data and analysis on the Chinese involvement in the Korean war as well as the international implications of PRC's decision to enter this war. Special mention needs to be made on Whitting's hypothesis on the origin of the conflict and China's role. In this connection, it is useful first, to identify the Six general assumptions made on how the war started. These are (i) North Korea (DPRK) initiated it on her own (ii) U.S.S.R. instigated DPRK, (iii) U.S.S.R. and PRC instigated DPRK, (iv) Peking instigated DPRK, (v) USA instigated South Korea (ROK) and (vi) ROK's own initiative to start the conflict.

Dismissing the fifth and sixth possibilities as empty communist propaganda, Whitting then concentrates on the first four possibilities and concludes that all available evidence, agrees with most non-communist conjecture that the "North Korean attack" was "planned and directed by the Soviet Union" and that though Peking must have been aware of the projected "attack" of June 1950 and indeed had strong interest in it, she lacked direct responsibility for its initiation or outcome".

While far from completely exonerating the Chinese in the origin of the conflict, Whitting's analysis clearly reflect that Peking was not enthusiastic about involvement. China, after "liberation", had its own immediate problems including the question of Taiwan and Tibet.

Reading the book, one comes out with a definite impression that the PRC decision to enter the Korean war was forced on her by the United States and United Nations actions both in the battle zone and at Lake Success. Whitting, in a systematic manner and making excellent use of documentation, presents a chronological analysis of Peking's efforts to achieve a diplomatic settlement. Only when the US and the UN decisively rebuffed such moves and when the decision was made for the "UN" troops to enter DPRK's territory, ignoring PRC's warnings did Peking consider that the die was cast and the Chinese Peoples volunteers crossed the Yalu River. Yet, even then, Peking waited for more than a week (US forces crossed the thirty-eighth parallel on October 7, while Chinese "volunteers" crossed into Korea on October 16) reinforcing the hypothesis of PRC's reluctance to enter the war until all political moves have been exhausted.

China crosses the Yalu was published only seven years after the Korean Armistice agreement. It was certainly a refreshing departure from the trend of blaming the Chinese for every thing. In that respect, Professor Whitting's work is an important contribution towards a more "rational" and "objective" understanding of Chinese foreign policy.

Though essentially, a historical work, the book has a multifaceted advantages. To a student of China, it provides rich though not exhaustive terms of reference behind the thinking of the elites in "New China". His identification and analysis of the three elements namely the Chinese, Ideological and experimental components are both relevant and useful. To the policy planners and decision makers in the realm of foreign policy, they would be well advised to pay heed to Professor Whitting's observations on the dangers of failure in communication in a limited war situation and thus the need to have continuing and reliable channels of communication among actual or potential belligerents. Absence of inter-belligerent communication can be catastrophic as was demonstrated in the Korean conflict.

His analysis on the stability of limitations is fascinating. One wishes that the case study has been written in the seventies so that a comparative analysis could be made on its applicability or otherwise in other theatres of war e.g. Vietnam.

Finally, while Whitting has put forward his hypothesis and deductions in a brilliant manner, China Crosses the Yalu has its limitations. In this respect, my major criticism is the treatment of the whole Korean episode as an exclusively power game between China and the Soviet Union on the one hand and the United States on the other. No role whatsoever is given to the Koreans themselves. Even if one were to accept the version of DPRK premeditated incursion into South Korea, no explanation is given behind the motives of Pyongyang leaders. The reader is simply left to believe that Kim II Sung and his regime are mere puppets of the Russians and simply obeyed the instructions of the Kremlin. But is this really so? What about the history of the Korean struggle against Japanese occupation and Kim II Sung's determination to free and unite the 'fatherland'. To say this is not to accept the DPRK's version of the conflict. Yet Professor Whitting should at least have given some treatment on the motives and "nationalistic" or "ideological" commitment of Kim II Sung. Furthermore, the events in the late sixties and early seventies have disproved the concept of Pyongyang being simply a "Soviet satellite". The Pueblo incident for example was an irritation to Washington as it was an embarrassment to Moscow.

