To Cathy and Oscie,
and to the memory of Betsy Isaacson

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ARCHITECTS OF THE AMERICAN CENTURY

It was not a lavish party. Despite his enormous wealth, Ambassador Averell Harriman was uncomfortable with social frivolity, particularly when there was a war going on. The guests who gathered at his Moscow residence on the night of April 12, 1945, had to make do with dance music from Harriman's Victrola and snacks from the embassy's kitchen. Many had already headed home by 1 A.M. when the telephone rang with the news from Warm Springs. With his daughter and a few close aides, Harriman went upstairs and sat by the fireplace in his bedroom. There, warming himself against the Russian night, the financier-turned-statesman ruminated about the death of the only President he had ever served and speculated about the man who had become the only President in his lifetime he had never met.

Harriman had grown increasingly dubious about Franklin Roosevelt's hopes that the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. could be allies in peace as they had been in war, and he had been hectoring Washington for permission to return home and present his case in person. With an inexperienced new President suddenly in power, one whose only trip overseas had been as a soldier during World War I, Harriman bluntly cabled his "intention" to come back for consultations. When the State Department finally relented, Harriman left Moscow aboard his own private plane at 5 one morning

and arrived in Washington just over forty-nine hours later, easily setting a new record for such a journey.

As embassy counselor, George Kennan had helped harden Harriman's views about the Soviets and drafted some of his sharpest cables. Harriman's departure left the introverted young diplomat in charge and gave free rein to his tendency to send long telegrams describing the inherent conflicts between America and the Soviet Union. Roosevelt had pursued his own foreign policy with little heed to the Cassandras in the State Department. Harry Truman, on the other hand, stayed up late his first evening in office poring over recent reports. When Kennan's messages began to flow, he found a receptive reader in the White House for a change. As Truman noted after one particularly downbeat missive from Kennan about the Soviets: "I realized only too well the implications in this message."

John McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War, was a man more suited to action than reflection. After an aide rushed into his Paris hotel room and awakened him with the news, McCloy jotted in his diary that Roosevelt would probably be remembered as a great President, "but the press of current and impending events leaves no time to speculate on his position in history." McCloy's inspection tour of Europe had heightened his conviction that the U.S. must not retreat into isolation after this war the way it had after the last. A ravaged Continent would have to be rebuilt. America would have to assume its rightful position of leadership in a shaken world. Cutting short his trip, he rushed back to Washington, stopping briefly in London to attend the memorial service for Roosevelt in bomb-scarred St. Paul's. He found it fitting that the boys' choir sang "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," though he noted that "they sang it too slowly."

Robert Lovett, McCloy's "Heavenly Twin" as an Assistant Secretary of War and Harriman's former Wall Street partner, was preparing to depart for Europe and Asia to oversee the redeployment of the air force he had built. Convinced that strategic bombing had softened Germany for the kill, he was anxious to do the same to Japan. Yet in the back of his

mind, he later recalled, there were thoughts about a revolutionary weapon he barely understood and which the new President knew almost nothing about. Lovett decided to delay his trip while President Truman pondered the best way to pursue the war against Japan.

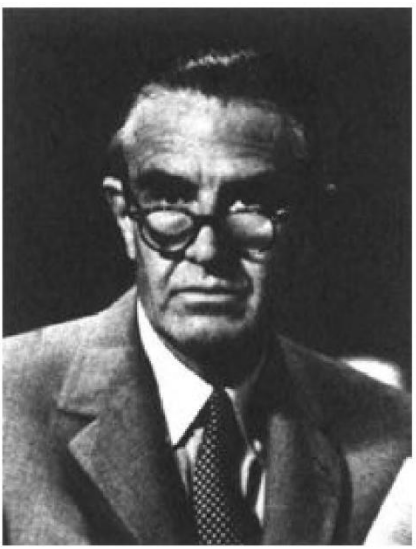
Dean Acheson, who as Assistant Secretary of State had worked with Harriman on Lend-Lease negotiations with the Kremlin, was having his portrait done by photographer Yousuf Karsh when he heard the news. Most of his friends had never met Truman and were dismayed by the prospect of a failed haberdasher from Missouri becoming President at such a critical time. But Acheson sensed that Truman had good instincts and would depend on the right people. "I think he will learn fast and inspire confidence," Acheson wrote to his son.

Only hours after he was handed the news flash, Charles Bohlen began preparing a background paper for the new President. As the State Department's liaison to the White House, Bohlen met Truman for the first time the next afternoon when he delivered the report. The Soviets were ignoring the pledges made at Yalta two months earlier, it declared, and they had been "consistently sabotaging Ambassador Harriman's efforts" to reach an agreement over Poland. Upon Harriman's arrival in Washington, Bohlen set up a meeting with Acheson and others at the State Department, where the ambassador stressed the "basic and irreconcilable differences of objective between the Soviet Union and the United States." Then Bohlen walked with Harriman to the White House, where the education of Harry Truman—on the Soviets, on the need for America to help rebuild Europe, on the bomb—began in earnest.

Six friends. Their lives had intertwined from childhood and schooldays, from their early careers on Wall Street and in government. Now they were destined to be at the forefront of a remarkable transformation of American policy. As World War II drew to a close, most of their fellow citizens wanted nothing more than to turn inward

and, in Harriman's words, "go to the movies and drink Coke." But by breeding and training, this handful of men and a few of their close colleagues knew that America would have to assume the burden of a global role. Out of duty and desire, they heeded the call to public service. They were the original brightest and best, men whose outsized personalities and forceful actions brought order to the postwar chaos and left a legacy that dominates American policy to this day.

Working together in an atmosphere of trust that in today's Washington would seem almost quaint, they shaped a new world order that committed a once-reticent nation to defending freedom wherever it sought to flourish. During the late 1940s, they authored a doctrine of containment and forged an array of alliances that, for better or worse, have been the foundation of American policy ever since. Later, when much of what they stood for appeared to be sinking in the mire of Vietnam, they were summoned for their steady counsel and dubbed "the Wise Men."



WILLIAM AVERELL HARRIMAN'S first visit to Russia was in 1899, when Nicholas II was czar. His last was in 1983, at the invitation of Yuri Andropov. In between, he negotiated his own private Soviet mineral

concessions with Trotsky, spent more time with Stalin than any other American, and worked out a limited test-ban treaty with Khrushchev. Yet throughout most of his career, his attitude toward the Soviets was that of a tough businessman toward a competitor, firm yet pragmatic. The son of E. H. Harriman, the steely entrepreneur who built the Union Pacific Railroad, Harriman often seemed a sovereign in his own realm. After graduating from Groton and Yale, he formed his own shipping line and merchant bank, then entered government as one of the progressive businessmen who supported the New Deal. As Roosevelt's "special envoy" to Churchill and Stalin, he began a career as a freewheeling diplomat that continued through the Vietnam era. Plodding yet at times strikingly bold, detached yet also intense, he earned the nickname "the Crocodile" by affecting a drowsy manner that would suddenly give way to a snap of action.

ROBERT ABERCROMBIE LOVETT spent much of his childhood playing games at the Harriman estate. His father was E. H. Harriman's trusted right hand at the Union Pacific and later its chairman. The two sons became fellow members of Skull and Bones at Yale, directors of the railroad, and partners on Wall Street. At the outset of the Depression,

they helped merge Harriman's banking interests with those of Brown Brothers, where Lovett had become a partner. When he came to Washington as Assistant Secretary of War, Lovett operated as he had on Wall Street, discreetly backstage. With his patrician demeanor and charm, he was a masterful administrator who did more than any other man to bring the U.S. into the age of strategic air power. As Under Secretary of State, he was the chief operating officer of the department during the early showdowns of the Cold War; later, he went on to become Secretary of Defense. When John Kennedy became President, he reached out to the man he considered the living embodiment of a noble tradition and offered him a choice of three top Cabinet posts, State, Defense, or Treasury; Lovett, devoid of personal ambition, spurned them all but suggested the three men who ended up in those jobs.

DEAN GOODERHAM ACHESON, son of the Episcopal bishop of Connecticut, was at Groton and Yale with Harriman, who taught the somewhat cheeky younger boy to row crew. Even then Acheson was known for his flashy wit, but it was not until he studied under Felix Frankfurter at Harvard Law School that his mental agility was honed into the intellectual intensity that was to mark his tenure as Truman's

Secretary of State. He entitled his memoirs *Present at the Creation,* and though he was rarely accused of excess modesty, the phrase actually understates his role. Indeed, he was the architect of the creation he describes, a man who was more responsible for the Truman Doctrine than President Truman and more responsible for the Marshall Plan than General Marshall. In and out of power, Acheson and Harriman maintained a gentlemanly rapport that overcame their occasional rivalries; it was a relationship that culminated more than three decades after they entered government service when Harriman helped Acheson fathom the dark realities of the Vietnam quagmire with the same care he had used in initiating him to the intricacies of rowing a shell.

JOHN JAY MCCLOY, JR., like Acheson, experienced an intellectual awakening at Harvard Law School. But for the poor boy from Philadelphia, the experience did even more. It provided an entrée into an American Establishment that he came to revere—and to epitomize. As a Wall Street lawyer, he learned to win the confidence of the nation's most powerful men. He and Lovett were recruited by the venerable Henry Stimson to help run the War Department, and McCloy went on to become president of the World Bank and High Commissioner for

Germany. With his distaste for ideological battles, McCloy illustrated how those who administer a policy often have more impact than those who conceive it. Later he served as chairman of the Chase bank and the Council on Foreign Relations. He may hold the record for the number of Cabinet posts rejected by one man, preferring to spend most of his life as one of the nation's most influential private citizens.

GEORGE FROST KENNAN, an insecure boy from Milwaukee, came to Princeton as an outsider and resolutely cast himself in that role even after he became the intellectual darling of the Washington elite. His long career in the Foreign Service was an anguished one: he seemed to relish being unappreciated and misunderstood. Yet for a brief period at the onset of the Cold War, his ideas about the Soviets helped coalesce a nebulous attitude among policy makers in Washington. First through the famous Long Telegram, which warned of the Kremlin's expansionist ambitions, and then through a scholarly article written anonymously as "X," Kennan formulated a containment theory that was embraced in Washington with an enthusiasm that soon caused him to squirm. As Henry Kissinger has noted, "Kennan came as close to authoring the diplomatic doctrine of his era as any diplomat in our history."

CHARLES EUSTIS BOHLEN was in many ways the opposite of Kennan; he was born with the social graces that allowed him to be an amiable insider amid circles of power. Yet the two men became best of friends and close intellectual partners as they rose within the Foreign Service to be the nation's foremost Soviet experts at the outset of the Cold War. Together they helped open the first U.S. mission to the Soviet Union following American recognition in 1933, and for the next two decades they served alternately at the State Department and as diplomats in the Moscow embassy, both culminating their careers by becoming ambassador there. While not as creative as Kennan, Bohlen had a subtler yet almost as important role. Far more adroit at dealing with others in power, he gently paved the way for the official acceptance of the view of Soviet behavior that he and Kennan shared.

Harriman, Lovett, Acheson, McCloy, Kennan, Bohlen: two bankers, two lawyers, two diplomats. Besides being major players in their own right, they represent a cross section of the postwar policy Establishment. The values they embodied were nurtured in prep schools, at college clubs, in the boardrooms of Wall Street, and at dinner parties in Washington. They shared a vision of public service as a lofty calling and an aversion to

the pressures of partisan politics. They had a pragmatic and businesslike preference for realpolitik over ideology. As internationalists who respected the manners and traditions of Europe, they waged a common struggle against the pervasive isolationism of their time. Their world view was shaped by a fascination with the emergence of the Soviet Union as a world power and an unabashed belief in America's sacred destiny (and their own) to take the lead in protecting freedom around the globe and create what Henry Luce in a 1941 *Life* magazine article envisioned as "The American Century."

There were, of course, other men from the same tradition who could also be included in a biographical narrative of America's emergence as a global superpower. Several, in fact, play important roles in the story that follows. James Forrestal, though he became more intensely ideological than the others, brought from Princeton and Wall Street much of the same outlook as his close friend Lovett and their colleagues; had he not committed suicide at the height of his career, he might have come to be considered a personification of the Wise Men tradition. Paul Nitze—who was Bohlen's clubmate at Harvard, Forrestal's partner on Wall Street, and Kennan's successor as chief planner at the State Department—was not in a position of influence during the initial showdowns of the Cold War in 1945 and 1946, but he soon became an important member of the crowd.

Nor are the six men profiled in this book wholly compatible. Kennan, for example, hardly fit into the clubby comradery that helped unite the crowd (he even quit his eating club at Princeton, a matter that still seemed to cause some anguish as he recalled it decades later in the elegant drawing room of Manhattan's Century Association). McCloy was likewise not to the manner born, although he early on adopted it with relish. Lovett and Bohlen, the most socially secure of the lot, arguably had less direct influence on the making of policy than many of their contemporaries. Harriman, for his part, had serious bouts of political ambition that caused Acheson and the others to regard him with raised eyebrows.

Yet when considered together, these half-dozen friends fit together in a complementary way, epitomizing a style and outlook that played a

dominant role in modern American policy making. Regarding service as an honor and imbued with a sense of noblesse oblige, they glided easily between private and public careers. As individuals, and even more so as a group, they embody what has been called (by those who venerate them as well as those who malign them) the American Establishment.

The field that has been ostentatiously labeled, by both self-serious scholars and those who satirize them, "Establishment studies" is a tricky one. On both the left and the right, there is a tendency to treat "the Establishment" as a gigantic conspiracy that needs to be exposed, as if it were a mysterious Masonic cabal. Wide-eyed right wingers distribute leaflets filled with exclamation points and arrows that purport to show the insidious reach of the Council on Foreign Relations and the Trilateral Commission. Zealots on the left use the same ominous tones in revealing the influence of the power structure, disagreeing with the right only on whether it is a conspiracy of capitalist imperialists or Communist one-worlders.

Those with greater insight can also be sharply critical. John Kenneth Galbraith, no stranger to its hallowed precincts, takes great joy in unleashing his irreverent wit on "the Establishment." In a celebrated 1966 speech to the Americans for Democratic Action, the acerbic professor blamed the deepening Vietnam entanglement on "the foreign policy syndicate of New York—the Dulles-Lovett-McCloy communion, with which I am sure Secretary Rusk would wish to be associated and of which Dean Acheson is a latter-day associate."

On the other hand, there are those insiders who speak with reverence of the bygone elite. "For the entire postwar period," writes Henry Kissinger, "foreign policy had been ennobled by a group of distinguished men who, having established their eminence in other fields, devoted themselves to public service." Citing McCloy, Acheson, Harriman, and Lovett among others, he goes on to call them "an aristocracy dedicated to the service of this nation on behalf of principles beyond partisanship."

Paul Nitze mentions the same names when speaking of the "golden age of the Establishment," noting: "I have never seen such a panoply of first-class people, who never thought of putting their interests before the nation's."

The English journalist Henry Fairlie first popularized the phrase "the Establishment" in a 1955 article describing the circle of powerful men who dominated Britain. Six years later, in a mock-serious parody called "Notes on the Establishment in America," Richard Rovere deftly poked at those who took the notion seriously while, with the other edge of his pen, executing a delightful drypoint of the subject at hand. Recounting a purported conversation with Galbraith, who "had for some time been surreptitiously at work in Establishment studies," Rovere described his discovery of the chairman emeritus of the Establishment. "Suddenly the name sprang to my lips. John J. McCloy."

It is a notion that rankles McCloy. "Oh, no, not me," he protested years later. "I was not really a part of the Establishment. I was from the wrong side of the tracks." As Rovere dryly noted in his essay: "Naturally, Establishment leaders pooh-pooh the whole idea; they deny the existence of the Establishment, disclaim any connection of their own with it." For McCloy, it is the latter reaction. "Yes, of course," he says when asked if there was ever such a group. "They were Skull and Bones, Groton, that sort of thing. That was the elite. Lovett, Harvey Bundy, Acheson, they called on a tradition, a high tradition. They ran with the swift. I always had in mind, even to this day, that I was not really a part of that."

In fact, however, one of the salient features of the tradition McCloy invokes is that it has not been a closed circle admissible only by birthright. In many ways it is meritocratic, at least for those eager to accept its style. The two men Rovere cites as putative Establishment chairmen, McCloy and Dean Rusk, were both from poor backgrounds. The cultivation process was a mutual one: Just as they sought admission to what they considered a special elite, the group sought to groom them and others for inclusion in its tradition of high-minded service.

Among those who most vehemently disparage the idea that there is an Establishment is McGeorge Bundy. (Clearly it would be futile for him to

disclaim any connection if it did perchance exist: his father, Harvey Bundy, was a longtime aide to Secretary of War Stimson; McGeorge Bundy coauthored Stimson's memoirs; he edited a collection of Acheson's speeches; his brother Bill married one of Acheson's daughters; he served as Kennedy's and Johnson's National Security Adviser; and he was president of the Ford Foundation.) The notion is far too nebulous to be of any use, Bundy contends, and the differences among those usually included under the Establishment rubric are far greater than the similarities. And yet, it turns out, it was Bundy who wrote a memo for Lyndon Johnson entitled "Backing from the Establishment," which set the stage for the formation of the group that became known as the Wise Men. "The key to these people," Bundy advised, "is McCloy."

When Bundy was seeking Lovett's advice during the Cuban missile crisis, the elder statesman nodded toward a photograph near Bundy's desk and intoned that "the best service we can perform for the President is to try to approach this as Colonel Stimson would." That, in fact, might be the truest touchstone of Establishment credentials: reverence for the tradition exemplified by Henry Lewis Stimson, the consummate American statesman and Wall Street lawyer who served as Secretary of War under both William Howard Taft and Franklin Roosevelt and as Secretary of State under Herbert Hoover.

In its twentieth-century incarnation, the tradition began with the group of internationalists who acted as an informal brain trust for Woodrow Wilson at Versailles and returned home to found the Council on Foreign Relations. The founding father of the line was Elihu Root, who served as William McKinley's Secretary of War and Theodore Roosevelt's Secretary of State. Root was revered as a mentor by Stimson, just as Stimson became the mentor for such men as McCloy and Lovett.

These men helped establish a distinguished network connecting Wall Street, Washington, worthy foundations, and proper clubs. "The New York financial and legal community," former JFK aide Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., wrote in 1965, "was the heart of the American Establishment. Its household deities were Henry L. Stimson and Elihu

Root; its present leaders, Robert A. Lovett and John J. McCloy; its front organizations, the Rockefeller, Ford and Carnegie foundations and the Council on Foreign Relations."

Opposing this tradition is a populist strand that has run through American history since Jonathan Edwards led the Great Awakening against the sophistication that was blossoming in the eighteenth century and Andrew Jackson spearheaded a popular revolt against John Quincy Adams. In fact, the division between populists and the Establishment has been a more fundamental one in U.S. politics than that between left and right, liberal and conservative. Both Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan, like many of their predecessors, rode to the White House in large part by tapping an anti-Establishment vein in the populace.

This populist resentment of the Establishment—shared by the Old Left, New Left, Old Right, and New Right—accounts for much of the hostility faced by Acheson, McCloy, and their colleagues. For it is another defining characteristic of their group that they were decidedly nonpopulist, serving in the executive branch while remaining proudly aloof from the pressures of public opinion and its expression in Congress.

These men did not adhere to a single ideology, nor was ideology a driving force in their lives—except insofar as an instinct for the center can be called an ideology. They were equally opposed to the yahoos of the right and the softies of the left. Ideological fervor was frowned upon; pragmatism, realpolitik, moderation, and consensus were prized. Nonpartisanship was more than a principle, it was an art form: the only public jobs held by John McCloy or Robert Lovett, both mainstream Republicans, were in Democratic Administrations. "Damn it, I always forget," FDR muttered when McCloy once reminded him that he was not a Democrat.

There were, however, some basic tenets these men shared, foremost among them an opposition to isolationism. They were internationalists, and more specifically Atlanticists, an outlook that resulted in a certain willingness to make sweeping American commitments. They viewed America's leadership role, and their own, as part of a moral destiny.

Godfrey Hodgson, an insightful British journalist, notes in an essay on the American Establishment that it was "characteristic of these men to take on the burdens of world power with a certain avidity." It reflected, he said, a "grim but grand duty" that was a "legacy from half-buried layers of New England Puritanism." Louis Auchincloss captured these Puritan underpinnings in his 1985 novel *Honorable Men.* Its hero, Chip Benedict, at one point declares to his wife: "What about our national honor? What about our commitment to world freedom?"

Their other basic tenet was the doctrine of containment. The notion that the primary goal of U.S. policy should be to limit the spread of Soviet Communism by force and diplomacy was their paramount contribution, one formulated jointly by Kennan, Acheson, Harriman, Bohlen, McCloy, Lovett, and Nitze. It became the core, indeed the creed, of a foreign policy consensus that prevailed for almost a generation; despite the destructive involvement in Vietnam that was its bastard legacy, the idea of containment remains, in a form strikingly similar to the way these men first conceived it, a fundamental precept of American policy.

In addition, they believed in a certain noble style of leadership, both for their country and for themselves. Galbraith likes to call it "the Groton ethic," the notion of duty and honor that Endicott Pea-body tried to instill in his pupils. Lovett and McCloy were gentlemen, far different in manner from the ambitious power players who hold similar positions today. It was a tradition that they bequeathed to such men as David Bruce, Clark Clifford, Douglas Dillon, William and McGeorge Bundy, Dean Rusk, Cyrus Vance, and many others.

The Establishment label can therefore be a useful one. However hazy its outlines, the men who fall under the rubric shared many assumptions, and being part of a close-knit coterie added to whatever influence they had as mere individuals. Yet to treat the Establishment as a monolith, as many historians do, is less than enlightening. Stimson may have considered McCloy and Lovett "twins," but the fact that they came from decidedly different backgrounds is crucial to a full understanding of the style that both came to exemplify. The same is true of Kennan and

Bohlen. Even Acheson and Harriman, whose shared experiences began at the Groton boathouse and lasted through the final meeting of the Wise Men more than sixty years later, illustrate the intriguing diversity within what is often regarded as an undifferentiated group.

This, then, is primarily a story about six influential men: their friendship, their power, their world, and their creation. However one defines the Establishment, these men were at its core, both because of who they were and how they were regarded. But by regarding them as individuals, the group becomes slightly less mysterious, and a lot more interesting.

Looking at the lives of these men, at their experiences and feelings, helps provide a personal perspective on the postwar period. Even the most careful scholars (in fact, particularly the most careful ones) sometimes seem to forget that at the midst of the momentous forces that shaped the modern world were flesh-and-blood individuals acting on imperfect information and half-formed beliefs. Like most human beings, these men were influenced by a mixture of principles and prejudices, noble goals and personal conceits. Their ideas sometimes reflected their lofty visions, at other times their momentary indignations, and occasionally their personal moods.

Choosing a group of close colleagues also made it possible to explore an important facet of why people act as they do: the influence exerted by friends, the desire for peer approval, and the pressures to conform. In forming their attitudes about the Soviets, for example, Kennan and Bohlen helped shape each other's ideas in the 1930s, then had an impact on Harriman's thinking during World War II, and he in turn helped sway McCloy, Acheson, and many others in Washington as the war drew to a close.

The debate over the extent that great individuals affect the flow of history is destined to remain unresolved. But one thing is certain: The men in this book deeply believed that what they thought and did could be

a contributing factor, that persons and personalities could play a role on history's stage. They were, at least to an extent greater than noted in many histories, correct. When Harriman flew from Moscow to tutor Truman on the nature of the Soviet threat, when Kennan sent his Long Telegram that helped focus what had been a somewhat amorphous attitude in Washington, when Acheson took over a meeting about aid to Greece and Turkey and spoke of "rotten apples" in a barrel, events unfolded in a way that might have been different if others had been in their positions.

One reason the personal angle is missing from many of the otherwise penetrating studies of the Cold War is that the subjects of this book, important as they were to their times, were very private men. Unlike the more ambitious mandarins who pervade today's professional policy elite, these men did not seek to purvey their influence in the public realm. Later, of course, some wrote memoirs, but none wallowed in the self-serving revelations so popular today. They abhorred publicity; neither at the time nor in retrospect did they seek to enhance their role for popular consumption. Partly as a result, there are no full biographies of any of these six pivotal players (although some are in the works), and most histories treat them as two-dimensional characters.

The story is told mainly from the perspective of the men involved, exploring what they saw and felt at the time. Judging their role of course requires factoring in knowledge available only in retrospect, which we freely do; but it also requires regarding their actions in context, neither embellished by misty memory nor diminished by hindsight. To this end, we have relied primarily on the papers of the men involved, the letters they wrote and the interviews they gave at the time, their personal memos and their occasional private journal jottings. These proved to be an abundant and largely untapped resource. Particularly useful were reams of papers of Harriman, McCloy, and Lovett, and the family letters of Kennan that have not yet been made public, as well as the letters of Dean Acheson deposited at Yale in 1983. In addition, we interviewed scores of relatives and old colleagues, many of whom gave us access to papers and memorabilia.

In embarking on this project, we had no ideological ax to grind, no theses to prove. Nor was it our goal to apportion responsibility for the Cold War. Instead, we sought to understand why a group of important players came to act as they did. The main characters in this book, we came to believe, made mistakes and wrought some unintended consequences. But they were not guided by sinister or selfish motives in shepherding American policy.

They were staunch capitalists for whom liberal free trade was a creed; some had extensive financial holdings that would today be considered conflicts of interest; they believed in using economic policies as levers of diplomatic power. Yet they were not primarily motivated by imperialist impulses or fears of an impending capitalist crisis. Although their belief in the ideals of democracy was not always evenly applied, they were sincerely repulsed by the tyrannical tactics of the Kremlin and understandably anxious to keep them from spreading.

In their minds there was a link between free trade, free markets, and free men. The fact that the U.S. would be the prime beneficiary of a system of open global markets was clear to the protagonists of this book, but that did not make the goal any less sincere. Much of what they advocated was in fact largely selfless: the notion that Europe should be protected from Soviet domination had less to do with a desire for lucrative markets than with an affinity for the traditions and aspirations of Europeans.

The creed of Soviet containment that they formulated reflected their instinct for the pragmatic center. On one side were the liberal visionaries who believed that the Grand Alliance that had won the war could work together to preserve the peace if only Washington would make concessions to Stalin's legitimate security needs. On the other side were the fanatic anti-Communists who viewed the coming East-West showdown as a holy war.

Having seen firsthand the reality of the Soviet system, Harriman and

Kennan and Bohlen came to believe that it was dangerous to put much faith in postwar cooperation, and they soon persuaded Acheson, McCloy, and others. Yet as pragmatic men, they were not primarily worried about Marxism or Communist ideology; far from being McCarthyites, they became some of the prime targets of the Redbaiting scares. What they sought to contain was the spread of Russian domination. They would likely have reacted much the same way if the xenophobic and expansionist empire at issue was still czarist rather than Bolshevik.

Their primary reason for resisting the spread of Soviet power was the same as the one that has motivated most Americans ever since: an abhorrence of the imposition of totalitarian systems on people yearning to live freely. They were tacitly willing to cede the Soviets some sphere of interest, but in return they saw no reason for Moscow to crush all freedoms in that realm. This outlook involved, of course, an implicit assumption that the rest of the world naturally desired the system of democratic capitalism, liberal values, and economic trade enjoyed by those in the West.

They viewed the Soviets in the way a businessman might regard a competitor: concessions and appeasement would not serve to buy goodwill, but it was possible to achieve a realistic modus vivendi that included cooperation on matters of mutual interest. They favored, for example, a postwar loan to the Soviets and efforts to work out a system of joint control for the atom bomb. Yet Acheson and others consciously overstated the threat they perceived in order to sell their vision of America's role in the postwar world. Eventually, they began to internalize their own rhetoric. Even more importantly, people less comfortable with the subtleties of the businessman's approach turned the competition with the Soviets into a life-and-death confrontation.

Most historians date the onset of the Cold War to the cold winter of 1947 or even later. In the minds of the men in this story, however, it began much earlier—and thus in fact it did. At the time, they were reacting to

specific events while grappling for a strategic doctrine that would order their thoughts. They would have been appalled (as indeed they later were) at the prospect that the struggle they foresaw would result in a world dangerously divided for decades to come and locked in a frightening arms race.

History will bestow a mixed judgment on what they bequeathed. The world role that they carved for the U.S. left a costly legacy for successors who were neither as pragmatic nor as flexible when it came to balancing commitments with resources. The unchecked interventionist spirit resulted in unwise political and military involvements that the nation, by the end of the Vietnam War, was neither willing nor able to keep. Their policies also did nothing to alleviate, and perhaps even exacerbated, the evil they were designed to combat: Moscow's paranoia, expansionism, and unwillingness to cooperate in a liberal world order. Their reaction to the Soviet threat, Walter Lippmann has charged, "furnished the Soviet Union with reasons, with pretexts, for an iron rule behind the iron curtain, and with the ground for believing what Russians are conditioned to believe: that a coalition is being organized to destroy them."

Yet it is hardly fair to blame such men as Acheson and Harriman and Kennan for Stalin's intransigence or for the inability of others to adapt the policy of containment to changing situations. Reacting prudently to the threats they perceived at the time, they were able to create a bipartisan consensus about the goals of American policy that worked well for two decades. They countered what was, in fact, the very real threat that the power vacuum existing at the end of a devastating war would result in all of Europe and the Middle East coming under Soviet domination. "It is to the lasting credit of that generation of Americans," Kissinger has written, "that they assumed these responsibilities with energy, imagination and skill. By helping Europe rebuild, encouraging European unity, shaping institutions of economic cooperation, and extending the protection of our alliances, they saved the possibilities of freedom. This burst of creativity is one of the glorious moments of American history."

Whatever the final verdict on America's postwar policies, any

assessment requires knowing and understanding why certain integral players acted the way they did. Their story is ultimately a human one, a drama of courage and conceits, wisdom and folly. It is, as Acheson has written, "a tale of large conceptions, great achievements, and some failures, the product of enormous will and effort." And it begins with boys rowing at a New England prep school and riding horses in the snow on a sprawling ranch in Idaho.

Introduction

In their time, they operated largely behind the scenes, little known by the public. But they achieved great things: the shaping of a world order; the creation of international institutions; the forging of a lasting peace in a perilous time. They were private men who avoided publicity but were comfortable with public power, not as an end in itself but as a force for prosperity, security, and freedom. Those who called on their services used the term "Wise Men" half tongue in cheek, but presidents from FDR to Richard Nixon counted on their wisdom.

In the twenty-five years since *The Wise Men* was published in 1986, we have often been asked, "Who are the Wise Men today?" We have groped for some semi-plausible names, but in truth, it's harder now to be a Wise Man than it was in 1945.

A half century or more ago, as America was assuming its place as the world's greatest power, government was much smaller and more intimate. High policy is no longer made over cocktails, as it was in 1947, when President Truman's undersecretary of state Robert Lovett went over to the apartment of the chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Republican Arthur Vandenberg, to share some top-secret cables in order to win support for the Marshall Plan. When the Wise Men were creating the Western Alliance in 1948, the White House had no national security staff—just presidential aide Clark Clifford meeting or having lunch at the F Street Club with, say, Averell Harriman. National security policymaking may be a more orderly or democratic process these days, but it is also far more cumbersome, if not sclerotic.

The social elite that spawned the Wise Men is a vestige of the past. The meritocracy has long since replaced what columnist Joseph Alsop labeled the Wasp Ascendancy. The Ivy League still staffs many of the top jobs in any administration, but not with the sort of free-spirited preppies who came to Washington during the 1940s. The great Cold War secretary of

state, Dean Acheson, last in his class at Groton, wouldn't get into the twenty-first-century Yale; Russian expert and diplomat extraordinaire Chip Bohlen, kicked out of St. Paul's, wouldn't get into Harvard. The think tanks and committee staffs of Washington are filled with overachieving men and women with impressive résumés and SAT scores, but who often come across as more careerist than creative.

Government service, sadly, has lost its luster. At Princeton, alma mater of foreign policy visionary George Kennan, a wealthy graduate endowed the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs expressly to train Foreign Service officers. But by the late 1990s, very few Woodrow Wilson School students were taking the Foreign Service exam. Many more were looking instead for Wall Street jobs.

During and immediately after World War II, investment bankers like Lovett and Harriman and lawyers like John McCloy and Acheson could, without too much fuss, go back and forth between their private sector jobs and government service. Today, they must divest themselves of any assets that might conceivably pose a conflict of interest and hire lawyers to get past the erratic, seemingly endless Senate confirmation process. Not surprisingly, quite a few able men and women are unwilling to make the sacrifice.

The ones who do go into government don't seem to have quite as much fun as the Lovetts and McCloys of the old days. When these two young Wall Streeters went to work for Secretary of War Henry Stimson in 1941, they were able to wield their considerable power with élan. Today's government servants must run a gauntlet of reporters and congressional committee investigators—important and sometimes essential checks on the abuse of power, but often vexing nonetheless. Foreign policy making was relatively free of partisan politics in the early days of the Cold War; today, nothing is.

The Wise Men had the exhilarating sensation of being, as Acheson put it in the title of his zesty memoir, "Present at the Creation." The American Century, in the 1941 phrase of Time-Life founder Henry Luce, was just beginning. Today the talk (alarmist and unfounded, we believe) is

of American decline. No wonder the esprit of government service has declined as well.

It is, of course, easy to mythologize the Wise Men and overstate their significance and worth. Indeed, one could write a cautionary lesson about the Myth of the Wise Man. Presidents can be badly served by former statesmen who pretend to know all but don't—whose prejudices have hardened but whose real-time intelligence is lacking. Dean Acheson gave John F. Kennedy dangerously hawkish advice during the 1961 Berlin and 1962 Cuban missile crises. He and Bob Lovett also unwisely encouraged Lyndon Johnson to show backbone by escalating in Vietnam in 1965. On the other hand it was Acheson, along with several other Wise Men, who forced LBJ to confront the bad news coming out of Vietnam after the Tet Offensive in 1968.

"Speak truth to power" is a cliché notable for its rarity in modern-day Washington. Robert Strauss, a kind of latter-day Wise Man who counseled Democratic presidents from LBJ to Bill Clinton, enjoyed describing what it was like to bring visitors to offer advice to the president. On the way over to the White House, the visitors would work themselves up, practicing brave speeches (Strauss would imitate them: "I'm gonna tell that S.O.B. in the Oval Office a thing or two!"). But once actually inside the Oval Office, their courage would wilt; they would become supplicants and sycophants. Strauss would mock their prating: "Oh, Mr. President, you're doing such a wonderful job!"

Presidents need men and women who are confident enough—independent enough—to level with them. No one would argue that the president's top advisers should be chosen from an elitist club of Anglo-Saxon white males who graduated from certain schools (the parody version of the Wise Men; also the reality). But it would serve the country to have public figures with the confidence to rise above party or the search for celebrity. The self-confidence of the Wise Men was liberating—it gave them the freedom to be creative and bold.

The Wise Men fashioned not just the ideas but also the institutions that

ran the postwar world. Those institutions are still largely in place—long after the world has changed. Are the World Bank and International Monetary Fund the right institutions to manage the new global economy? Radio Free Europe and Voice of America worked brilliantly to spread the word of freedom to the Communist bloc. But what is the right sort of agency to fight cyber terror or Islamic fanaticism? Is NATO the best military structure for resolving messy insurgencies or civil wars in countries like Afghanistan and Libya? These Cold War—era institutions creak and labor along, but a new generation needs to create whole new structures and systems for the world as it is or will be. This task will require the same kind of inspiration and energy that seized Acheson as he sought to create a Pax Americana to replace Pax Britannica and Kennan to imagine the containment doctrine. The Wise Men, whose story we tell in this book, are gone forever. But their spirit should live on.

—Walter Isaacson & Evan Thomas, January 2012

PART ONE

GATHERING

I am sure you will catch on,
and go on and on
and be something and somebody.

—E. H. HARRIMAN TO HIS SON AVERELL

CHAPTER 1

Harriman, standing fifth from left, on the Groton crew

WORLD OF THEIR OWN

To the manner born

As he stood on the dock of the brown-shingled boathouse, Averell Harriman paid little notice to the spindly boy rowing in seat seven of the shell hacking up the languid Nashua River. Dean Acheson was more than a year younger and two forms behind him, and at Groton there was little fraternizing between boys of different ages. In addition, with his air of stoic detachment, Harriman seemed aloof even to students his own age. He had been taught to row by a private tutor on his family's own private

lake, and the other boys came to regard him as more of a coach than a schoolmate as he helped organize the underclass crews. Acheson, on the other hand, had quickly earned a reputation of being too cheeky for his own good. He went out for rowing only because the school required that each boy play some sport. Yet Harriman soon came to believe, as he later recalled, that the boy with toothpick legs and an impish demeanor showed some promise, at least on the water. He began to offer unsolicited tips, a bit of encouragement. Eventually he would bestow the pronouncement that Acheson "was a good oar."

In the years to come, Harriman would continue to fancy himself a tutor to the fresh schoolmate he had helped with the intricacies of stroking an oar. He would lecture Acheson about the postwar Soviet threat and, much later, gently prod him about the futility of the Vietnam War. Acheson, for his part, would later confess to being bemused by Harriman's plodding and sovereign style, though he would find him ever a reliable ally when it counted. And when it was all over, just weeks before he died in 1971, Acheson would recall the relationship fondly in a letter to his old friend:

> Sometimes it amuses me to confuse the young by pointing out what really elder statesmen we are by telling them that our friendship began—though perhaps neither of us knew it at the time—sixty-six years ago this month. Then I came as a new boy to the school at which you were a little, though not much, my senior. In most of those years that have passed, we have joined in activities that sometimes have been pretty strenuous, first of all on the water, where we rowed, and later in government, where we struggled.

Harriman's sense of sovereignty and detachment was hardly surprising: he was the eldest son of one of America's richest men, a domineering railway tycoon whose family more closely resembled a medieval duchy

than an American household. Edward Henry Harriman's personal fortune surpassed $70 million at a time when there was no inheritance tax, the average hourly wage was twenty-two cents, and a dollar could buy an imported linen dress shirt or a hundred eggs. His money was entirely self-made. "My capital when I began was a pencil and this," he would say, tapping his head.

The first American Harriman was a London stationer who had migrated to New Haven in 1795 and made a comfortable fortune chartering vessels for trade in the West Indies. But E. H. Harriman's father had been an itinerant Episcopal clergyman who wandered through California preaching in prospecting camps before returning east as the rector of a small wooden church in Jersey City. At age fourteen, E. H. dropped out of school to become a five-dollar-a-week messenger boy at a brokerage house on Wall Street. "I have become convinced that there is something else in life for me besides school and books," he told his disapproving father. "I am going to work."

A compact dynamo, he plunged with relish into the cutthroat market of the Robber Baron era. With three thousand dollars borrowed from a wealthy uncle, he bought himself a seat on the Stock Exchange and captured Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt and Jay Gould as his mentors and clients. By twenty-six, E. H. had parlayed his own first fortune of $150,000 by selling short in coal-mine stocks when he guessed that a speculator's attempt to corner the market would fail.