When?

possible Moscow contact has changed

double space

Robert James Maddox, The New Left and the Origins of the Cold War, (N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973)

Maddox stated that he was criticising the method used by the New Left revisionist authors and not defending either some particular orthodox positions or American policy at any particular periods. He succeeded in doing the first, but unconsciously failed in his second goal.

Arthur Schlesinger typifies orthodox position on the Cold War: by declaring that "the Cold War was the brave and essential response of free men to communist aggression" at the close of World War II. American leaders were, therefore, merely reacting defensively against seeming violations of war time agreement. On the other hand, the revisionists argue that it was the Soviet Union that was forced to react defensively to protect her minimum security needs in the face of American determination to wreck the war time coalition by using its newly acquired atomic bomb and its superior economic weapons.

According to Maddox, there are two types of revisionists: the "soft" and "hard" liners. The first emphasize failures of individual American policy makers and leaders as the cause of the Cold War, while the latter group stress the fundamental flaws of American institutions or system which made conflict with the Soviet Union inevitable. The "hard" revisionist see American corporate structure as shaping foreign policy of the country. It was Russia's refusal to accept American need for a world order in their economic and political image which was responsible for the Cold War.

Maddox's critique of the revisionist writers has several handicaps. First, by choosing the works of seven authors, he took on more than can be conveniently chewed in one book. Therefore his analysis of the work of the seven revisionist authors tends to be sketchy. He should have concentrated on one or two of the most important revisionist authors such as Williams, The Tragedy of American Diplomacy or Gardner's The Architects of Illusion.

In any case, it is impossible for a third party to fairly assess Maddox's criticisms of the revisionist historians whose books were referred to in his text without reading the original books themselves.

Maddox's attempt to deflate the claims of the revisionist historians tended to lead him to concentrate on the latter's weaker arguments and evidence. Perhaps it is impossible for him or anyone to give a comprehensive analysis of the strong as well as weak points made by seven different authors within a single book. However, by emphasizing the factual errors, omissions and misrepresentations contained in the work of the seven revisionists, Maddox himself may be criticised for selective use of damaging materials. Furthermore, Maddox seems to see little that is scholarly or worthwhile in the entire revisionist literature, rather he nearly accuses them all of deliberate falsification of history and of intellectual dishonesty. Can this be true for all the revisionists cited by Maddox?

Maddox does not really deal with the fundamental issues raised by the revisionists. What is the relationship between United States' corporate structure and the country's foreign policy - or is there none? Moreover, doesn't the tragedy of American involvement in Vietnam illustrate the need for those outside the foreign policy establishment to challenge conventional and official view-points? Maddox may not disagree but would insist that this must be done within the framework of scrupulous respect for facts, evidence and fair interpretation. The relationship between philosophy, interpretation and facts and evidence, is, however, more complex. And, in any case, isn't Maddox and others setting a higher standard for revisionists which has not really been applied to orthodox historians of U.S. foreign policy?

One final observation. It would seem that the unintended result or consequence of Maddox's critique of the revisionists is that he appeared to assume the role of prosecutor sharply rebuking seven authors. Hence, he may well be guilty of what he accused some of the revisionists, especially Clemens' Yalta, of doing.

Roger Hilsman, TO MOVE A NATION, The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy, A DELTA Book, New York, 1964 & 1967.

President Kennedy was one of the most colourful of American Presidents. His administration, cut short by the assassin's bullets, has been a subject of special interest for politicians, political scientists and other scholars and indeed to average people, both American and others. To many Africans, President Kennedy represented the embodiment of some of the cherished values of the founding fathers of the United States. His support for freedom in Africa (as his statement when he was still a Senator in 1959: "Algeria shall be free") endeared him to the African continent. This explains my choice for reading Professor Hilsman's To Move a Nation namely a desire to have an insight into the mechanics and politics of decision making in the United States during some important periods of history. And in this, Hilsman, in his articulation of the policies during the Kennedy administration has not disappointed me.