Marriage to Mary Williamson Averell in 1879 brought Harriman his first link to railroads. Her father, William Averell, the president of a small upstate New York rail company, provided a special train for the couple's honeymoon with "E. H. Harriman" painted on the locomotive. It was the first of many destined to be so emblazoned.

Harriman's railway holdings were built with both paper and steel: he became an adroit and notorious speculator in railway stock options and an energetic builder of the lines he thus came to control. The empire that he eventually accumulated as chairman of the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific stretched twenty-three thousand miles and was capitalized at $1.5

billion. In the process he made some daunting enemies, including J. P. Morgan and the President of the United States. After a feud that began over a political appointment, Theodore Roosevelt took to calling him an "enemy of the Republic" and a "malefactor of great wealth."

The railway madness of that era was noted for its untrammeled excess, epitomized by the brutal take-over battles between E. H. Harriman and James J. Hill. Theirs was an exalted realm. "When the master of one of the great Western lines travels toward the Pacific in his palace car," wrote the awed British observer Lord Bryce, "his journey is like a royal progress. Governors of States and Territories bow before him; legislatures receive him in solemn session; cities seek to propitiate him."

William Averell Harriman, born on November 15, 1891, bore many of his father's traits. To his childhood friends, who called him Bill, Averell was noted for his curious combination of tenacity and detachment. Unlike his small and tightly wound father, Averell was somewhat plodding, almost to the point of seeming dull; but both were blunt and unvarnished—proudly so. No jokes or small talk crept into their conversations, no easy laughter or self-deprecating tales. Although his older sister Mary and younger brother Roland abounded in gregarious charm, Averell displayed little of the frivolity of youth. He affected an imperious demeanor that was accented by his quiet manner.

Even when he was young, Averell looked somewhat haggard and sallow, but appearances were deceiving: he was tough, physically and mentally, and relished putting his abilities on the line. Recreations were challenges to be mastered, and Harriman invariably did: polo, rowing, skiing, bowling, croquet, and even backgammon. "He went into any game lock, stock, and barrel," Robert Lovett later recalled. "He would get whatever he needed—the best horses, coaches, equipment, his own bowling alley or croquet lawn—and work like the devil to win."

"I like the kind of play that is as strenuous as work," the young Averell told an interviewer. "I like to go into each, in its turn, as hard as I know

how." It was an approach he learned from his parents. "Father," Averell once recalled, "could not imagine doing anything just for fun." His mother used to carry a rule book while she played croquet, citing it often to insist that the finer points be followed.

E. H. Harriman, short and stern, was hardly a doting father, but he took a great interest in his children, taking them on his far-flung excursions and playing childhood games with them in his study after dinner. He insisted they look him straight in the eye during all conversations and rewarded them with pennies for performing self-improvement chores such as keeping a daily diary. "In everything he did he took command, no matter what was going on," Averell later recalled. "Even if we went for a walk, he'd tell us where he wanted to go. He knew what he wanted to do."

On one of the cross-country tours E. H. took with his older son, their private train started swaying out of control as it sped along a stretch of rough track. After almost derailing, it screeched to a halt. The Union Pacific president, Horace G. Burt, explained to Harriman that a construction crew had been working on the roadbed and failed to send a flagman out to signal oncoming trains. "Fire everyone on that gang," said Harriman as Averell listened in awe. "That's really rather cruel on these people," Burt replied. Said Harriman: "It may be cruel, but it will probably save a lot of lives. That sort of thing won't happen again."

The elder Harriman imparted his wisdom through oft-repeated adages. "A good workman can work with poor tools," he would tell his children. "Whatever you have anything to do with, your first thought should be to improve it." And his favorite maxim: "Great wealth is an obligation and responsibility. Money must work for the country."

His children took these sayings to heart. When his daughter Mary made her debut in 1901, she balked at the expenses that were being lavished on the extravaganzas of her friends. Even though she was a vivacious partygoer, she felt that such displays were unnecessary. So she put part of the money to better use and helped found the Junior League. Its first project, even before it was formally an organization, was bringing

the flowers from lavish parties to local hospitals and seeing that they were properly distributed. This sense of social obligation, of noblesse oblige, was something she often urged on her brother, who respected her enormously.

Averell's reserve resembled that of his mother. "Her rather formal pattern of living provided, in a sense, a shield against intrusion," her biographer wrote. Some people, because of their style and grand bearing, tacitly command attention simply by entering a room. Mary Averell Harriman had such an air, and so too at times did her older son. She managed her households, which included up to a hundred servants and retainers, with the same authority and attention to detail her husband brought to running the railways. Her diaries, studded with biblical sayings and meticulous financial accounts, reveal a shrewd outlook which was only rarely apparent in public.

During Averell's childhood, the Harrimans owned a series of elegant town houses on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan. The grandest was a cavernous Georgian pile of marble that overlooked the site where the St. Regis Hotel was being built. Averell would stare from its windows for hours, fascinated by the horse-drawn trucks and steam-powered pulleys and the marvel of human construction they were slowly creating. E. H. Harriman kept a string of trotters in the city to pull his sons through Central Park and later was driven about by one of the country's first automobiles, one he had imported from Germany.

Averell dutifully attended Miss Dodson's dancing school and other such Social Register rites of passage, but he stonily avoided the young social set whenever possible. He was more in his element at Arden, the Harrimans' baronial estate fifty miles up the Hudson where the family spent spring and summer.

Begun as a modest wooden cottage on the shore of a lake, Arden was gradually expanded by the Harrimans into a rambling three-story mansion with squash courts, billiard room, and separate guest quarters. For E. H. Harriman, even his home was a potential industry: iron mines on the property were reopened, dairy cows were raised to sell milk to the military

academy at West Point, and electricity plants were built at Arden and neighboring Turners Village (now Harriman, New York) to sell power throughout the area.

The Harriman household formed a world unto itself, self-contained and self-sufficient. When it came time for Averell and Roland to learn how to row, their father hired the Syracuse University crew coach, Jim Ten Eyck, to provide private lessons on a course set up on their 150-acre lake. An island in its midst was outfitted with special wood-floor tents for camping trips. As his boys would swim or canoe to their little island, old man Harriman would sit in a camp chair on the dock, watching and thinking.

When Averell was ten, he spent many mornings riding with his father, while the rest of the family followed in carts pulled by trotters, surveying their property for the perfect place to build a new mansion. The search was somewhat moot: Mrs. Harriman had decided early on that it should be built on the summit of Mount Orama, the highest point between New York and the Catskills. It was a desire that required the full might of the Union Pacific to fulfill: the top of the mountain was sliced off to provide a level foundation and a funicular railway was stretched up one slope to haul material.

The "new" Arden was the grandest of palaces, but a distinctly American one. Other wealthy barons of the time were building imported castles, shipping them stone by stone from Europe. But E. H. Harriman, with no less ostentation, told his architect, Thomas Hastings, that he wanted everything in the house, from the granite to the art, to be American. Six hundred workmen labored three years on the mansion, which was completed just six months before Harriman died in 1909.

Arden, which remained in the Harriman family until Averell donated it to Columbia University in 1951, had more than a hundred full rooms, including forty bedrooms and a hotel-size kitchen. There were a tennis court, a croquet lawn, forty miles of bridle paths, and later a set of bowling alleys. A private polo ground was built, and there the Harriman children and their friends would challenge the cadets from West Point.

Arden's voluminous hall was dominated by an organ, for which Mrs. Harriman retained a full-time musician. When he was not performing, the children would work the majestic instrument by attaching player rolls and pulling on the various stops. Mrs. Harriman dedicated herself to collecting the finest of American art, tapestries, and furnishings. The only imported items in the house were the linens; they came from Ireland because she could find no domestic ones that suited her standards. The servants were ordered to keep every room ready for occupancy, bedizened with fresh flowers, to encourage the children to invite friends to their isolated castle. On some summer weekends the table would include as many as twenty guests.

The community of retainers and servants at Arden provided Averell with his steadiest playmates. At one of Mrs. Harriman's annual staff Christmas parties, there were 65 men, 25 women, and 188 children. Averell and his siblings worked with their mother's secretary to choose small gifts for every child, such as skates and mittens, and distribute them at the party. At the end of the party one year, Averell remarked on the absence of a young boy who lived with his drunken father in a shack about four miles from the main house. It turned out that the child had been mistakenly left off the list. Averell and his father rode out into the night and found the forgotten boy, presenting him with a sturdy new sled.

In 1899, when Averell was not quite eight, his father was advised by his physicians to take a restful vacation. "His idea of a rest was to charter a steamship out of Seattle and take a group of distinguished scientists on a three-month jaunt along the Alaskan shore," Roland recalled. The party included sixty-five crew members, twenty-five scientists, eleven woodsmen, three artists, two photographers, and a cow to produce milk for Averell and Roland.

E. H. Harriman's primary ambition on the trip was to shoot a Kodiak bear, and he did: a huge seven-footer whose skin thereafter graced his parlor floor. When both the captain and pilot balked at exploring an uncharted inlet, the brazen industrialist personally took the helm. As a result, the fiord and glacier they found were named Harriman. In

addition, the scientists discovered thirteen new genera and six hundred new species of flora and fauna, took five thousand photographs, and published thirteen illustrated volumes and eleven monographs in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution.

Among those aboard was the renowned conservationist John Muir. One evening, the scientists on the forecastle were praising Harriman for the benevolence of his wealth. "I don't think Mr. Harriman is very rich," Muir interjected. "He has not as much money as I have. I have all I want, and Mr. Harriman has not." Harriman heard about the remark and raised the matter at dinner. "I have never cared for money except as a power to put to work," he said. "What I enjoy most is the power of creation, getting into partnership with nature and doing good, helping to feed man and beast, and making everybody and everything a little better and happier."

That self-appraisal, although hardly a precise one of the railway baron's career, deeply impressed Averell. The expedition came just as he was beginning to comprehend his family's enormous wealth and power, and the burdens as well as benefits it brought. As an awkward socializer, Averell had already become uncomfortable with the frivolous society life of many of his friends; his father's belief that money was a tool rather than a goal burned a lasting impression.

The trip also gave Averell his first glimpse of a country that would figure prominently throughout his life. His mother insisted that the voyage not end at the Seal Islands, as scheduled, but instead cross the Bering Sea to the coast of Russia. "Very well," replied Mr. Harriman, "we will go to Siberia." Upon landing at Plover Bay, the family spent the day buying artifacts from the natives, taking photographs, and picking the unusual wild flowers. For the next nine decades, Averell was to return to Russia at regular intervals, his last visit coming in 1983. During World War II he was able to tell Stalin that on his first trip to Russia he had entered without a passport. "Well," Stalin replied, "you could not do that now."

With the acquisition of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, E. H. Harriman began to have visions of completing an around-the-world

transportation system. So with his family in tow, he headed for the Orient in the summer of 1905. Japan had just wrested control of the South Manchuria Railway from Russia, and Harriman wanted to add it to his empire. A preliminary agreement for a lease was reached with the Japanese government, but it was scuttled a few weeks later amid the anti-Americanism that erupted in Japan after President Theodore Roosevelt mediated the peace terms for the Russo-Japanese War. All Harriman got from the Japanese were some cases of captured Napoleon brandy, a supply ample enough that Averell, then thirteen, would savor it years later.

The Harriman family then proceeded by chartered steamer to Port Arthur, on the Manchurian coast. Averell, however, was unable to accompany them. Although Averell's father had moved mountains, he was unable to move Endicott Peabody, the immutable rector of Groton School. The rail baron had cabled from Japan an urgent request that Averell be excused from the first two weeks of classes so that he could tour the Asian mainland. Any student, Peabody replied, absent from the first day of term would be "fired" from the school. In order to extend Averell's stay by three more days, Harriman rerouted a Pacific Mail liner.

"The experience released me from the Groton rigidities and perhaps contributed to my becoming something of a nonconformist," Harriman later said about the Rector's refusal to let him tour Manchuria. Although the school was just twenty-one years old, those rigidities were already firmly entrenched. Modeled after an English public school, Groton was New England's new Eton. It was Episcopalian (one founder was Phillips Brooks) and amply endowed (another was J. P. Morgan). "Ninety-five percent of the boys came from what they considered the aristocracy of America," wrote George Biddle, a 1904 graduate. "Their fathers belonged to the Somerset, the Knickerbocker, the Philadelphia or the Baltimore Clubs. Among them was a goodly slice of the wealth of the nation."

The school's purpose, according to its first brochure, was to develop

"manly, Christian character." Life was strictly regimented and ascetic. Students lived in six-by-nine-foot bare wood cubicles in which no ornamentation, except family pictures, was allowed. They arose at 6:55 A.M., attended chapel seven days a week (twice on Sunday), and were allotted twenty-five cents a week as spending money (a nickel of which was for the Sunday collection plate). Yet there were some amenities: They did not have to make their beds or wait on tables, and their shoes were polished overnight by servants. At dinner, the required dress was stiff collar, black tie, and patent-leather pumps.

Groton's driving force was Endicott Peabody, who ruled the school for its first sixty years. Educated in England at Cheltenham and at Trinity College, Cambridge, the Rector was a perfect Victorian. Tall and muscular, regarding his body as a temple, he always dressed in highly polished black shoes, blue suit, and white starched bow tie. As a thirteen-year-old Averell Harriman described him in a letter home: "You know he would be an awful bully if he wasn't such a terrible Christian."

Peabody cared more about sportsmanship than scholarship. "I'm not sure I like boys who think too much," he once said. "A lot of people think a lot of things we could do without." He personally taught two subjects: football and sacred studies. "The way of the non-athlete at Groton was not so much hard as inconsequential," wrote the school historian. "Football was the King of the Games. Theoretically, a boy does not have to play the game, but moral suasion on the part of the faculty and students makes it almost impossible to avoid doing so."

The rest of Groton's curriculum included large doses of Latin and Greek, ancient history, and European studies with a particular emphasis on England. American history was generally snubbed: Roland Harriman noted that history teachers "made us learn all the names and dates of the French and English kings while neglecting to tell us that one hundred years before the Pilgrim fathers landed in Massachusetts, the Spaniards were in California." The students were graded weekly, and each month their performance was ranked by Peabody, who sent stern and unvarnished reports home to their parents.

Although Peabody was thoroughly intimidating, most of the students also revered him. He remained a loyal and powerful force to most of them throughout their lives, marrying them off, christening their children, and even on occasion visiting them in jail. (When one of his old prefects, New York Stock Exchange president Richard Whitney, was convicted of embezzlement, Peabody visited him at Sing Sing. He brought Whitney a first baseman's mitt so he could play on the prison team.) Franklin Roosevelt cited him as "the biggest influence in my life."

Peabody was dedicated to the ideal of public service and to instilling a sense of Christian and patrician obligation among his charges. "*Cui Servire Est Regnare*" is the motto of the school. Literally translated, it means "to serve Him is to rule." Peabody, drawing on the Book of Common Prayer, gave it a more ethereal translation: "Whose service is perfect freedom." He meant not only service to God, but also to country. "If some Groton boys do not enter public life and do something for our land," he said, "it will not be because they have not been urged." At the school's twentieth anniversary celebration, the President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, summed up that message for the students by paraphrasing the gospel of Luke: "Much has been given you. Therefore we have a right to expect much from you."

Groton did produce more than its share of public servants. The school history notes that Groton's first thousand graduates included a President, two Secretaries of State, two governors, three senators, and nine ambassadors, grandly extrapolating that if the rest of the U.S. population had produced leaders at the same rate, "there would have been 37,000 Presidents, 350,000 ambassadors, 110,000 Senators. . ." With some exceptions, most notably Franklin Roosevelt, Groton's graduates avoided politics and tended to prefer the more discreet branches of government, particularly the OSS and the CIA. Few entered the ministry, and virtually none pursued the arts. Service to God and Country was overshadowed by service to Mammon. The largest single category of career choice in the school history is "finances, stocks, bonds, etc."

To most twelve-year-olds entering Groton's Second Form (eighth

grade) in 1904, Groton would seem a severe institution run by a formidable man. Yet the Harrimans were, as John Kennedy described Averell many years later, a "separate sovereignty." As an institution unto themselves, they tended to be less intimidated by presidents, premiers, and rectors. Throughout his life, Harriman would remain an unusual blend of loyal public servant, dutifully undertaking tasks requested by various presidents, and an unfettered diplomat, eschewing detailed instructions and dealing with foreign powers as he saw fit.

The rectitude Averell found in the Rector was similar to that of his father: both Peabody and E. H. Harriman stressed the virtue of work, the burdens of privilege, and the obligation to repay society. The senior Harriman even became involved in guiding the school. Upset that there was neither a full-time athletic director nor a tutor to provide remedial instruction to struggling scholars, he made arrangements to fund these positions. Students were required to write home every Sunday; Harriman's parents demanded that he also send a postcard every night.

Averell started off shakily at Groton; in his first year, he was in the bottom third of his class. Peabody noted on a February report card: "Poor in English; capable of better work all around." This resulted in a rather stern intercession from E. H. Harriman, one that provoked the desired effect. The next report from Peabody read: "Has been working rather harder since your visit." By Harriman's Sixth Form (senior) year, he was in the middle of his class and, more importantly, rowing on the varsity crew. Wrote Peabody: "Fair in his studies. In other ways he has been gaining steadily."

This was still not enough for his father. "Can you not 'jack up' on the English?" he wrote from San Antonio, where he was supervising the construction of a new railway to Mexico. "I know you can as well as some other subjects. It is encouraging to have you so improved, and I am sure you will catch on, and go on and on and be something and somebody."

That phrase, "be something and somebody," stayed with Harriman always; he was still invoking it as a legacy from his father at age ninety-two. "Groton gave me a great sense of obligation," he said. "But so did my

father."

Harriman's streak of independence came through in his letters home. When his father, worried about Roland's performance, asked Averell to "do something to wake him up," Averell replied: "It seems to me that the whole Groton organization needs an awakening, the masters one and all, as well as the scholars like Roland." Yet he was still a loyal Grottie. When Peabody, in his usual fashion, sent a letter to Harriman on his birthday the year after he had graduated, Harriman responded dutifully that the Rector's greetings "come as a reminder of what Groton has done for us, and what Groton stands for, and what Groton expects of us."

On the day that Dean Acheson was born—April 11, 1893—some friends came to call on his family accompanied by their teen-aged son. The Reverend Edward Acheson, impressed by the visiting boy's bearing, asked where he went to school. After hearing an enthusiastic description of Groton, then only nine years old, Acheson decided that his newborn son should be placed on the admissions list for twelve years thence.

Groton at the turn of the century was a curious melting pot of money and status. The explosion of industrial wealth had blurred class lines; Groton, like the other High Church prep schools in New England, became an arbiter of its own, not just a measure but a maker of social distinction. It brought together the children of Boston Brahmins and Mrs. Astor's "400" with the offspring of commercial magnates, some of whose money was still a bit crisp. There was, in addition, a special place at the school for another group that the Rector believed should be part of the backbone of America's establishment. If he was willing to accommodate new money, he was just as anxious to make room for the sons of the Episcopal clergy, some of whom were quite threadbare.

Acheson's family was perfectly comfortable. Yet next to the Harrimans they were church mice. The descendant of a Scotch-Irish clan that was fiercely loyal to the House of Stuart, Edward Campion Acheson had been born in 1857 in southern England, where his father, a professional soldier

and Crimean War veteran, was garrisoned. On the eve of his thirteenth birthday, Edward bought himself a present: a prayer book that he put under his pillow so it would be there on his birthday. The following year he ran away to London, and two years later immigrated alone to Canada. There he worked his way through the University of Toronto, fought with the Queen's Own Rifles in Saskatchewan, won a gold medal during an 1885 Indian uprising at Cut Knife Creek, and subsequently began training for the ministry.

While attending All Saints' Church, Edward Acheson had met Eleanor Gooderham, the daughter of a prominent Toronto whiskey distiller and bank president. Their first son, christened Dean Gooderham Acheson, was born in the rectory of the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church in Middletown, Connecticut, where his father had taken a job.

Over the years, nothing could do more to soften Dean Acheson's sometimes acerbic demeanor than misty memories of his days under the arched elms of Middletown. It was a carefree Huck-and-Tom childhood of smoking corn silk and playing ball that grew rosier with each retelling.

> The golden age of childhood can be quite accurately fixed in time and place [he wrote in *Morning and Noon,* a volume of early reminiscences]. It reached its apex in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first few years of the twentieth, before the plunge into a motor age and city life swept away the freedom of children and dogs, put them both on leashes and made them the organized prisoners of an adult world. . . . No one was run over. No one was kidnapped. No one had teeth straightened. No one worried about children, except occasionally my mother, when she saw us riding on the back step of the ice wagon and believed, fleetingly, that one of the great blocks of Pamecha Pond ice would fall on us. But none ever did.

Dean had a pony (with a "grand design of how to live in idleness"), a dog named Bob (purchased for five dollars), and a ready supply of

playmates. Unlike Harriman, the mischievous young Acheson was never considered excessively mature for his age. On the three-acre field between the church and rectory, he and his friends would recreate battles of the Boer War and Teddy Roosevelt's charge up San Juan Hill, little deterred by counterattacks from irate neighbors whose laundry lines and gardens became bunkers and battlegrounds.

Each evening Dean would walk to the firehouse to watch the men drill and then run to the wharf in time for the arrival of the boat from Hartford. "To me, it seemed that the ladies and gentlemen promenading the deck of that ship were the most fortunate people on earth," he later recalled, "and watching them night after night, I imagined myself plowing across the open sea, some nights to Europe, some nights to China, some nights to darkest Africa."

Acheson's lifelong Anglophilia was instilled as a child. He and his two younger siblings were the only U.S. citizens in the household, which included his parents (who were loyal subjects of Queen Victoria), two Irish servants, and a Canadian governess. Celebration of the Queen's birthday in May ranked with St. Patrick's Day and July 4: a Union Jack would wave, and after dinner the children were given a glass of diluted claret so they could join their father in toasting Her Majesty.

Edward Acheson often took Dean and his friends to cottages on Long Island Sound or campsites in the woods of Maine. With utmost patience, he taught them how to fly-fish and build fires. But he was generally a stern father, tall and intimidating, remembered most for his Olympian detachment. His most severe punishment was an icy stare and banishment from the house, such as occurred when he caught Dean pitching pennies during church while he was serving as an acolyte. His son learned to view morality, and also punishment, as natural rather than spiritual phenomena. "The penalty for falling out of a tree was to get hurt," he said of his childhood. "The penalty for falling out with my father was apt to be the same thing. Result followed cause in a rational, and hence predictable, way but left no spiritual wound."

Yet Edward Acheson had a jovial sense of humor and talent as a mimic.

"He could have made a fortune in vaudeville with his Irish brogue," his son recalled. He loved to read stories aloud, particularly Kipling, doing the different voices with great gusto. In the evenings he would carry on discourses with his pet parrot, until one day the bird bit him on the finger. Acheson refused to speak to the bird for weeks, despite numerous squawked "hellos." Finally he relented and solemnly fed the bird a cracker.

He also had a grand sense of style and drama. His choir, clad in scarlet cassocks, would open the church service with a great drum roll leading into Gounod's "St. Cecilia Mass," and then the rector would bellow the creed, "I believe in one God!" Because he knew everyone in town, his walks with his son Dean would last for hours as he stopped for chats with policemen, the blacksmith (where Dean learned to curse), the garbage collector, and the millowners. All revered him. One Jewish shopkeeper, Isaac Wrubel, brought his boys to Acheson to be taught religion. He did not care what religion was taught, Wrubel said, as long as Acheson was the teacher. "Well, then," said Acheson, "I'll teach them your religion. The Old Testament is good enough for me."

As a man who believed that theology could not be kept separate from worldly action, Acheson frequently sermonized on the need for such reforms as workmen's compensation, often to the consternation of his conservative congregation. "You know that forty people in the drop-forge plant are going to lose their hands or smash their fingers before the end of the year," he preached. Unlike the fire and brimstone that came from many pulpits at the time, Acheson's sermons were commonsense lectures on hope, charity, and good works.

Mrs. Acheson made her home a center of hospitality for the town, but was far more concerned than her husband with social status. "She was in many ways the social arbiter of Middletown, and was inclined to be an aristocrat," remembered Ray Baldwin, who later became a U.S. senator from Connecticut. She wore tailor-made clothes, affected an English accent, and carried herself with a regal air that struck many as somewhat presumptuous.

Until he was nine, Dean was educated by his governess and at a small

local private school. When his mother fell ill, and Dean and his sister, Margot, became more quarrelsome, he was sent off to a boarding school called Hamlet Lodge in Pomfret, Connecticut. It was near enough to Middletown to permit weekend visits from his father. One Saturday, Joe Lawton made the trip with the Reverend Dr. Acheson. As they walked up the path to the school, they met a young man marching back and forth. "I'm being punished," he explained. The stern minister, who was soon to be elected bishop of Connecticut, reprimanded the boy and then asked if he knew where to find his son Dean. "That's him walking over there," said the boy, pointing. "He did the same thing."

Dean developed a cocksure style, a sense of fun and a streak of independence. "He did everything that came into his head," recalled his friend Lawton. "He was a good mixer, but very, very independent." Lawton, a Catholic boy who went to parochial school, remembers most of all that Dean, when young, took no note of the social and class differences among his playmates.

From his father Dean inherited a devotion to valor and duty, from his mother a sense of fortitude and grace. He also had a keen intellect that, once awakened, was at times all too aware of its own brilliance. As he grew older, his wit and elegant charm made him a convivial companion to friends who pierced his intimidating haughtiness. His reverence for the protocols of power (which sometimes failed to conceal a touch of arrogance) inspired a forceful loyalty among those he served as well as those who served him. The lessons he learned as a child developed into a dedication both to high principles and tough pragmatism. Although he occasionally found himself caught between the two, he seldom seemed paralyzed by doubt. He had the calm assurance of a man who had grown up believing that problems were meant to be solved and challenges were made to be met.

When the time came for him to enter Groton, Dean had no desire to abandon Middletown. But his father had gotten to know Peabody, and

was more convinced than ever that the decision made twelve years earlier was the right one. So in the fall of 1905, the Achesons rode up to northern Massachusetts to enroll him in the school's First Form.

Groton's rigid environment was, for Acheson even more than Harriman, a cold dousing after the warm days of childhood. In *Morning and Noon,* Acheson never mentions the school by name. "The transition from the wild freedom of my boyhood to the organized discipline of adolescence at boarding school was not a change for the happier," he wrote. "At first, through surprise, ignorance and awkwardness, later on and increasingly through willfulness, I bucked the Establishment and the system. One who does this fights the odds. The result was predictable, painful and clear."

Groton graduates may seem to outsiders all cut from comparable cloth. But in 1905, as in later years, there were deep social distinctions among the students. Acheson came from a far different milieu than Harriman, and he had none of the social ties that could ease the transition through the initial hazing that was endemic to the school.

Acheson was slight and hardly a practiced athlete; worse yet, he was independent, even cheeky. To such people, Groton could be terribly cruel. Oliver La Farge, who later won the Pulitzer Prize for his novel *Laughing Boy*, would wake up all through his life having nightmares that he was still a Third Former at Groton. Cass Canfield, who became a distinguished publisher, was greeted upon his arrival by an older student who said, "So you're the new kid," and proceeded to punch him in the face. George Biddle, later an accomplished painter, bitterly recalls the punishment known as "pumping" meted out to young boys thought too fresh. With the Rector's tacit acquiescence, the offender would be dragged from study hall by older boys and thrust headfirst into a lavatory sink, where he was "held upside down while water was sprayed on his face until he was jerked to his feet, coughing, choking, retching."

Acheson was subjected to "pumping" as well as to a crueler torture. Spindly and puckish, he was forced to stand like a Maypole while a circle of mocking students danced around calling him a "fairy." Nor did

Peabody take kindly to him. "I find him a very unexpected sort of person," the Rector wrote on one of his first report cards. "Irresponsible, forgets books, doesn't remember lessons, makes excuses." In May, Peabody simply wrote, "Immature." Three years later, Acheson had become more rebellious. Wrote Peabody: "He is described by some of his masters as by no means a pleasant boy to teach." Even in Acheson's final year, Peabody's judgment was harsh: "Needs open-mindedness. He is full of immature prejudices."

At the end of Dean's first year, Peabody dolefully informed the Achesons that the school was unable to make a "Groton boy" of their son. Mrs. Acheson was determined to keep him in the school, fearing that otherwise he would forever carry the scars of dismissal. Showing some cheek of her own, she told Peabody that she did not want the school to make a Groton boy out of Dean, but simply to educate him. Peabody, who preferred to save souls rather than lose them, relented.

Academically, Acheson stayed mired near the bottom of his class. On his final report card, he finished with a 68 average, the very lowest among the twenty-four in his form. In athletics, he showed his disdain for the intensity of the team loyalties, so alien to the pickup games in Middletown, and made the first crew but only in his final term. "At Groton I didn't happen to feel like conforming," he later said. "And to my surprise and astonishment, I discovered not only that an independent judgment might be the right one, but that a man was actually alive and breathing once he had made it."

Despite his discomfort at Groton, it instilled in Acheson a desire to seem tough, a resistance to being considered a pushover. His mannerisms, cultivated from his childhood home and his boarding school, were thoroughly British, even dandyish—but never effete. Having braved the Maypole taunts and the pumping with a stiff upper lip, the bullying tactics of Senator Joseph McCarthy and others would seem pale in comparison.

Although Acheson mocked Peabody's pieties, a bit of the Rector's sense of duty stayed with him. "Under Peabody, the idea of service, so

strong with Dean, was first instilled," his classmate Joseph Walker III later recalled. Five years after his graduation, when he first began to consider seriously his role in life, Acheson wrote Peabody to apologize for not revisiting the school. The reason, he said, "was entirely one of shrinking from a place where I knew I had been a failure and where I felt that the masters and the boys who knew me had an opinion of me far less charitable than the present one of the world at large." When his son, David, came of age, Acheson sent him to Groton.

The Grotonian for Acheson's senior year includes an essay he wrote called "The Snob in America." It was fashionable then, as it has often been, to take a hard stand against snobbery in a way that suggests that by avoiding snobbery one is exercising forbearance. Acheson did precisely that in his flowery and contorted prose. He was already wrestling with a conflict that would be evident throughout his life: an intellectual attachment to democratic values pitted against a personal elitism that caused him to view with condescension "the vulgar mass of humanity." Both the style and the content of the four-page essay are revealing:

> The institution of snobbery is in a foreign land when it alights on the shores of America. Not that it will not meet many compatriots; far from it. It will almost feel at home in the crowd of friends. But soon there is that in the atmosphere which makes it old, shriveled and spiteful . . . Snobbishness is not mere conceit. Conceit is the glorification of oneself, snobbishness is the abasement of others. A conceited man says "I"; a snob says "we." Conceit may give a man self-confidence, unfounded perhaps, but conducive to effort. Snobbishness produces nothing but the sneer . . . In America the antipathy to the snob goes deeper than the scramble for gold. For the essence of democracy is belief in the common people, and the essence of snobbery is contempt of them . . . It is wonderful, this spirit of democracy and, whenever we hear it raved against as being too strong, or too radical, or too popular, let us remember that in it lies the ever virile power which keeps us

from being a nation of snobs. D.G.A.

Echoing his father, Acheson in his essay took issue with those who thought that laborers were showing ingratitude by trying to organize unions. His fellow students, he felt, should become more sensitive to the plight of the working class. Upon graduating in 1911, he took his own advice: through family connections he got a summer job with a work crew on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway being pushed across northern Canada.

On his way to the railroad camp in the wilds near Hudson Bay, Acheson boarded a freight car filled with itinerant workers only to discover that even among railwaymen there was a rigid class system, one that he had violated. "Residency types, even axemen, did not travel with common laborers," he recalled. "I had let down the barrier of caste, albeit through ignorance, and with it our side—a minute group, as I learned later, for whom prestige was a major factor in handling large numbers of illiterate laborers."

The initiation rites on the railroad were similar in some ways to those of Groton: as a neophyte he was taken for a ride in a handcar that the other workers tipped over at a prearranged signal, sending Acheson sprawling. "My own merriment was somewhat forced," Acheson recalled. But he reveled in "the intoxication of knowing that this was 'life.'" As he traveled from camp to camp through the wilderness, he derived a sense of security from the gruff hospitality, the shared soup and hardtack, that greeted each new visitor.

At his final workplace, an outpost known as Residency 25, Acheson fell comfortably into the close-knit crew. There was the chief engineer who "lived alone, as a captain should. Exuding authority, he commanded almost without words." Then too there was the hearty instrument man and the French-Canadian cook, Lorin, a Falstaffian man of great gusto prone to ribald soliloquy and song. "Months later, when I had gotten to college, Lorin's recitations and stories put me in the novel role of ribald

wag."

"These men," Acheson later wrote, "had given me new eagerness for experience. The simple, extroverted pattern of their lives had revived a sense of freedom amidst uncoerced order. They had restored to me a priceless possession, joy in life. Never again was I to lose it or doubt it."

St. Paul's School in Concord, New Hampshire, in many ways mirrored Groton. Opened in 1856, it was ardently Anglophile and Anglican. Like the other Episcopal schools of New England, it broke with the academy model of American private education (as exemplified at Andover and Exeter) and consciously imitated Eton and Harrow. For years baseball was forbidden; the boys played cricket instead.

The formidable and pious headmaster of St. Paul's, Dr. Samuel Drury, could match Endicott Peabody starched collar for starched collar. "The school might make one condition for its diploma: the ability to recite the Sermon on the Mount," he proclaimed. But whereas Peabody was hale, Drury was dour. According to the school history, he was "reserved, cheerless and solemn" and regarded American boys by nature to be "slovenly, dilatory, inconsiderate and slack." He inveighed against the use of banners in student rooms because he considered them "an offense against art and hygiene."

St. Paul's was larger than Groton (four hundred boys instead of two hundred) and drew more from the New York-Philadelphia Main Line axis than Boston's Brahmin families. In 1923, 199 students were from New York and only 26 from Massachusetts. Among them was a boy whose family had lived in both states, Charles Eustis Bohlen, known at St. Paul's and for the rest of his life as "Chip."

St. Paul's and Groton, along with a few other High Church boarding schools in New England, offered those born into America's new industrial wealth, such as Harriman, an induction into the nation's aristocratic old boys' network. They also helped provide a proper place in this circle for the sons of the right sort of Episcopal clergymen, such as Acheson. But no

less importantly, they permitted the sons of the old-line social gentry to retain their connection to the country's Establishment. The Bohlens were very much a part of this slightly frayed American upper class, a family of social distinction but somewhat less wealth.*

Chip Bohlen was born on August 30, 1904, at his family's home on Grindstone Island, in the St. Lawrence River near Clayton, New York. His father, also named Charles, had a modest but comfortable inheritance that allowed him to live graciously as a hunter, rider, sportsman, and "gentleman of leisure." He prided himself as a suave and gracious bon vivant—fond of strong drink, spirited horses, and the opera—and though his children often found his style a bit embarrassing, it rubbed off on each of them. Once during a trip to Paris with Chip, he caught the bouquet of violets tossed by Raquel Meller after her "La Violetera" solo, kissed them, and with a dramatic flair threw them back onstage.

Celestine Eustis Bohlen, Chip's mother, was eccentric, domineering, and charming. A member of one of the most distinguished families of New Orleans, she was raised in perhaps the grandest home in that city's Garden District. Her grandfather, a Massachusetts lawyer who migrated south in 1822, was chief justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court. Her father, James Biddle Eustis, was a Civil War hero and U.S. senator. When he was appointed in 1892 to be American envoy in Paris, a job that then held only the rank of minister, Eustis said he would accept only if it were upgraded. Thus he became the first American ambassador to France.

Because he was by then widowed, James Eustis took his daughter Celestine, known as "Tina," to serve as his official hostess in Paris. Her service in the embassy, combined with her Creole heritage, instilled in her an abiding love, bordering on infatuation, for France. She took her children there almost every year; Chip Bohlen remembered her pointing from the window of a Cherbourg-Paris train at a field of cows and saying: "You must admit that they are prettier than cows in America."

The Bohlens kept a winter residence in Aiken, South Carolina, a resort favored by wealthy northern families of the day. When Chip was twelve, they moved their main residence from Clayton to Ipswich, Massachusetts,

north of Boston. At the Ipswich home, a rambling farmhouse surrounded by woods and streams, Mrs. Bohlen re-created the congenial hospitality of her childhood. Her husband became a gentlemanly fixture at the Myopia Hunt Club. Between their mother's natural grace and their father's relaxed outlook on life, the three Bohlen children developed a social ease that could charm both friends and elders.

Such qualities were to play an important role in making Chip Bohlen a consummate Foreign Service officer. By nature and breeding he was neither an incisive strategist nor a forceful advocate. His flair came from his easygoing and charismatic personality; his success came from his ability to gently guide the shifting framework of American policy as a respected member of the State Department's inner circle. With unbroken service as a Soviet expert to six administrations over forty years, he would come to embody the bipartisan consensus that dominated the postwar period.

At St. Paul's, Chip was overshadowed by his brother, Henry Morgan Bohlen, known as Buffy. Chip, a year younger, was by school custom designated as "Bohlen II." During his final year, Buffy won the school prize for "Greatest Distinction Jointly in Scholarship and Athletics." Chip that year played third-string club football and joined the radio club. His academic record was respectable but modest; he showed little interest in history, but did slightly better in science and math. In his Sixth Form, Chip finally made the football team; "from a rather mediocre player, he developed into a most useful and hardworking guard" was the limp praise of the school paper.

Despite Buffy's schoolboy success, he was in fact a quietly tormented boy who took to drink at college and killed himself shortly after graduation. Chip, for all his failings at St. Paul's, found early in life an inner balance. Instead of competing with Buffy, Chip dedicated himself to having fun, honing a devil-may-care attitude, and rebelling against Dr. Drury's pieties.

In the eyes of his masters, Bohlen II suffered from that most grievous of schoolboy maladies, "bad attitude." Two months before graduation it caught up with him. Bohlen and some friends were seen using an inflated

condom as a soccer ball, kicking it about the Upper School courtyard. One of the masters identified Bohlen as the culprit. Off to Dr. Drury he went. Drury, who sometimes knelt and prayed with students who were being expelled, did not waste his prayers on Bohlen before sending him packing.

It might seem curious that Acheson, Harriman, and Bohlen were less than total successes as schoolboys. Acheson, in particular, was thought of in later life as the epitome of a Grottie, regardless of how Peabody felt at the time. But then, Churchill was a disaster at Harrow. Those who became senior prefects at Groton and St. Paul's—solid, stolid boys, square-shouldered fullbacks, reliable, unquestioning, and loyal—quite often grew up to be respectable bankers and to pass the plate on Sundays. It is not all that surprising that imaginative boys with visions of broader vistas often did not take well to the rigid conformities of life at high-toned church schools.