In writing the book, Hilsman has used what he has termed a "multiple" approach meaning that each issue dealt with is a mixture of memoir, history and political science. Because of the personal nature of the book reflecting the depth of the author's personal experiences in some of the issues discussed, To Move a Nation is exciting to read and useful in the understanding of American foreign relations. Obviously Professor Hilsman makes an excellent use of his experience. Yet, an argument could be made that the work would have been a more powerful one if the sources of many of the statements made and positions propounded were authenticated.

A thread running very firmly throughout the book is that of the role of the cold war, USSR and China relations and the emergence of China as a power in the world. These were some of the main determinants in every policy decision. In this I found the discussion on the U.S. role on the Congo crisis very instructive. The contradictions between the so called "New Africa" group and the "Old Europe" caucus helps to understand the infights within the Administration as well as other centres of power, e.g. the Congress, and how decisions of foreign policy are finally decided upon. They also illustrate the cold war background under which such decisions were made. Thus the main common argument of those "New Africa" group who were sympathetic towards African aspirations and "Moving with the tide of history" appeared to be based on cold war considerations. Thus the policy of disengagement in the Congo was disregarded because it was "estimated that the communists (Soviet) would parlay our disengagement into a position of considerable influence...". And when the recommendation in favour of firm support for the military operations to end the secession in Katanga was approved by President Kennedy, it was done with a proviso that a special effort was to be undertaken to brief the press and key Congressmen on "the evidence that had accumulated of renewed Soviet activities in the Congo and the long new danger of a communist take-over in Leopoldville from which they would subvert not only Katanga but all the neighbouring African States as well".

Throughout I was impressed by the author's fairly objective descriptions and evaluation of the role of the United Nations in each of the relevant crises. His account of the policy making during the Vietnam war was very enlightening. Professor Hilsman seems to be very thorough and he is very straight forward about his bias for involvement, though subsequently when he gives his reasons for resignation from government service, he includes President Johnson's tendency towards a military solution.

Hilsman discusses the role of the CIA in many of the issues and decision making with remarkable candour. To me, the discussion was very enlightening.

All in all, To Move a Nation is an extremely interesting and educative piece of work. It gives the reader an intimate overview of the foreign policy of the John F. Kennedy Administration. Of no less importance however, is the fact that the book provides a student as well as an observer of American foreign policy, a wealth of knowledge on the role of different institutions and power groups in the formulation of foreign policy. In this respect, reference can be made to Hilsman's discussion on the role of the media, internal government machinery and its special interest groups, the Congress, lobbyists and indeed grass roots people.



Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation; My years in the State Department, (W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., New York, 1969)

As the sub-title suggests, Present at the Creation is about Secretary Acheson's service in the State Department. Acheson had assumed important responsibilities at a very significant (and in the case of World War II, crucial) period of American as well as world history.

The author describes his role and experiences, first as Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, then as Under Secretary of State and finally as Secretary of State--encompassing a total period of twelve (1941-1953) years. These were historic years indeed. For during that era, the world was witnessing the catastrophe of an international conflagration and when that 'hot' war was over, there emerged the 'cold' war with its risks and imponderables. Acheson's book deals with all this. As it does indeed deal with the creation of the new world order subsequent to the crumbling of former great powers.

What impresses this writer most about the book, is the degree of candour with which Acheson puts his reminiscences of all the major events of the period under consideration. Besides the recapitulation of many important events and decisions relating to the Second World War, the reader also gets an insight of the background to many of the burning issues of the day.

It is certainly instructive in the understanding of the formulation and decision making processes of United States Foreign Policy, to read Acheson's portrayal of such issues as the emergence of nuclear weapons (and the vain efforts to restrict their proliferation), the birth of the United Nations and the great expectations of the founding fathers who assembled at San Francisco, the formation of NATO (which according to Acheson was for the defense of the freedom of the free nations), the Marshall Plan and the Reconstruction of Europe and the Korean War which, according to the author, was a product of Soviet provocation and a challenge to the United States.

Some of the issues discussed in the book are still bedeviling international relations today. In this respect, I found the lobbies and counter lobbies on the question of Palestine very useful in understanding current American policy towards Israel. Acheson reveals the contradictions between the United States and the United Kingdom over the question of Jewish immigration prior to the creation of the State of Israel /as typified by President Truman's firm insistence on allowing immigration to Palestine of 100,000 Jews and Foreign Secretary Bevin's retort to the Bournemouth meeting of the Labor Party, "I hope it will not be misunderstood in America if I say, with the purest of motives, that (U.S. policy towards Jewish immigration into Palestine) was because they did not want too many of them in New York."7

Obviously these contradictions though taking different forms have not been completely dissipated. The behaviour of the United Kingdom and the other Europeans during the last October Arab-Israeli war, leaving the United States almost alone in its support of Israel is indicative of this.

Acheson's reflections on China and U.S. relations with that Asian giant is very revealing. One wonders whether the current 'rapprochement' between Washington and Peking could not have been possible twenty-five years ago had the United States taken into account the profound analysis made by George Kennan as reflected by Acheson, on the role and nature of the Chinese Communist Party clearly identifying the nationalistic and non-dependent nature (to the USSR) of the CCP. Furthermore it clearly emerges from Acheson's book, that it was Chiangkai-Shek more than the Communists who were blocking the road to national conciliation and thus frustrating General Marshall's mission. To quote Acheson, "What brought about the total failure of the Marshall Mission was not the independence or lack of it, of Yennan from Moscow, as much as the death wish of the Kuomintang in taking on an offensive military campaign against the communists for control of all China."

Having diagnosed the problem and properly evaluating the structure and aspirations of the CCP, the United States, apparently failed to draw the obvious and necessary conclusions, and so as it were, "lost the chance" to mend matters with the communists. Clearly, reading Acheson's book, the impression is solidly given that the preoccupations with the "threat" of international communism and the assumptions of the monolithic nature of that system, seem to have been overriding considerations.

Present at the Creation deals not only with the issues but also with personalities. What makes the book more enjoyable is that Acheson speaks his mind freely even when referring to his assessment of the characters and roles of various men, great and not so great. Mr. Acheson served under four Secretaries of State (Hull, Stettinus, Byrnes and Marshall) and two Presidents - Roosevelt and Truman. Acheson describes FDR as an indecisive but not a weak man, while Truman comes out as a straight forward, decisive, simple and entirely honest. <sup>pers. file</sup> The description of the role and characters of the different personalities, both American and other world leaders apart from giving the book a 'human touch' also enriches our understanding of the nature of foreign policy.

Throughout the book, the American-Soviet ideological and strategic confrontation is given prominence.

The structure of the State Department, its pitfalls and shortcomings, its influence when presided over by men close to the White House (like Marshall and Acheson himself), its problems and limitations (when headed by Secretaries whose relations with the Chief Executive are strained like the case of Secretary Hurl), the relationship with other governmental organs and Congress, are succinctly projected.

Mr. Acheson does not hide his conservative approach, at least on some issues. In the case of Southern Africa, for example, he is critical of the United Nations for being the "instrument of interference with affairs of weak white nations, as Rhodesia..." He does not of course say that this "interference" is based on solid U.N. Charter principles on the equality and freedom of all nations and peoples representing 250,000 white men in a country where the Africans constitute 4 million.

All in all, I found Acheson's book highly useful in understanding American foreign policy particularly during the period under consideration. The late Mr. Acheson, in publishing this book has certainly made an invaluable contribution to students of history as well as those wishing to have a better understanding of the background and rationale behind America's reaction and actions to the crises referred to in his work.

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RESEARCH PROJECT - I

SINO-AMERICAN RELATIONS, 1945 - 1953

In October 1971, the People's Republic of China (PRC) was admitted to the United Nations and the representatives of the "Chiang Kai-shek clique" were expelled. This decision came almost twenty one years after Premier Chou En-lai had cabled Lake Success (on November 15, 1949 and January 15, 1950) demanding the ouster of the "Kuomintang reactionary clique" representatives from international organs.