Expulsion from St. Paul's did not greatly disturb young Bohlen, because Drury had refrained from exacting the ultimate punishment—withdrawing his college recommendation. Bohlen was still free to go to college, and for boys from Groton or St. Paul's in that era, college meant Harvard, Yale, or Princeton. From 1906 to 1932, for example, 405 Groton boys applied to Harvard. Three were rejected. St. Paul's had a similar track record. Bohlen, like his father and uncle and brother, chose Harvard.

The first snow came early that fall to the ranch in Idaho, clinging to the branches of the jack pines and falling on the young boys as they cantered past. Like many of the games played at the Harriman household, the horseback jousting could get rough. The object was to grab the handkerchief looped around another boy's shoulders and yank him out of his saddle. What most struck skinny Bob Lovett, he later recounted, was that the older Harriman boy, on vacation from Groton, wore neither jacket nor tarpaulin. Protected by only a large V-necked sweater, Averell appeared not to notice as the wet snow hit him in the neck and melted

down his chest.

To Lovett, Harriman's ascetic qualities would seem, in later years, to suggest a somewhat oblivious attitude, perhaps partly feigned, about the world around him. While working together as partners on Wall Street or helping to shape America's world role in the difficult early days of the Cold War, the conscientious Lovett would learn to laugh at the headstrong Harriman's ability to seem more like a sovereign than a subject to the Presidents he served. But on that day at the Idaho ranch, as Lovett watched from afar, he recalls that he merely marveled at Harriman's casual hardiness and envied his cool indifference.

Lovett's first introduction to the Harriman family was a grandly befitting one: at a small way station in Texas in 1903, his father's private railway car was coupled onto E. H. Harriman's private train. The new boss of the Southern Pacific was making a tour of his realm, and he sought the counsel of the most respected railway lawyer in Texas. Judge Robert Scott Lovett, a successful and dignified attorney who had earned his honorific by a short stint on the Texas bench, was hired to handle Harriman's interests. Within three years he would move to New York as Harriman's chief counsel.

As the two men discussed business, young Bob, then eight, explored Harriman's elaborate private car with the magnate's younger son, Roland. Spying a parallel bar in the exercise cubicle, Bob began to show off his acrobatic skills, chinning himself a couple of times and ending with a whirl of giant swings. E. H. Harriman came in and watched. Turning to the somewhat pudgy Roland, he demanded: "Why can't you do that?"

Like Averell's father, young Bob's was a self-taught man. To support his family, R.S. Lovett had quit school at fifteen and taken a job as a station agent in Huntsville, Texas, on one of the lines that was eventually incorporated into the Southern Pacific. Most of his education came from visiting the rectory of a local Catholic church where he was informally tutored by a kindly priest. Later he read law in a Houston firm, served briefly as a state court judge, and at twenty-six became a member of the famous Houston firm of Baker and Botts.

Judge Lovett married a member of Huntsville's aristocracy, Lavinia Chilton Abercrombie, a daughter of a Confederate Army officer originally from Alabama. After attending Randolph-Macon College in Virginia, she became a teacher at the Peabody Normal School in Huntsville and was in the vanguard of the town's effort, not altogether successful, to become known as the "Athens of the South."

Their only child was born on September 14, 1895. Although the family moved to Houston shortly after his birth, Robert Abercrombie Lovett would later affect the style of a small-town Texan, even on occasion writing Huntsville as his residence in guest books and hotel registers. His mother, anxious that he respect the codes of chivalry of the old South, plied young Bob with romantic novels and histories of the Civil War. He learned from her an aversion to conflict and a respect for civility. Disputes were matters that ought to be hastily resolved. Other people, including his parents, should be addressed as "sir" or "madam."

The elder Lovett cultivated in his boy an attention to detail, observation, and factual organization. After they moved to New York in 1906, Bob bicycled between their home on Central Park West and the Hamilton Military Institute where he attended grammar school. His father would ride to work along the same route and question Bob each evening about the sights along the way. "How many horses were pulling the cart?" he would ask about a midtown construction project. "How many girders were in the cart?" "How were the horses hitched to the cart?" Bob was rewarded or penalized a quarter depending on the accuracy of his answers.

Rigorous intellectual discipline was also demanded by the Hamilton Institute, where the curriculum included drilling by a military master who had served with the Queen's Guards. In spite of, or perhaps because of, his rigid training, Lovett developed a wry sense of humor. His enigmatic but warm half smile, when combined with his quiet courtliness, endeared him both to his contemporaries and their parents, and provided the foundation for what was to be his greatest strength in later life: a winning ability to defuse personal tensions.

Tall and slender, with hooded dark eyes and a full, almost feminine mouth, Lovett was strikingly handsome. He possessed an inner security, a genial warmth that made him comfortable with himself and with others. It allowed him to enjoy being off on his own; when he traveled with his father on long excursions he often dropped off in Wyoming or Colorado to enjoy a week of solitary fishing. Yet he also formed easy boyhood bonds with friends in both Manhattan and near Woodfold, his parents' country estate in Locust Valley, Long Island. Along with the Harriman boys and other young men from fashionable families, he was an avid member of the Knickerbocker Greys, a kind of upper-crust Boy Scout troop replete with military ranks and uniforms.

Like E. H. Harriman, Judge Lovett used to take his young son on inspection tours of the railways. On one such trip, a man flagged down their car and pleaded for help. His baby, he said, was suffering from seizures in a shack near the tracks. As the older men pondered the child's plight, Bob diagnosed the problem and insisted on administering an enema. The cure worked. Lovett thus gained a lifelong reputation of being a frustrated doctor: from then on he eagerly diagnosed ailments and prescribed cures for reluctant friends from the bottles of medicine he invariably carried on his travels. He was, himself, a confirmed hypochondriac, a condition partly vindicated by a recurring array of actual health problems throughout his life.

Bob often traveled with the Harrimans to their fishing camp at Klamath Lake in Oregon or to the Railroad Ranch the Lovetts and Harrimans had bought in Idaho. He was also a frequent weekend visitor to Arden. To him the rambling estate was a wondrous oasis, filled with such friends as the Harriman boys, Norman Reed, and Charles "Pat" Rumsey (who later married Mary Harriman). A particular favorite was Mrs. Harriman, whom Lovett later called "the epitome of charm and beauty." Together the polite young man and the formidable grand dame would play backgammon in the parlor at Arden. In Manhattan Bob would call on her after school even when her children were away.

After E. H. Harriman died in 1909, Judge Lovett not only took over

the chairmanship of the Union Pacific, he also handled Mrs. Harriman's legal affairs and helped groom Averell to take over the railroads. During the summers Mrs. Harriman would move her whole household out to the Idaho ranch. She and Bob once took a cross-country train trip together, sitting up late every night talking and playing two-handed bridge. Along the way she bought a memento for him, a large piece of petrified wood that she had sawed in half to make matching paperweights for the two of them. In later years, while he was Under Secretary of State and later Secretary of Defense, it was accorded a prominent place on his desk.

As a boy, Bob Lovett tended to view Averell Harriman, who was four years older, from a respectful distance. In any game they played, Harriman was not only naturally better, but was also more determined to be better. Lovett, on the other hand, was far more studious. He seemed to have an inner security and confident outlook that allowed him to genuinely enjoy his schooling, to excel without either embarrassment or grinding effort. Nor did his parents see any reason to send him to one of the rigidly disciplined and potentially stultifying church schools in New England. Instead they chose The Hill School, near Philadelphia, which was more distinguished academically than it was socially.

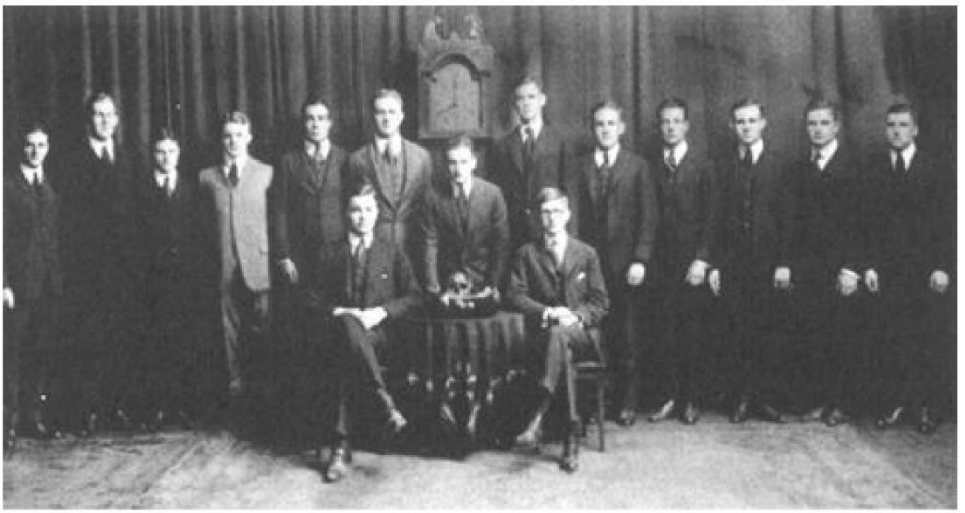
The Hill's headmaster, John Meigs, shared the piety of Peabody and Drury, but he was not a minister; his field was modern languages and his training was as a teacher. Nor was he burdened by the stiff style of most New England headmasters. The school history notes that he had "exuberance, infectious humor, and an often stinging wit." One of Lovett's classmates wrote a school newspaper editorial that would have been considered heresy at Groton: "Last week the seeds of iconoclasm were sown at the YMCA meeting. The time was ripe for it. Bible classes were assailed for their sluggishness and enough argument was instilled to make it spirited instead of dry."

Lovett, who for a time picked up the nickname "Jake," was the outstanding boy of his class. "Born for success he seemed," said his senior yearbook. He was head of his form academically from his first year until his last. Those with top marks were excused from midyear exams, and

Lovett regularly used the exemption to travel with his father inspecting the Union Pacific system.

His other activities included being yearbook business manager, a cheerleader, and a skinny but accomplished tumbler on the gym team. As an avid thespian, Lovett co-founded the school's Shakespeare Club (for which his father endowed a theater) and performed in *The Merchant of Venice, Twelfth Night*, and A *Midsummer Night's Dream.* Of the eighty-six boys who graduated from The Hill in 1914, more than half went to Yale, among them Lovett.

CHAPTER 2



Lovett, seated left, in Skull and Bones

TAP DAYS

"To run with the swift"

Anna May Snader McCloy, the strong-willed daughter of a proud but poor Pennsylvania Dutch family, had one major goal in her life: making sure that her sole surviving son became part of the world of wealth and power that she admired from her vantage as a hairdresser. Her husband had died of heart failure at age thirty-nine, shortly before the boy's sixth birthday. Her other son had died of diphtheria five months later. From that day on, she devoted her considerable energies to the two tasks that her acute social instincts told her would ensure her son's advancement: getting him a good education and seeing that he met the right people.

Few mothers have ever been more successful. John McCloy eventually came to be considered the leading embodiment of the East Coast's inner circle, a "Chairman of the Board of the American Establishment." Throughout his life, he would rankle at the notion that he was an Establishment archetype, noting time and again that he had been "born on the wrong side of the tracks." In fact, however, he was one of the best examples of that most salient feature of America's social structure: that its upper echelon admits not only those born into it, but also those with talent who are eager to accept its cultivating process.

The Philadelphia neighborhood where McCloy was born on March 31, 1895, was actually north of Market Street, and thus on the "right" side of the city's tracks. But back then, North 19th Street was a drab working-class area with few social pretensions. He was baptized John Snader McCloy, his name taken from a brother of his mother. McCloy liked neither the uncle nor the name; years later, as he was about to embark on his career, he would adopt the name John Jay McCloy, Jr., in honor of his father.

The senior John McCloy, a staunch Presbyterian of Scotch-Irish descent, left behind little money and no insurance when he died, even though he had worked for nineteen years as a claims officer for the Penn Mutual Life Insurance Company. When an official of that company years later mailed him a picture of his father as a young man, McCloy replied that "it all gave me a very strange feeling, inasmuch as I knew so little about him." The company also sent McCloy a copy of a letter his father had written about a person who had been refused life insurance because of a heart murmur. "My mother tells me that he himself had endeavored to get insurance with the company, but his own heart condition stood in the way," McCloy replied. "When he talks about the soft and low murmurs surging through a laboring heart, I am quite sure he was thinking a little about himself and so spoke sympathetically of the turned down applicant."

To avoid the drab fate that usually befell penniless widows and their children at that time, Anna McCloy learned home nursing and massage

techniques, visiting neighbors and friends to conduct her trade. She also built up her hairdressing business, "doing heads," as McCloy liked to put it, at fifty cents apiece. She often took her son along to meet her rich clients, who included the town's foremost lawyers and their wives. To save money, Anna set up house with her two maiden sisters, Sadie, who earned money as a milliner, and young Lena, who did the housework, looked after Jack, and saved her nickels to take him on trips to the circus and the zoo.

Above all, Anna McCloy was a proud woman. One wealthy businessman whose family she worked for was particularly impressed by her beauty and strength. When his wife died, he proposed marriage and offered to adopt John as his son and heir. There was one condition: John would have to change his last name. Anna said she would prefer to keep "doing heads."

The streets of Philadelphia offered carefree joys not all that different from those Acheson found in Middletown. In a speech to the Pennsylvania Club in 1948, McCloy recalled:

> Life for small boys was most intriguing. There was the reservoir, down whose very steep approaches you could sled on snowy days if only you had the nerve to accept the awful chance of hitting a horse and buggy or ice wagon on Corinthian Avenue. Brewery town, in whose stables were the brewers' big horses, was not far away. Only a relatively short way out Fairmont Avenue was the park itself, with the trolley, the zoo, the views of the destruction of Pompeii left from the Centennial Exposition, and railroad tracks with standing freight cars and other attractive nuisances to deal with. We were chased from time to time by what we called railroad dicks, always more exciting to run from than mere cops.

The summer jobs that Anna chose for her son were designed to expand his contacts as well as help pay family expenses. Through her wealthy

Philadelphia clients, she was able to get work for him as a chore boy at the fashionable resorts and camps of the Adirondacks. He did everything from delivering dairy products to cleaning bathrooms. By toting milk and ice with a shoulder yoke and wagon, he developed into a strapping boy. Soon he had taken responsibility for maintaining the tennis courts at many of the camps and serving as a volleying partner for the better players.

Having learned his mother's lessons well, Jack began lining up work tutoring the children of the families he met and coaching them in tennis. The powerful lawyers and judges in Philadelphia (George Wharton Pepper, Matthew Stanley Quay, Boies Penrose, Samuel Pennypacker) became his heroes and the subject of dinner-table discussions; McCloy would spend as much time as possible with them during the summers, quietly yet persistently grilling them about their work.

Even more important to Anna was her son's education. The senior McCloy had dropped out of high school but had taught himself to read Latin and worked with a friend on a translation of Vergil's *Aeneid.* His greatest regret was not knowing other languages. On his deathbed he told Anna: "Have John learn Greek." His other wish was that his son become a lawyer.

Fearful that continuing at public school while living home with his aunts would not provide a sufficiently manly challenge, she saved enough money to send him to an inexpensive but rigorous Quaker school called Maplewood, then to The Peddie School in New Jersey, near Princeton. When McCloy enrolled in 1907, Peddie still catered to boys of moderate means and retained many of its traditional ties to the Baptist Church. But the atmosphere was far freer than at Maple-wood. Recalls McCloy: "I found you could raise your voice and talk out loud in the world."

McCloy got excellent grades, was noted for his forceful writing style, and became fascinated by the glory of ancient Greece. For the rest of his life, he viewed the ultimate goal of public service to be re-creating a "Periclean Age." In his final year he captured the school's Hiram Deats Greek Prize (the award: five dollars). He also became a favorite of the athletic coach, a man named John Plant, who taught the stocky yet quick

young man to excel in football and tennis. Plant's exhortation, "Run with the swift," became one of McCloy's favorite phrases. "Being at Peddie taught me how important it was to run with the swift," he later said, "to work with people who were better than I."

Throughout his life, he retained this genuinely humble awe about those he called the swift, the people he worked with who somehow seemed "better." In his own mind, at least, there was always a bit of the chore boy in his nature. He became known as a man who could get things done, who never caused a stir, who could handle inordinate amounts of work, who could edge people toward a consensus without making them feel manipulated. Whether as a top official at the War Department, High Commissioner for Germany, or president of the World Bank, he was most comfortable when keeping a low profile. His immense influence came not because he had an outspoken ideology or an overt political agenda; rather, it grew out of his ability to make the people he dealt with think each idea was their own. Because he was an expert at avoiding trouble for others, the word "trusted" always seemed attached to his name. Because he was a good listener, one who could guide decisions without noisy infighting, Jack McCloy was considered the consummate wise man.

On the strength of both his academic and athletic record at Peddie, McCloy won a scholarship to Amherst, where he matriculated in 1912. While there he began his unusual lifelong habit of staging "reading debates" for himself: he would choose books on a certain topic but with different viewpoints and read them concurrently. Philosophy and history were his greatest academic interests. He was a dogged student, not naturally brilliant but endowed with a stolid, reliable intellect. Friends compared his academic approach to his style on the tennis court, where he was a hard-driving though hardly graceful player always eager to rush the net. Although he was graduated cum laude, to his deep disappointment (and that of his mother) he just missed making Phi Beta Kappa.

His best friend was Lewis Williams Douglas, the raffish son of

"Rawhide Jim" Douglas, a man who had made a fortune as a miner in Arizona. Lew Douglas went on to become a congressman, Franklin Roosevelt's budget director, and Harry Truman's ambassador to the Court of St. James's. The two were oddly matched: Douglas had an engaging diffidence; McCloy, an intense desire to conform. McCloy's favorite recreation was to take long hikes, often alone, through the Holyoke mountains; Douglas, on the other hand, preferred chasing the girls of Smith College, which he did with notable success. Using a colloquial term for womanizing, the 1916 yearbook noted: "Jack McCloy and Lew Douglas hold the two ends of the fussing record."

Two of the women who used to visit Douglas from Smith were the Zinsser sisters, Peggy (whom Douglas soon married) and Ellen (whom McCloy married years later). Neither of the young women, however, remembered meeting McCloy at Amherst. Douglas joined the high-toned Alpha Delta Phi fraternity; McCloy, by waiting on tables, was able to afford only Beta Theta Pi, which was then far less opulent. Yet the two young men became close and fast friends at college, and as brothers-in-law remained fly-fishing buddies and professional associates until Douglas's death in 1974.

While Jack was at Amherst, Anna McCloy decided that the best way to broaden her son's circle was for him to spend vacations in the affluent resort communities along the coast of Maine. At her insistence, McCloy knocked on doors of the great estates, as he had done in the Adirondacks, to arrange jobs teaching history, sailing, and tennis to the young boys there. "Part of my mother's genius was to get me a good summer," he said years later. "I remember very well the day she made me work up the nerve to ring the doorbell at Seal Harbor, where the Rockefeller estate was, and try to get a tutoring job with their children. I got turned down, but I did teach them a little sailing." In his later career as a Wall Street lawyer, he handled the personal affairs of the Rockefeller family.

With the war in Europe under way, the Amherst campus split into the "pacifists" and the "militarists." McCloy and Douglas were firmly in the latter camp, steadfastly defending in late-night bull sessions the need for

American preparedness. They were among the first to enlist in the Plattsburg movement, the fledgling reserve officers' training camp set up in Plattsburg, New York, and eventually around the country. "It seemed to me that all the right people went," McCloy later recalled. While there, he distinguished himself as a marksman, winning top honors at the camp during the summer of 1915 and tying with Douglas (each scoring 448 out of a possible 450) in 1916.