In February 1972, President Nixon visited China reinforcing the process of "rapprochement", which had been in the making in the wake of "ping-pong" diplomacy. Both these two events were important in Chinese foreign policy as they were indeed of significant importance in international politics. Yet, with the benefit of hindsight, it can be stated that the fact that these two processes took place more than two decades after the birth of "New China" can be significantly, if not decisively, attributed to the Korean war and PRC's involvement in the same. As Professor Whitting in his book, China Crosses the Yalu, puts it, the Korean war of 1950 - 1953, "affected the course of Chinese communist relations with both the United States and the United Nations for many years to come".

The purpose of this research project is to study the relations between the United States and China during the period of 1945 to 1953, that is from the end of the Second World War with the defeat of Japan and the signing of the Armistice Agreement at Panmunjon. The aim here is to study the development of Sino-American relations (alienation), and to attempt to provide answers to a number of important questions including the following: Was the entry of China into the Korean war the causal or consequential factor of Sino-American alienation? If

China and the United States had maintained normal, even if not friendly ties, would the Chinese repeated warnings to the United States and the United Nations against crossing the thirty-eighth parallel, have gone unheeded? To what extent has the lack of communications between Peking and Washington led to miscalculations and misreadings of the intentions and motives of their respective sides. What about the 'burning' issue of Taiwan once referred to by General MacArthur as the "unsinkable aircraft carrier?" To what extent did the United States perception of the monolithic nature of international communism influence her evaluation of the PRC?

#### Approach of the Study

The study will trace the history of the strained relations between the Chinese Communist Party and the United States during the Chinese civil war. The efforts of the United States to promote a coalition between the Communists and the Kuomintang as evidenced for example through the Marshall Mission would be assessed. How genuine were these efforts and how legitimate were the Chinese communists' allegations forcefully put forward by Mao Tse-tung in August 1945 that the Americans were propping up Chiang Kai-shek in order to intensify "the civil war and keep China under United States domination". Here, for some background, consideration would be given to the rejection of Mr. Service's recommendations that the United States supply arms to the Chinese communists in order to expedite the defeat of Japan and so as to place the Americans on equal footing with both the rival Chinese regimes. /See, Esherick's Lost Chance in China: The World War II Dispatches of John S. Service.

An assessment will also be made of the efforts, if any, made by the leaders of the CCP to establish normal ties with Washington. In

this respect Barbara Tuchman's essay, "If Mao had come to Washington", (Foreign Affairs, October, 1972) in which she reports of the expressed offer made by Mao Tse-tung and Chou En-lai in January 1945 to visit Washington and confer personally with President Roosevelt "in an effort to establish a working relationship with the United States", is useful. Furthermore, according to Service, he was told in Yennan by Mao Tse-tung that "America does not need to fear that we will not be cooperative". The Chinese leader was reported to have emphasized on the need for Sino-American cooperation asserting, "we must cooperate and we must have American help. This is why it is so important to us communists to know what you Americans are thinking and planning. We cannot risk crossing you - cannot risk any conflict with you".

Secondly, the study will consider the events after the communist victory in October 1949, and prior to China's entry into the Korean war in October 1950. The mutual suspicions will be focussed and their impact on the prevention of normalisation. Why did the United States refrain from recognizing the new regime inspite of the fact that in a white paper published in August 1949, the United States clearly indicated that (a) she will not directly help the Chiang Kai-shek regime and (b) attributed the failure of the Kuomintang to its own policies. Conversely, why was PRC's response to the White paper negative? Was the Chinese maltreatment of American officials and related anti-American actions at Mukden and Peking of significant importance in strengthening the anti-PRC forces in the United States and making it difficult for President Truman to accord recognition to the new regime in Peking?

Given the clear warnings made both directly and indirectly by the Chinese leaders including Chou En-lai that China will be forced to enter

the war if the North Korean territory is invaded by United States and United Nations forces, why did Washington choose to disregard these warnings?

The third and last phase of the project would be to examine the diplomatic and other activities during the war and how these further adversely affected Sino-US relations. American blocking of China's membership to the United Nations; its rejection of the Indian and Soviet initiatives to allow Peking to participate in the Security Council deliberations in order to find a political solution to the Korean conflict will also be examined.