Harvard Law School represented the pinnacle of Anna McCloy's dreams, and hence those of her son. It was indisputably the foremost law school of the time, and its dean, Roscoe Pound, the nation's greatest legal scholar. Teaching was largely done through the Socratic method, in which professors prodded their students with questions and dialogue, and courses were built around case studies, in which legal theory was explored through concrete examples of important cases. Most important, from McCloy's standpoint, the institution was a meritocracy; grades, not social standing, counted. For a poor boy struggling to succeed, it was the perfect ticket to the top.

McCloy was elated when he was admitted to the school, and he enrolled in the fall of 1916 after leaving Plattsburg with a commission of second lieutenant in the Army reserve. America's entry into the war, however, presented him with a dilemma. His mother strongly felt that he should do everything possible to finish his studies before joining active service. But because he had argued so strongly in favor of the cause, he felt uncomfortable not enlisting. So at the end of his first year, he left Harvard to become a second lieutenant in the regular Army at Fort Ethan Allen in Vermont.

His commanding officer was General Guy Preston, a salty cavalryman who had fought at the Battle of Wounded Knee, where the Sioux Indians made their final stand in 1890. Still lean and flagpole straight, Preston had organized an artillery regiment, noting that he had no trouble making the transition from the cavalry because "I learned what a trajectory was while

pissing against the schoolhouse wall." McCloy's meager agility as a horseman indirectly led him to be plucked from the ranks and made a staff aide to the general. "One day at Fort Ethan Allen, I walked behind you after you had been riding and I could see blood all over your pants," Preston later recalled to McCloy, with whom he corresponded until his death in the 1950s. "I said to myself that any son of a bitch who could keep riding with that much pain must be a damn good officer."

Preston and his field artillery regiment, with McCloy as the chief operations officer, arrived on the western front in France shortly before the armistice. Positioned on the Moselle River, they spent a few weeks in isolated skirmishes with enemy artillery and were preparing for an assault on the town of Metz when the war ended.

Upon their return in August of 1919, Preston tried to convince McCloy to take a permanent commission. But McCloy was already back to reading his lawbooks. "One evening McCloy came to eat with me at my camp table in the mess hall," Preston recalled years later. "I saw he was preoccupied. Finally he exclaimed, 'General, that abstract law is beautiful stuff!' I glanced at him and saw his face was radiant as an angel's. I said at once, 'Mac, I'll never again ask you to stay in this man's army. Your destiny is too manifest.'" At age twenty-four, McCloy returned to Cambridge for his final two years at Harvard Law.

"The courses were wonderful, and I got caught up in the flavor, the excitement of the law school when I returned," McCloy later recalled. Professor Joseph Beale, known for his textbooks on civil damages and federal taxation, gave him particular encouragement. The clarity of his thought was excellent, the professor noted, although his writing style lacked elegance. He was able to stay near the top of his class, but to his chagrin he barely missed making *Law Review.* "I had to run as fast as I could to keep up," McCloy remembers. "I worked as hard as I knew how to work."

His mother was still an ever-present force in his life; she even moved to Cambridge so that she could share an apartment with him while he completed law school.* Her savings and earnings as a hairdresser helped

supplement McCloy's scholarship, and he earned extra money teaching handball and squash. The financial burden seemed especially difficult after a heady year commanding troops. He felt older, more experienced, than the other students, and certainly not inclined to be distracted by social frivolities.

The prospect of returning to Philadelphia, where few jobs were waiting, also seemed unexciting. Upon graduation, he instead headed for Wall Street. "I knew the pace would be thrilling there," he remembers. "I knew that was where I would have a chance to run with the swift."

He was a shy boy of moderate means from a family of modest social stature. Yet despite his background, or perhaps because of it, George Kennan became entranced with F. Scott Fitzgerald's romantic portrayal of a young Midwestern boy caught in the Gothic and glamorous swirl of Old Nassau in the early part of the century. "From the first he loved Princeton," Fitzgerald wrote of his hero, Amory Blaine, in *This Side of Paradise,* "its lazy beauty, its half-grasped significance, the wild moonlight revel of the rushes, the handsome, prosperous big-game crowds, and under it all the air of struggle that pervaded his class." During his senior year at military school, Kennan read the novel avidly. Even though no other boy from his school was going east for college, Kennan resolved that he too would break into the world of power and prominence by enrolling in Princeton.

As America entered a new competitive era, the right college education became as important as birth or prep schools in determining a person's social status. The top colleges, and in particular Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, began to be regarded (and regard themselves) as great national institutions, important rungs on the American ladder. Young men who attended them, particularly those tapped for the right clubs, felt graced, as if they had been singled out in the quickening race. College spirit flourished, and the school ties that bound Old Blues or Princetonians were at least as strong as those formed by survival at Groton or St. Paul's.

Like McCloy, Kennan had a lifelong fascination with what he considered the American elite. And though Princeton would turn out to be, as he noted in his memoirs, "not exactly the sort of experience reflected in *This Side of Paradise*," it served to pluck Kennan from the obscurity of his background and set him on his way to becoming the most celebrated product of America's Foreign Service and the designated intellectual within the postwar policy Establishment.

Yet unlike McCloy, Kennan had tortuously conflicted feelings about being tapped to be part of the American elite. Whenever he seemed about to meld comfortably into the American Establishment, be it at Princeton or in Washington, he would resolutely cast himself as an outsider, deriving an almost perverse pleasure from the stings and slights that can befall those who neither fully accept nor reject its embrace. Deeply insecure, he would alternate between yearning for acceptance and acting diffident. He claimed to relish the role of outsider, but it was important for him to be an outsider from within, a person who liked to think that he was continually miscast. "To the extent that I was accepted among those in the Establishment, it was in the role they decided to cast for me, rather than because of who I really was," he reflected at age eighty from one of the leather armchairs of the Century Association clubhouse in Manhattan. "I like to think, too, that this was my own choice."

Even as a child, George Frost Kennan had felt a sense of isolation. He was born in Milwaukee on February 16, 1904, the only son of Kossuth Kent Kennan and Florence James Kennan. Two months later, his mother suddenly died. His father, then fifty-two, had little talent for providing youthful love or companionship. His work as a tax lawyer (he formulated Wisconsin's state income tax, the first in the nation, and wrote two books on the subject) generally kept him secluded in the dark study of the rambling Kennan home. "He had a way of churning his teeth together so you could see the muscle, sort of suppressing things," George recalled many years later. He perceived his father as a "shy, lonely and not very happy person," and was able to communicate with him mainly by "bashful sidelong glances."

Nor did George receive much parental love from his stepmother, Louise Wheeler, a teacher from Ripon College whom his father married when George was five. "I don't think she was capable of deep affection," Kennan later recalled. One of his earliest memories is of her severely punishing him when, after watching some other little boys urinating in a lavatory, he cut a slit in his own trousers because they had no fly. From then on, as he was growing up, he felt acutely uncomfortable about his stepmother seeing him even partly undressed. Despite his interest in music, his stepmother forbade him to play the family piano. Yet she pampered her own son, Kent Wheeler Kennan (who later became an accomplished musician), with private lessons.

Although later prone to the ailments that accompany a dolorous disposition, Kennan was a strapping young boy. Yet he was not aggressive, and in fact he was often accused of being a sissy. Once when he got into an argument with another boy, the two were taken to a yard to fight it out. Kennan and his similarly timid antagonist revolved around each other for so long without throwing any punches that the other boys finally called off the fight.

When Kennan was eight, his father took the family on a six-month trip to Germany. They lived in Kassel, where the elder Kennan worked on a tax book. With an apparently natural facility for language, George was speaking German quite respectably by the time he left. In a letter to his father, who had returned home a few weeks earlier than the rest of the family, George revealed his first career interest. "May I join the Navy when I grow up?" he asked.

For the most part, Kennan was raised by his three older sisters, Jeannette, Frances, and Constance. As he said in his intensely confessional *Memoirs*: "I lived, particularly in childhood but with lessening intensity right on to middle age, in a world that was peculiarly and intimately my own, scarcely to be shared with others or even made plausible to them."

It was a childhood far removed from the secure world of a Harriman or a Lovett, one that seemed to engender emotional extremes. "My behavior knew only two moods: awkward aloofness and bubbling enthusiasm,"

Kennan noted in his *Memoirs.* Actually, there were many more moods, many more conflicts. His character contained a curious blend of arrogance and insecurity, haughtiness and self-pity, sensitivity and coldness, assertiveness and shyness. He would grow into a tormented romantic who liked to view himself as a cold intellectual pragmatist, one who felt, as he later wrote, "a guest of one's time and not a member of its household."

Kennan attributed much of his conflicted personality to his ancestry. In an unsent letter to his two daughters in 1942, written to be delivered in case of his death, Kennan described his mother's side of the family as "utterly lacking in sentimentality" and his father's side as having "an ugly tendency toward it." Both sides were "extremists" in their own way, he said, with a "tendency to shyness and introversion." He took a great interest in exploring his own genealogy, and in 1961 wrote his children a fifteen-page letter detailing his findings. "That heredity does play a part second to none in making us what we are, no one would deny," he told them. "I find it a source of strength to picture myself as part of a continuity."

The Kennans had come to New England from Scotland by way of Ireland in the early 1700s. James McKennan, the first direct ancestor to arrive, settled in the Massachusetts Bay colony, shortened his name, and had ten children. Most of his descendants were farmers or Presbyterian ministers. As George Kennan later wrote to his daughters: "None took the easy path of picturing themselves as downtrodden. None threw themselves on the charity of others. It is this middle ground they managed to preserve—between the humiliation of selling one's labor to others and the moral discomfort of having others in one's employ—to which I often felt indebted when I grappled with the problems of Marxism."

Thomas Lathrop Kennan, George's grandfather, moved west to buy a farm in Wisconsin and eventually became a lawyer in Milwaukee. (He was a descendant of Elder Brewster, of the Mayflower Company, but George

Kennan cautioned his children against false pride: "For every *Mayflower* ancestor we could probably find a hundred ne'er-do-wells in the family tree.") As a tax and estate lawyer who dabbled in real estate, Thomas became the first Kennan to make money. He built an ornate stone house on Prospect Street and settled into a life of Victorian pretension.

Kennan's father was named after the famous Hungarian freedom fighter Lajos Kossuth, who visited Milwaukee during a tour of the U.S. in 1851. Kossuth Kent Kennan, known generally as Kent, worked his way through Ripon College, studied law while working for the Wisconsin Central Railway, and traveled through Europe recruiting laborers for the railroad. While there, he learned to speak German, French, and Dutch. He became an ardent admirer of German music and theater, which he helped support in Milwaukee, and collected a fine library from which he spent long evenings reading aloud to his family.

After a childless first marriage, Kossuth married Florence James. Her father, Alfred James, had run away at age thirteen and shipped out on a whaler for New Bedford. He spent several years before the mast, rounding the Horn of Africa twice before returning to Illinois. He left to his grandchildren a privately printed leather-bound account of his adventures. George, who read it many times as a child, attributed to his grandfather his own love of the sea and "the rebellious pride which seems to crop up in us from time to time."

One of the most influential relatives in Kennan's life was a man he met only once. As a young schoolboy, he traveled with his father to Medina, New York, to visit a cousin of George's grandfather, a man also named George Kennan. Born in Ohio in 1845, the elder George Kennan had at age twenty explored Alaska and Siberia for a telegraph company and written a popular book called *Tent Life in Siberia.* After becoming famous as a journalist and lecturer, he set out in 1885 to visit Siberian prisons and the czarist camps. The resulting articles appeared in *Century Magazine* and were subsequently published as a two-volume book, *Siberia and the Exile System.* By exposing the cruelties of the Russian autocracy, the pieces made the elder George Kennan the first bearer of

that name to be declared persona non grata in Russia. Shortly before his death, in 1923, he completed a laudatory two-volume biography of E. H. Harriman.

During his stay with his distinguished relative, the younger George Kennan became fascinated by Russia. He enviously eyed the various artifacts in the home. But the visit was not without tension. Young George was somewhat sulky and petulant, especially toward the elder George Kennan's wife. She and her husband were childless; their only son, who had also been named George Kennan, died in infancy. She resented the young usurper of the name, and worried that her husband might bequeath him some of his treasures. After two days, there was an argument, and the Kennans from Wisconsin were asked to leave.

Kennan never saw his distant cousin again, but he noted in his memoirs "the feeling that we are connected in some curious way by bonds deeper than just our rather distant kinship." The two George Kennans were, each in his own way, loners and skeptics, men who came to their own highly personal conclusions about the Russian people and their rulers. "There was in both Kennans," says Harrison Salisbury, "a cranky, against-the-grain quality."

Fearful of the feminine influence in his household, Kennan's father sent him to St. John's Military Academy, a small, rigorous school twenty-four miles west of Milwaukee. Kennan was deeply unhappy there, writing forlorn letters to his sisters about the discipline, the loneliness, and the spartan life. "I learned then that I was not cut out for the military," he later recalled. His chief distinction at the school was as "class poet" in his final year. The yearbook's assessment of his character was, certainly in retrospect, remarkably insightful. It notes: "Disposition—vacillating" and "Pet peeve—the universe." Kennan was an avid reader (he spent vacations at home in a small room in the attic poring through shelves of old books) and averaged about 90 percent in his English studies. His math and science grades, however, often dipped below 60 percent.

Kennan nevertheless decided, spurred by his headmaster and F. Scott Fitzgerald, that he was destined for Princeton. After flunking two of his college entrance exams, in Latin and math, he was drilled by Jeannette in preparation for retaking the tests. He passed them only after he arrived in Princeton, and was the last boy to matriculate in the fall of 1921.

Because he had enrolled late, Kennan had to settle for a room far from the campus. In addition, he was afflicted, as he wrote in his memoirs, by "being the slowest and last to learn the ropes in any complicated organizational structure. Too shy to ask, I never found out."

After an orientation lecture during the first week at Princeton, Kennan turned to another boy and asked the time. Taking a drag of his cigarette, the student blew the smoke in Kennan's face and walked away. "This little touch, it just seared me," Kennan recalled more than fifty years later.

Unwilling to ask his father for the money to return home for Christmas, he took a job his first year as a mail carrier in Trenton. There he caught scarlet fever. It was in the days before penicillin, and his frightened father banished George's sisters from the house while George was recuperating. When he returned to Princeton later in the spring, friendships and social groups had already formed; the shy and naïve Midwesterner had his propensity for being a loner involuntarily reinforced.

At Princeton, clubs totally dominated undergraduate life. Social status was rigidly determined by the ranking of one's eating club. At the top of the hierarchy was Ivy, "breathlessly aristocratic" in Fitzgerald's breathless description; when Ivy took in only eleven men in a year, a bitter sophomore complained, "Even Jesus Christ took twelve." At the bottom of the heap were the clubs that had to scrape to fill their sections. Non-club members were virtual lepers.

During bicker week of Kennan's sophomore year, he avoided campus "in a veritable transport of false pride" lest he be invited into a club. When he was finally asked by an acquaintance to join one that had not yet been able to fill its quota, the now-defunct Key and Seal, Kennan cried and accepted. In his memoirs he writes of having "pangs of conscience about

the decision," and he says that he resigned shortly afterward. In fact, his letters of the time reveal that the pangs were more pecuniary. "Am enclosing the receipt for the check you just sent," he wrote his father in May of his sophomore year. "I hope I can make it go for the rest of the term. I certainly let myself into something when I joined this club—but it's the social thing."

Kennan worried that if he quit his club he would embarrass his roommate and cousin from Milwaukee, Charles James. After meticulously itemizing his expenses (among them: tuition, $175; books, $20; laundry, $25; trips, $15; club, $40), Kennan admitted to his father that he could drop the club, but fretted: "I would hate to do that, though, as it might throw a sort of social stigma on Charles, to be rooming with a non-club man." For a while Kennan was "assistant manager" of the club, which meant that he worked in the office in return for a reduction in his bills. Finally, when his money ran out, he was forced to quit and eat "among the non-club pariahs" in a gloomy refectory known as Upperclass Commons.

College, especially as a non-club member, was a lonely and scarring experience for Kennan, one that heightened his sense of alienation. He had few acquaintances other than Charles (Andover, varsity soccer team, Quadrangle Club) and his friends, who were two years younger. Still smitten by the romantic vision of Fitzgerald, Kennan read *The Great Gatsby* while in college and wept at the epilogue's description of the Midwesterner's reaction to the fashionable East.

One of the few friends Kennan made on his own was a boy named Constantine Messolonghitis, an Ohio waif who tried for one year to work his way through Princeton after transferring from Kenyon. He convinced a nervous Kennan to spend a summer scrounging through Europe. In London, Kennan (who at that time was dreaming of becoming a lawyer) spent his time hanging around the Royal Courts of Justice at Temple Bar; in Italy, he developed dysentery and had to ask sister Frances to wire him money to come home.

Kennan was particularly ill at ease with women. At St. John's, he had

worried about adolescent homosexual stirrings. From afar he had admired an older boy on the basketball team whom he thought "terribly good-looking, physically attractive." He later recalled: "Had I remained in an all-male environment any longer, I like all of us would have developed homosexual tendencies simply because of the lack of other objects." At college, although attracted to women, he found it impossible to overcome his painful awkwardness; he was envious of the sexual success his acquaintances bragged about.

His sister Frances, who had become a struggling actress, was living a bohemian life with a group of young women in Greenwich Village. Kennan used to enjoy going to visit them and sleeping on their couch. One night Frances brought home a friend with the unlikely name of Puritan, "thinking that I ought to have a girl." Far less happened than was hoped. "I wasn't prepared to go to these lengths yet," Kennan later recalled in an interview. "I just idealized women so, you know." Afterward he wrote Puritan a passionate love letter. Her response was cool.

Despite his later reputation as a prescient analyst, Kennan did not have a great innate intellect. Even those who would come to respect his reports and judgment often privately noted that he showed little native brilliance and in fact sometimes seemed surprisingly obtuse. At Princeton, his grades bordered on the abysmal. The academic marks there ranged from 1 ("very high") to 5 ("very low"). At the end of his first year, he got 5s in physics and history, a 4 in English, and 3s in Latin and French.

Partly this was due to his freshman illness and the limpness of his St. John's preparation. He was also far from adept at charming his professors. "You will probably get a flunk notice saying that my standing in Economics 302 is now below standard, but don't be worried about it," he wrote home. "My instructor is notoriously about the worst in college and I can't help arguing with him sometimes." Yet Kennan continued to get 4s, even in a senior-year history course. "You had better wait until I have found out whether I passed my exams before sending the money," he wrote his father at the beginning of his final year. "They have no

compunctions about dropping people here."

Not until his senior year did he achieve a couple of 1s, in politics and economics. That year he did a short (and poorly written) paper for an international law class that he sent home with the proud comment that it had scored highly. It analyzed the laws designating legal domiciles, and it seemed to reflect his own growing unsureness about where he could call home. He described the class to his father: "Most of the students believe the only ultimate international law is force, while Prof. Brown claims that the law we study is definitely sanctioned by what he calls the 'anticipated advantages of sovereignty.'"

The 1925 Princeton class book has a poll with forty-seven categories, such as "best-looking" and "most studious." It lists anyone who got as few as three votes in any of the categories, which in some cases amounts to thirty or more names. Kennan is unmentioned in any of the groups. "I may have been the most undistinguished student Princeton ever had," he recalled years later after he had returned there to work at the Institute for Advanced Study and serve on the university's board. "I was certainly the least memorable." Princeton, however, left its mark on him. As he would later note, "Sometimes it is the moody, unadjusted student, struggling to forge his own standards in a callous collegiate society, who develops within himself the thoughtfulness to comprehend a foreign environment."

Kennan's early letters home expressed a desire to follow in his father's footsteps as a lawyer, but he came to realize that he had neither the money nor the grades to enroll in law school. He toyed with the idea of trying to find outdoor work, having enjoyed the invigoration and solitude of crewing on a cargo boat one summer. Another option he considered was joining a corporation such as General Electric. The class book notes little next to Kennan's name except that his intended occupation was "unknown."

The unabashed elitism that pervaded East Coast campuses in the years

before World War I was particularly prevalent at Yale, where Harriman and Acheson headed after graduating from Groton and Lovett went after finishing at The Hill School. College was a business for the true Yale man. One did not simply attend; one had a "career" there, with a ladder to be climbed and immense prestige for those who reached the top. Students were measured by what they did "for Yale" in student organizations, publications—and especially on the playing fields.

"For a brief time at the beginning of this century," wrote one historian, "the close-knit, intimate world of the American gentry fixed in the drama of intercollegiate athletics, particularly those of Yale, Harvard and Princeton, all the limited but quite genuine idealism of their romantic culture." As Yale football coach T.A.D. Jones told his charges: "Gentlemen, today you play Harvard. Never again will you do anything so important."

Scholarship was a lesser measure. "Now you've got to do a certain amount of studying here," an upperclassman warns Dick Stover in Owen Johnson's 1911 novel *Stover at Yale.* "Better do it in the first year and get in with the faculty."

In some ways, the pressure at Yale to conform and perform was as great as that exerted by Peabody. Yale spirit was referred to as "sand." Placed under the wheels of a locomotive, it made the train go. "Sand" was grit, determination, persistence, reliability.

Although Yale boasted of its democracy, the Class of 1913 was still virtually all-white, conservative, and well-off. Prep schools supplied 61 percent of the class (until the 1960s, a majority of Yale undergraduates came from private boarding schools), and some 20 percent were the sons of Yale men. A class poll done during the election of 1912 showed 111 students for Republican Taft, 74 for Democrat Wilson, and 34 for Progressive Roosevelt.

As a way to get ahead, and as a means of self-defense, Yale men joined organizations, scores of them. There were clubs for singers (such as the legendary Whiffenpoofs and its half-dozen farm teams), clubs for scholars, clubs for mandolin players, clubs for wits, clubs for drinkers, clubs for

believers, clubs for achievers. Stephen Vincent Benet, '19, wrote a ditty with the refrain: "Do you want to be successful?/Form a club!/Are your chances quite distressful?/Form a club!"

Membership in a senior society was the capstone of a successful Yale career. The oldest and greatest, indeed the most legendary of all college clubs, was Skull and Bones. To be tapped by Bones in that era was akin to canonization, and its prestige was enhanced by its secrecy. Members—fifteen seniors, typically two or three of the major sports captains, the editor of the *Lit,* the chairman of the *News,* and other such Big Men—did not even mention the society's name in public. When nonmembers dared to breathe the words, self-serious Bonesmen would leave the room. Underclassmen were afraid to be caught even looking at Bones's "tomb," the windowless Egyptian-style mausoleum on High Street guarded by a massive oak door with oversized padlocks.

Skull and Bones had a wealth of hocus-pocus ritual, but it was hardly a frivolous fraternity; no liquor was consumed inside the building, and the clocks were set five minutes fast to symbolize that Bonesmen started life a leg up. In the inner sanctum, known as "322," members would gather two nights a week to explore the character and being of their fellow Bonesmen. With the room dimly lit, a member would sit and talk about himself—his fears, his sexual experiences, his ambitions, his inner self. Other members would press him closely, forcing self-criticism and revelation. (One reason secret societies endured at Yale through the turbulent 1960s was because they were, as one undergraduate of the era put it, "therapy-groups with million-dollar buildings.") The purpose was to develop members for later life, to strip them down and make them whole again with the inner strength necessary to lead. It was assumed that Bonesmen would be leaders, and the assumption was not unfounded: Henry Stimson, William Howard Taft, Henry Luce, Justice Potter Stewart, William and McGeorge Bundy were among the many prominent citizens who as undergraduates revealed themselves in the sanctum.

Tap Day was a momentous event on the college calendar, described in the 1915 yearbook as "that annual revelation of the generosity and

essential manhood of recurring Yale classes." On a Thursday afternoon in mid-May, the junior class and hundreds of onlookers would gather on Old Campus to await the verdict. As the chapel bell struck five, the roar would go up: "First man!" Grim as death's hand, dressed in black with a gold Bones pin, a member would suddenly appear and head straight for some trembling junior. Grabbing him by the shoulder, he would wheel him around and slap him hard on the back, crying, "Skull and Bones! Go to your room." Legs shaking, the Chosen would stumble off through the parting crowd.

It was in a driving downpour on May 16, 1912, that Averell Harriman became the first man tapped his year for Skull and Bones. The honor perfectly suited the sense of obligation felt by the aloof, strikingly handsome, enormously wealthy young man. "It gave me purpose," he recounted more than seventy years later. "I scoffed at Harvard's Porcellian Club. It was too smug. But to get into Bones, you had to do something for Yale."

Harriman regularly went back to the tomb on High Street, once even lamenting that his duties as chief negotiator at the Paris Peace Talks on the Vietnam War prevented him from attending a reunion. So complete was his trust in Bones's code of secrecy that in conversations at annual dinners he spoke openly about national security affairs. He refused, however, to tell his family anything about Bones. Soon after she became Harriman's third wife in 1971, Pamela Churchill Harriman received an odd letter addressing her by a name spelled in hieroglyphics. "Oh, that's Bones," Harriman said. "I must tell you about that sometime. Uh, I mean I can't tell you about that." When Harriman carried secret dispatches between London and Moscow during World War II, he chose as the combination on his diplomatic case the numerals 322, the society's secret number.

Harriman's Yale career did not mark him as an obvious candidate for Skull and Bones. He participated in a variety of organizations, but only in such positions as assistant manager of the hockey team and as a member of the Wigwam Wrangler debating club, posts that usually do not cut it on Tap Day. Academically, he was at the bottom of the top third of his class,

performing slightly better than a gentleman's C. Nevertheless, he was enormously respected. In the yearbook, he is on the top-ten list for "Most Admired," "Most Thorough Gentleman," "Handsomest," and "Most Likely to Succeed."

Coming from a wealthy family and Groton helped: he slipped easily into the most prestigious underclass fraternity, Fence Club, a breeding ground for Bonesmen. During each of his four years at Yale, he roomed with fellow Grotonians, and his friends tended to be upperclassmen, mostly Bonesmen. As a freshman, he and Walter Camp, son of the legendary coach, made a reputation by trumping their elders at bridge.

Harriman's greatest interest at Yale was the crew. Rowing was a serious business at Yale, so much so that Cole Porter, a student at the time, mocked it in a song: "I want to row on the crew, mama!/ That's the thing I want to do, mama!/To be known throughout Yale when I walk about it/Get a boil on my tail and then talk about it." As a six-foot-one-inch, 150-pound freshman, Harriman was a bit too light to make a good oarsman. By his sophomore year he had gained eighteen pounds, but his doctors discovered a slight heart murmur and advised him against competitive rowing. So at his request he was made the coach of the freshman crew and was granted permission to spend six weeks at Oxford studying the English rowing technique.

The combination of Harriman's reserve with that of the British made his reception in Oxford somewhat chilly. The blue-boat captain crunched up Harriman's letter of introduction and, leaving him standing in the drizzle, said: "We're going up the river in half an hour. Take the towpath and you can watch." Harriman did, riding the bank on horseback and making careful notes about the long reach and slow layback of the tricky English stroke. Finally, one Saturday when the crew took a break from training for a champagne dinner, the captain issued a formal invitation to the American who had been dining alone in a corner each evening. "Mr. Harriman, would you care to join us?" he asked. Harriman thus became an accepted member of the coterie, and their famed coach, Harcourt Gold, invited him to watch the training from his launch.

Harriman was tempted to extend his leave for a few days so as not to miss the Oxford-Cambridge race, but fortunately he thought better of it; had he stayed, he would have sailed the following week on the doomed voyage of the *Titanic*. He subsequently spent six hours a day in the New Haven harbor teaching the techniques he had learned to his freshmen crew, which ended up beating the Yale varsity.

Even though the freshmen lost their race to Harvard, Harriman was asked to coach the varsity the following year, only the second time an undergraduate was so honored. Once again he traveled to Oxford, and he spent the summer commuting from Manhattan to conduct afternoon training sessions. But the varsity oarsmen did not adapt as well to the new style; they were soundly thrashed by Harvard yet again, and Harriman was relieved of his coaching duties.

What struck his classmates most about Harriman was that he displayed a cool, almost remote, detachment from the youthful frivolity. He was no snob, nor did he affect regal airs, yet he exuded an aura of maturity and gravity. He had always been somewhat aloof as a boy, but at Yale he seemed more than ever to be sovereign to a world of his own. Above all else he was not a Yalie, not a Grottie, but a Harriman.

This sense of his station in life was understandable. A few days before he enrolled in September of 1909, his father had died (bequeathing his $70 million fortune to his wife in a one-hundred-word will). As a freshman, Averell was appointed to the board of the Boys' Club, an organization his father had founded. As a sophomore, he took the train down from Yale to make the public presentation of ten thousand of Arden's acres and $1 million to the state of New York for a park. In his senior year, he was elected to the board of directors of the Union Pacific, arriving at his first meeting armed with a textbook on psychology.

Like most of his friends at college, Harriman strongly believed that the U.S. must prepare itself for entry into the European war, and he supported the Navy League's drive for increased naval appropriations. Yet when America finally entered the conflict, he was not eager to enlist for active service. In 1915, two years after his graduation, he had married

Kitty Lanier Lawrence, the daughter of a New York banker, after rescuing her from a runaway horse that was dragging her along a Manhattan street. By the time President Wilson declared war in April of 1917, they had a three-month-old daughter, Mary; their second child, Kathleen, would be born that December.

Harriman realized that the war would open up opportunities for him to serve his country without disrupting his personal or professional life. British orders for new vessels were inundating American shipyards, and Wilson was pressing for an increase in U.S. naval and shipping capacity. Within days of the President's decision to break diplomatic relations with Germany, Harriman bought the Chester Shipbuilding Company near Philadelphia and set about expanding its output. After winning a government contract for the construction of forty steel cargo ships, Harriman formed the Merchant Shipbuilding Corporation and built a major new yard on the Delaware River north of Philadelphia in what became known as Harriman, Pennsylvania. The government paid out $92 million for the work, yet by Armistice Day not one of the ships had been delivered. (Eventually, they were.) In a brutal report on the operations, a government auditor wrote in 1918: "The Merchant Shipbuilding Corporation is absolutely without a leader who can inspire their men to work and build ships."

In later years Harriman would confess a slight unease about his decision not to enlist in the military. In his book *Special Envoy,* written almost sixty years later, he noted that he "had long regretted the family and business circumstances that had kept him out of action." At the time, however, he contended that his work getting ships built was the greatest service he could render. As he told *Forbes* magazine in 1920: "I felt that in no other way could I contribute half as much to the urgent needs of the nation in the supreme emergency that had arisen."

When Acheson entered Yale in 1911, he was no longer the scrawny, cheeky boy who had been so miserable at Groton. His summer in the

In his senior year, Acheson was voted as among the "wittiest" in his class and, having spent far more than he could afford on dapper dress, was also selected one of the "sportiest." Yet he had little idea of what he would do with his life. The class historian, Charles Merz (who became an editor of *The New York Times),* satirizing the bon vivant reputation of the Episcopal bishop's son, wrote in his list of graduation-day predictions: "Dean Acheson leaves next week to do mission work in British East Guatemala." In fact, Acheson had decided, almost by default, to go to Harvard Law School. Before settling down to the rigors that would entail, he embarked on a farewell fling with his friends, traveling to San Francisco for the world's fair and then on to Japan for the geisha girls.

Acheson's roommates at Harvard Law School were not exactly conducive to study. He rented an apartment in Cambridge with Cole Porter, who had transferred from the law school to the music school, and among the rotating visitors and boarders were other Yale blades, including Archibald MacLeish. Law school threatened to become, for Acheson, an annex to the DKE House. Instead, it became a time of intellectual transformation: the intricacies of the law and the rigor of the law school stimulated the careless young man into becoming a serious scholar. "This was a tremendous discovery: the discovery of the power of thought," Acheson later recalled. "Not only did I become aware of this wonderful mechanism, the brain, but I became aware of an unlimited mass of material that was lying about the world waiting to be stuffed into the brain."

It was at Harvard Law that Acheson realized that "excellence counted —a sloppy try wasn't enough." He began comparing his mind to a welder's torch, waiting to be focused. His sense of security firmly re-established after the grueling trial of Groton, Acheson began to push himself intellectually, to take great pride in the sharpness of his mind. At Groton and in Middletown, intellectual ambition was considered socially suspect. But at Harvard Law School, Acheson found it prized as a path to

social distinction.

The type of intelligence that Acheson developed through immersion in the law was a logical and analytic one, "learning that you need not make up your mind in advance, that there is no set solution to a problem, and that decisions are the result of analyzing the facts, of tussling and grappling with them." But the law held even more for Acheson: he saw its evolution as a mirror of the economic and philosophic forces that ordered a community; when those forces changed, he came to believe, so too should the laws.

Harvard had already developed its reputation as a laboratory of reform and an incubator of social activism. "It is the crowning glory of this Law School that it has kindled in many a heart an inextinguishable fire," said Oliver Wendell Holmes, who urged his students to be involved in the "actions and passions" of their time.

The most influential professor, at least from Acheson's point of view, was a young Jewish refugee who had arrived at Ellis Island from Vienna in 1894 at the age of twelve. Felix Frankfurter was the spirited embodiment of the school's intellectual meritocracy. "I have a quasi-religious feeling about Harvard Law School," Frankfurter once said. "I regard it as the most democratic institution I know anything about."

After graduating from the law school, Frankfurter had served as an assistant U.S. attorney in New York under Henry Stimson. While working on the antitrust cases against E. H. Harriman, Frankfurter had developed a strong distaste for the role of corporate lawyers, taking particular offense at the way Judge Lovett was forced to act as Harriman's lackey. So in 1914, he accepted an invitation to return to Harvard as a professor. There he joined the vanguard of scholars who felt that the law must be an impetus rather than an obstacle to social change. In a memo to himself weighing whether he should accept the job at Harvard, Frankfurter spoke of his desire for "jurisprudence to meet the social and industrial needs of the time." In 1915, the year Acheson enrolled at the law school, Frankfurter told the American Bar Association: "We must show young people the law as an instrument, and not an end of organized

humanity."

Frankfurter's teaching style was highly personal. Francis Plimpton, later a distinguished New York lawyer, parodied his course on public utilities: "There is no law in Public U/That is its fascination/But Felix gives a point of view/And pleasant conversation." An aspiring Brahmin by instinct if not by birth, Frankfurter would seek for his favored coterie not only the brightest students but also the cleverest, wittiest, and most socially adept. Dean Acheson was a standout in all these regards; he became Frankfurter's most ardent protégé and later one of his most intimate friends. In fact, his transformation into a serious scholar can be dated to the beginning of his second year when he took his first course from Frankfurter.

Years later, John McCloy would joke about Frankfurter's select circle at the law school. During his first year there, McCloy would recall, he would audit Frankfurter's lectures from the back row and envy those such as Acheson, a year ahead, who sat up front and were invited to the professor's house for tea afterward. After McCloy entered government, Frankfurter brought him under his wing and became a close friend. But at the law school, the struggling scholarship student from Amherst could only admire from afar the ease with which people like Acheson were tapped for such attention.

Under Frankfurter, Acheson became fascinated by the relations between legal problems and socioeconomic ones. He even developed a curiosity about the works of Karl Marx, albeit a detached one; although he scarcely read any of Marx on his own, he avidly sought out those who could discuss Marxism. He was selected for the board of the *Harvard Law Review,* and the following year he graduated fifth in his class.

Upon leaving Harvard, Acheson enlisted in the Navy, where he served as an ensign at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. But before he saw active service, the armistice was signed, and Acheson returned to Cambridge with the vague goal of pursuing an academic career.

Under the supervision of Pound and Frankfurter, Acheson wrote a short book on labor law that was intended as part of the Harvard Studies

in Jurisprudence series. But Harvard never got around to printing it, and it was later declined by the Yale University Press. The manuscript, 140 typewritten pages, explored the legal concepts developed by the War Labor Board to regulate disputes between unions and management. "Because it recognizes with the Board that such things as trade unions exist, some idiots will call it radical," he wrote to his friend George Day, who was president of the Yale University Press. He explained that his piece merely tried to show how labor law could play a role in balancing the conflicting interests of individuals and society. "These principles would seem to me to be as valid for Russia as for the United States," he told Day.

Acheson's ties to the Democratic Party were formed during this period. He even considered pursuing a legal career within the labor movement, and sought contacts within the AFL and the plumbers' union. He also discussed with some of his colleagues the possibility of becoming a law professor. In a letter to his friend John Vincent, who had been a classmate at Yale and Harvard Law School, Acheson joked that some at Harvard were cautious about making him a teacher and wanted to find out "whether my book was to be published in Moscow."

His immediate course was settled, however, when Frankfurter got a letter from Louis Brandeis seeking a bright law student. Brandeis, a Supreme Court justice, had begun the practice of hiring graduates to act as his clerks. Acheson was excited, but worried that a clerkship might not help his career. "I cannot afford even the unusual association with a great man if after a year it leaves me as comparatively unfit for what I want to do as I am now," he wrote Frankfurter. "You do not know how a letter from you would help to clear away the confusion of my thoughts." Frankfurter did clear away those confusions, and Dean and Alice Acheson soon left New England for a new life in Washington.

Lovett, who entered Yale in 1914, was a far more serious student than either Harriman or Acheson. He was elected to Phi Beta Kappa and voted

by his classmates as among the "most scholarly," "most brilliant," and "hardest working." When his freshman Latin instructor became ill at Christmas, Lovett took over and taught the class for the remainder of the year.

Having sworn off athletics (for life), Lovett found other activities to round out his Yale career. He sang second tenor in the freshman glee club, was floor manager of the prom committee and assistant manager of the drama society. As qualification for admission to the Elizabethan Club, Yale's gracious literary bastion of watercress sandwiches and afternoon tea, he wrote a paper about a line from Shakespeare's *Hamlet:* "The play, I remember, pleased not the million; 'twas caviar to the general." Lovett suggested that the line referred to Shakespeare's own *Troilus and Cressida,* which many authorities thought had been completed after Hamlet.*

Mildly bored by the studies and social life at Yale, Lovett and his friends became increasingly interested in the European war that America was about to enter. Together with a dozen of his friends, he formed the Yale Unit of the Naval Reserve Flying Corps during his junior year, leaving New Haven behind to fight, as one of them put it, "for God, for country and for Yale."

The formation of the Yale Unit was inspired by Lovett's friend F. Trubee Davison, who had left Yale in 1915 to become an ambulance driver in France and returned with tales of duty and glory. "I picked out Bob Lovett and poured it into his ear," Davison recalled. "We made a sort of compact that if war came we should go into aviation." A year later, while Davison was on a training trip as a manager of the Yale crew, he sent a telegram to Lovett to come discuss forming a flying unit.