#### Data

In the preparation of this project, considerable research will be necessary. Memoirs of American leaders particularly Truman and Acheson will be invaluable. Equally useful are the writings and statements of Chinese leaders. Mao Tse-tung's selected works in particular will be referred to.

Another source of data will be the abundant literature on Sino-American relations both in books and journals [See selected bibliography]. Reference will also be made to such publications as the Peking Review, New China News Agency. United Nations documents particularly the records of the Security Council and the General Assembly during the 1950 - 1953 period will be consulted.

#### Problems

As can be seen from the selected bibliography, there is no paucity of material on Sino-American relations. Yet, there are some aspects of China's foreign policy postures just before the Korean war which remain a subject of pure conjecture. For example, what transpired at the marathon Mao Tse-tung-Stalin Summit in Moscow [December 1949 -

March 1950<sup>7</sup>? Ideally, one could conceive of interviews with Chinese officials but given their operational patterns, such interviews, even if granted, are unlikely to reveal much. Thus, perhaps the most serious shortcoming of this study would be its excessive reliance on the published word which in the case of Peking's side remain rather limited.

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RESEARCH PROJECT - II

ORIGINS OF THE COLD WAR: TRADITIONAL VS REVISIONIST VIEWS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research project is to identify and examine the major areas of disagreement between the traditional explanation of United States foreign policy actions in era of the cold war and the revisionist historians. What are the factors responsible for the disagreements? Can the disagreements be resolved; and if so, how?

Put crudely, the traditional American view of the cold war has generally been that the Soviet Union actively sought to dominate Eastern and Central, if not Western, Europe. Furthermore, the Kremlin leaders strongly attempted to alter the balance of power in other regions of the world in Moscow's favour. Thus, the United States was, in effect, forced to check the Soviet "expansionist" and "de-stabilizing" tendencies by pursuing appropriate defensive policies.

The revisionist historians and analysts, on the other hand, uphold the view ~~that~~ it was the United States that used its superior atomic and economic power to blackmail, or at least, provoke the Soviet Union into what was mis-read as aggressive policies.

In this project, these basic points of disagreements will be refined and illustrated with concrete examples from the works of prominent historians and analysts on both sides.

Finally, the development of the cold war will be assessed. Is the present detente between the two super-powers a mere continuation of the cold war in different form and tactics or is it the beginning of the end of the cold war?

Approach of the Study

1. The first element of this research project is to read the works of all the revisionist authors whose works are criticised by Maddox. It is impossible to evaluate Maddox's criticisms without resorting to the original works.

2. However, in order to focus such reading of the original works, it is important to concentrate on the following questions and issues:-

(a) How far is the disagreement between the orthodox and revisionist historians of the cold war a function of interpretations or of the evidence itself?

(b) What are the New Left historians really trying to prove and why? Perhaps they see their role as more than historians and if so, it may not be enough to judge them solely on their accuracy on particular facts or evidence.

(c) What are the specific issues in dispute among the orthodox and revisionist historians of the Cold War? In this respect, the different categories of charges made against the revisionists by Maddox may be useful starting points of our enquiry. These include:-

(i) Lack of originality in most of the works of the revisionists. The exception being William's Tragedy of American Diplomacy.

(ii) Revisionists' works are polemical pretending to be scholarly materials.

(iii) Misinterpretation.

(iv) Exaggeration.

(v) Double-standard.

(vi) Using of statements out of context.

(vii) Lack of Primary Sources in evidence presented.

(viii) Selective use of evidence.

- (ix) Misleading statements.
- (x) Usage of documentation which do not clarify.
- (xi) Overzealousness.
- (xii) Suppression of embarrassing evidence.

Sources:

1. See the Bibliography attached. This has been carefully selected to reflect both sides of the Cold War historical analysis and interpretations.
2. Memoirs of American leaders and biographies of Soviet Leaders of the early period of the Cold War. This would include materials on F.D.R., Churchill, Stalin, Truman's Memoir, Dean Acheson's Present at the Creation, and Senator Vandenberg's "Private Papers".
3. Letters to revisionist authors seeking their answers to specific and general charges made against them by Maddox.

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