Lovett quickly embraced the idea and lined up a floating hangar near his home in Locust Valley, Long Island. Other of their Yale friends were recruited, among them: Artemus "Di" Gates, captain-elect of the football team who later became Assistant Secretary of the Navy for air; John Vorys, later an isolationist Republican congressman from Ohio; David Ingalls, who became Assistant Secretary of War for air (a post Lovett eventually held); and Kenneth MacLeish, Archie's younger brother.

concentrated efforts, but it was ineffective to try to weaken them randomly. Future wars would be won by long-range bombers with large payloads that could deliver a powerful offensive punch.

One who did not survive was Kenneth MacLeish, Lovett's beloved companion and Yale Unit colleague. Lovett was neither a hell-bent military man nor one whose sensitivity had been sapped by war; he cried when he heard of Ken's death, and cried again a week later when he wrote Ken's brother. In his "Dear Arch" letter, Lovett reported that Ken had been killed because he rejected a promotion to squadron commander in order to remain on the front lines.

> I fairly crammed the squadron down his throat, when any other man in the whole service would have sold his last package of chocolates to win the job. Then the answer came back, only a few lines, but I'll never forget them. It began, "Bob—There's no use trying to make a commanding officer out of me if I can't fight and fly all I want when I want. Some people were born to paint, some to write, some to lead, and some to just plain go out and do-it-all-by-yourself." I believe he was the best we had in the line of a pilot, and I don't want a finer pal than a man who can give up everything for his ideal of service and honor.

Lovett never completed his final year and a half of college; his diploma was awarded in wartime absentia. He was tapped for Skull and Bones not on the Old Campus but at a naval station in West Palm Beach; his initiation, instead of being conducted in the "tomb" on High Street, occurred at the headquarters of the Navy's Nothern Bombing Group between Dunkirk and Calais.

The wartime experience was maturing and sobering, and when it was over, Lovett had no desire to return to classes. At his father's insistence, however, he agreed to give Harvard Law School a try. Unlike McCloy or Acheson, he soon found himself bored by both the law and the law school. Joseph Beale, McCloy's favorite professor, struck him as

imperious and out of touch with the real world, he later recalled. Frankfurter seemed to him a self-important social crusader. In his second year, Lovett transferred, briefly, to Harvard Business School. A few months later, he fled to join Harriman and most of his friends from Yale who were already making good in the real world of Wall Street.

For most students in the 1920s, Harvard College meant freedom. Its students, then and now, were largely left alone. Charles Eliot, whose forty-year tenure as president ended in 1909, described his legacy as "to allow each man to think and do as he pleases." Individualism was prized; even in that most boola-boola of college eras, Harvard indifference was preserved. "Our undisciplinables are our proudest product," said the resident philosopher William James. "Heresy has always been a Harvard institution," wrote John Reed, chronicler of the Russian Revolution *(Ten Days That Shook the World)* and the only Harvard graduate (or American) to be buried in the Kremlin.

When Chip Bohlen enrolled in 1923, after his graduation from St. Paul's, about half of the student body was from private preparatory schools and also about half was from New England. Seven out of ten came from Republican homes. They were, however, hardly all reactionary: in a detailed survey of the attitudes of the Class of 1926 shortly after their graduation, 32 percent said that they were "strongly sympathetic" or "mildly sympathetic" to the Soviet Union. (When these same alumni were polled again after World War II, only 4 percent expressed any degree of sympathy with the Soviet Union.)

For Bohlen, like most graduates of Groton or St. Paul's, Harvard meant no more required chapel, no black marks, no rector. The prankish humor and irreverence that were frowned upon at St. Paul's merely made Bohlen popular at Harvard. Like most of his prep-school chums, he lived on Harvard's "Gold Coast," the row of boardinghouses just south of Harvard Yard. He and eleven other friends from St. Paul's and St. Mark's moved into a thirteen-room yellow frame house at 9 Bow Street operated

by a lovable landlady named Mrs. Mullin. The rat-pack atmosphere perfectly suited Bohlen's congenial personality, and his housemates were destined to become lifelong friends. Among them were Cecil Lyon, who became a diplomat and served as minister under Bohlen in Paris, and J. Randolph "Ducky" Harrison, who until Bohlen's dying day (literally) engaged him in ferocious political arguments.

Clubs did not play the same role at Harvard as they did at Yale and Princeton. They existed mainly for boys who attended the church schools; those not from "St. Grottlesex," such as Walter Lippmann and John Reed, though they felt some envy, found they could succeed quite well without them. But for the boys of the Gold Coast, the club hierarchy was the essence of Harvard life. "Every one of us in the Bow Street house of course joined a final club," recalled Lyon. "It would have been unthinkable for one of us to do otherwise."

The eligible were sifted through a series of testing grounds. First there was election to the Hasty Pudding, a song-and-drink society that produced musical comedies on the side. Next came a "waiting club," such as the Sphinx-Kalumet chosen by Bohlen and his friends. The process culminated with election to a "final club." It was a man's final club that really counted, and none counted more than the Porcellian.

Founded in 1791, the Porcellian was deemed so important to young Brahmins that disconsolate sophomores were known to drop out of Harvard upon rejection, there being nothing more to look forward to in college life. When Theodore Roosevelt informed Kaiser Wilhelm of the engagement of his daughter Alice to future House Speaker Nicholas Longworth, he noted: "Nick and I are both in the Pore, you know." More than a half century after his election, and after he had won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction, Owen Wister said that membership in the PC was his greatest success. The man the Porcellian is best known for snubbing, Franklin Roosevelt, did not drop out of college, but he later admitted that his rejection was the worst blow of his life.

Unlike Skull and Bones, the Porcellian made no pretense of rewarding achievement; blood and congeniality were the criteria, in that order. Chip

Bohlen's father, uncle, and brother had been members, and his charm was already becoming legendary, so he was a natural choice despite his undistinguished career in academics and college activities. "The club prided itself on not being based on merit in any way," recalled Paul Nitze, who was a class behind Bohlen at the PC and would later work closely with him shaping America's postwar policies toward Russia.

The Porcellian clubhouse, located above a clothing store across Massachusetts Avenue from Harvard Yard, is anything but ostentatious. Inside are the requisite battered leather chairs and a wide assortment of pig figurines and stuffed boars' heads. In Bohlen's day, there was no card playing or gambling, no billiards or pool or any sport other than quiet games of chess. Undergraduates were not even served regular meals other than breakfast. Bohlen and his friends had to go to the Hasty Pudding or the SK Club for their rowdy poker games or dinners.

The main activity at the Porcellian was drinking. This was done seriously and at all hours, even during Prohibition. (Prohibition only made hangovers worse. The favored drink of Bohlen and his friends was ginger ale with bathtub gin, most of which was made and supplied by the steward of the SK Club, who later bought a boat and sailed off to Jamaica with his profits.) Members would compete in a ritual known as "The Day of the Book." It began shortly after dawn with shots of gin, moved on to champagne with breakfast, a martini every hour for the rest of the day, switching to Scotch after dinner. The goal, rarely achieved, was to be standing at midnight. Bohlen's poor brother, Buffy, was among those who tried and failed. Chip, while never a serious contestant, was able at the PC to develop a skill that would be invaluable for a diplomat in Russia: he could down great quantities of alcohol while barely showing it.

Bohlen made a halfhearted stab at continuing his career as a football player, playing third-string tackle on the freshman team, which beat Yale that year 59-0. But he never made the varsity. As an upper-classman, he tended to confine himself to the more gentlemanly sports of squash, golf, and shooting. Nor were his academic interests profound; despite being a voracious reader and having a highly retentive mind, he compiled an

undistinguished record as a modern European history major.

What Bohlen excelled at was making friends, and occasionally enemies, sometimes one and the same. He loved to talk and argue, doing so a good part of the day and much of the night. Silence unnerved him. When conversation lagged at 9 Bow Street, he would pull out a book and read it aloud to his friends.

He also had an eye for women, and they for him. Though sloppy in his manner and dress, he had shed his boarding-school pudginess. With his handsome face, warm smile, easy charm, and charismatic glow, Boston's debutantes seemed to find him quite irresistible.

Bohlen's late-night discussions at Harvard increasingly revolved around Russia. Though neither especially liberal nor political by nature, he avidly read *Ten Days That Shook the World,* and became fascinated with John Reed, who had died in Moscow, at age thirty-two, three years before Bohlen entered Harvard. Reed's romantic Marxism appealed to the spirited, well-born young man with limited resources and unclear ambitions. He sang Russian songs, read Russian literature, and even had a Russian girl. "This is the correct way to learn Russian," he joked to his friend Paul Nitze.

Excited by the passion and energy of the Bolshevik experiment, Bohlen gamely tried to defend it to his skeptical clubmates. These debates over Marxism with Ducky Harrison and others would rage late into the night in the incongruous setting of the Porcellian's paneled sanctum, fueled by adequate amounts of bathtub gin. Finally spent, Bohlen would stumble into bed fully clothed, his hat crumpled on the pillow.

Toward the end of their senior year, the clubmates found their discussions at the Porcellian revolving around a more practical matter: careers. Bohlen would proclaim that he was far too irreverent to become a lawyer. Following the rest of the herd to State Street or Wall Street as a financier, on the other hand, struck Bohlen as "an unsuitable form of bondage." At a loss for alternatives, he and Harrison signed up as twenty-seven-dollar-a-month crewmen on a U.S. Steel cargo ship headed through the Panama Canal to Manila, Manchuria, and beyond.

Company, and the American Ship and Commerce Corporation. In 1920, he consolidated these holdings (which included ownership of sixty-three ships) into one company, United American Lines, forming the largest commercial fleet yet assembled under the American flag.

To finance marine securities, Harriman founded the investment banking house of W. A. Harriman & Company in November of 1919. "I am profoundly convinced that the necessity for developing American shipping is upon us," he told the magazine publisher B. C. Forbes in 1920, "and I regard as embodying a fundamental truth the axiom that 'what becomes a necessity always becomes an eventuality.'" That had been one of his father's axioms.

Although he collaborated with his brother, Roland, and other partners in the shipping and finance business, Harriman remained very much a loner. He delegated authority and shared responsibility well, but he was never one for collegial operations. He viewed himself as a man of action, a doer. Focusing on each task at hand, he seemed to wear blinders against peripheral distractions.

Harriman's approach was, above all, pragmatic; the goal of businessmen, unlike stiped-pants statesmen, was to cut through abstract posturing in order to reach a deal. Even after he became a diplomat himself, Harriman would harbor the belief that foes could be bargained with as easily as friends. Thus he had no qualms about entering into a shipping agreement with Germany, even though the final armistice had not been signed, and a mining concession in the Soviet Union, even though the United States had spurned diplomatic relations with that country.

During a visit to Germany in 1920, Harriman began secret talks with officials of the once-powerful Hamburg-American Steamship Company, whose vessels had been confiscated at the end of the war. They quickly arranged a deal: The Harriman interests would supply the company with ships if it would act as the German agent for Harriman's own lines. "The arrangement gives us the benefit of some of the best brains in the shipping world," Harriman said, "men who before the war demonstrated their

ability to develop a shipping business second to none."

The nativist sentiment that caused some American towns to ban sauerkraut and forbid the teaching of German in high schools had not yet subsided. Harriman was pilloried. "Do you find yourself at all tempted to slacken your efforts because of the criticism and condemnation now being heaped upon you from various quarters?" a journalist asked. "No," Harriman replied. "Fortunately I am blessed with a sense of humor and also a big bump of patience." (Neither of which was exactly the case.) As the criticism mounted, Harriman reluctantly took his case public, releasing the details of his project to New York newspapers and telling reporters: "We regard the whole undertaking as a brilliant American opportunity."

It was, however, less than a brilliant financial opportunity. Interest rates were rising, prices falling, and exports declining. New restrictions on immigration cut the flow of steerage-class passengers, and Prohibition precluded the sale of alcohol on ships of American registry. Harriman embarked on a campaign for lower tariffs and increased subsidies for the shipping industry, casting his crusade in terms of the country's need for a strong merchant marine. The Democrats, he found, were far more receptive than the isolationist-dominated Republican Party then in power.

Even though Western nations had imposed a strict blockade on trade with the Soviets, and even though the U.S. was in the throes of a virulent Red scare, Harriman and officials of the Hamburg-American Company began talks with Moscow in 1922 about establishing a jointly owned shipping firm, the Deutsch-Russiche Transport Company. It began its meager operations in November of that year. "I know what prejudice there is against us in the U.S.," the director of the Soviet Trade Ministry told a *New York Times* reporter in 1922, "but one must believe that Mr. Harriman does not share it, since he is associated with the Hamburg-American line in placing half the capital in a steamship company in which the Soviets will hold the other half."

Indeed, Harriman shared few of his countrymen's ideological

suspicions about the Soviets. Through the Berlin office of W. A. Harriman & Company, he joined with a German bank to buy at a discount Russian notes from firms that had taken them as payment for exports. He was impressed when the Soviets made good on the notes; they appeared to Harriman serious about keeping their financial commitments.

Harriman also reached a tentative agreement with a German export group in 1926 to offer $42 million of bonds in the U.S. to finance long-term credits for the Soviet Union. When officials at the State Department heard of the arrangement through press reports, they were furious. Harriman, in Berlin working on the deal, was summoned to see American Ambassador Jacob Gould Schurman, who protested that providing credit to Moscow was contrary to U.S. policy. Harriman argued that the deal would benefit American business by allowing the Russian market to absorb German exports that might otherwise be dumped in the U.S. He also contended (as he would in later years) that economic isolation of the Soviet Union was impractical and would make it harder to bring the country into the world community. Trade and credit, he told the skeptical ambassador, could be used as levers in gaining concessions from Soviet leaders.

Harriman sailed back to Washington to present the same arguments there, but the State Department had already secured opposition to the plan from the full Cabinet. He was accorded only an unproductive meeting with an Assistant Secretary and subsequently decided to drop the credit plan.

The most ambitious deal that Harriman made with the Soviets went forward despite Washington's qualms. The Kremlin had come to view Western technology as critical to its industrial plans, but it had no foreign currency to purchase it. So Lenin announced that concessions to develop certain industries, similar to those granted by the czars, would be available to foreign investors. In 1924, Harriman began secret discussions with Soviet commercial agents in New York about obtaining a twenty-year concession to operate the manganese mines in the Caucasus Mountains of

Georgia.

Before the revolution, these mines had been the world's largest supplier of the element, an essential alloy for steel. But the facilities were archaic. The Soviets drove a hard bargain: Harriman agreed to supply new machinery, return production to postwar levels, and upgrade the port—an investment that could ultimately reach $2 5 million. The Soviets would get up to four dollars per ton of manganese extracted, and Harriman decided on his own to pay a royalty of one dollar per ton to the former Russian owners from whom the mines had been expropriated.

The concession could turn a profit only if manganese prices rose substantially. Instead, they fell. New deposits were found in Africa, and the Soviets expanded production in the Ukraine. In addition, railway and port improvements cost several times what Harriman had estimated, especially after new laws were passed requiring additional benefits for workers. Consequently, Harriman went to Moscow in December of 1926 to renegotiate his concession.

Stalin, the Secretary of the Communist Party, was at the time maneuvering for total power. He had succeeded in having Trotsky demoted from Defense Commissar to chairman of the Concessions Committee. Grasping the internal struggle, Harriman pressed to see Stalin, but was told he was out of town. Instead, he met with Trotsky for four hours, going over the contract paragraph by paragraph.

Trotsky's mind impressed the American businessman; he understood points rapidly but betrayed no emotion. His silence, as Harriman realized, was out of fear for his own tenuous position. Trotsky later explained to Maxim Litvinov (the future Foreign Minister) that he suspected Stalin of appointing him to the concessions post in order to compromise him in the eyes of young Communists. "It's already being said that I'm on Averell Harriman's payroll," he complained. Six months would elapse before the Soviets approved a modest change in the concession, decreasing Soviet royalties and releasing Harriman from responsibility for upgrading the railway.

On this, his second visit to Russia (the first being to Siberia with his

father in 1899), Harriman found the artistic life in Moscow and Leningrad to be flourishing. He met with many painters, writers, musicians, and actors, and took a special trip to see the collection of works by Matisse and Gauguin in Leningrad. For ordinary citizens, however, conditions were grim. Although normally somewhat oblivious to the people around him, Harriman was deeply shocked by the *bezprizornye,* the starving Civil War orphans who roamed the streets during winter like wild animals.

Harriman was not inclined to tailor his life-style for the Bolsheviks, nor did he think they would respect him more if he did. So for his 1,500-mile trip from Moscow to his mines in Georgia, he recalled, "I decided to behave like a capitalist and asked for a private car on the train." The czarist-vintage car was the most ornate he had ever seen, lavishly decorated with gilt scrollwork and wood inlay. At every station there were the ubiquitous hordes of wandering Russian peasants, weighted down with household goods and straw suitcases.

After four days, Harriman reached Tiflis, where local officials feted him at a party in the bulging cellars of Grand Duke Nicholas, renamed the "state wine library." The caviar-laden feast (featuring a Rhine wine of the 1860s, a 1906 Bordeaux, a Napoleon brandy, and a number of local vintages) introduced Harriman to the prolonged drinking sessions that would later be a working hazard for himself and other diplomats. He recalled: "By the time we emerged from the cellar we knew no pain."

The engineers at the manganese mines stressed their difficulties in dealing with the Soviet bureaucracy. Harriman, who had traveled to Russia with high hopes, would later claim that the trip produced a lasting skepticism about the Soviet Union. "I became convinced that the Bolshevik Revolution was in fact a reactionary revolution and that it was not 'the wave of the future.'" he said in a 1970 lecture at Lehigh University. "It denied the basic beliefs that we value so deeply—the rights and dignity of the individual, the idea that government should express the will of the people."

Those recollections, however, were embellished by hindsight. At the

There were also personal ties tugging him toward the Democrats. His activist sister Mary had become a close friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, who taught calisthenics at one of the Junior League settlement houses Mary had founded. At Groton, Averell was a classmate of Eleanor's brother, Hall; orphaned as a schoolboy, Hall had moved into Eleanor and Franklin's New York City town house, where Averell became a frequent guest. Through his service on the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, Harriman also became friendly with Governor Al Smith.

When Smith ran for President in 1928, Mary Harriman announced, through Eleanor Roosevelt, that she would vote for him. It was not hard for her brother to follow suit: the Democratic Party chairman was General Motors Vice-President John Raskob, a successful financier who had bolted from the GOP and declared his intention to make the Democrats the party of business. Harriman's switch in party loyalty was reinforced when the stock market crashed the following year, confirming his doubts about the Republicans' ability to manage the economy. From then on, he was a loyal Democrat.

At the time, however, polo rather than politics provided his primary diversion from the business world. Harriman would often leave Wall Street at 4 P.M. for a quick game at the Meadowbrook Club, on Long Island, before dinner. He bought a house at Sands Point, near the club, and acquired a string of ponies, frequently paying up to ten thousand dollars for a mount.

It was the perfect sport for an intense and driven (and rich) young man, made even more so because Harriman approached it the way he did business. "I like recreation that calls for just as much energy as work calls for," he said upon taking up the sport in 1920. "When you're playing polo you have to keep your eye on the ball every minute and you haven't time or inclination to think of anything else." Hardly a graceful player, he practiced with typical discipline to achieve an eight-goal handicap (ten being the best) and in 1928 scored four of the seven goals for the U.S. in the international championships against Argentina. That victory, wrote one newspaper, "amounted to a personal triumph for W. Averell

Harriman, the American No. 1, who played startlingly beautiful polo."

Harriman also took up croquet at Sands Point, and became, along with his neighbor Herbert Bayard Swope, editor of the New York *World,* one of the country's masters of the game. A meticulous strategist, Harriman would take up to twenty minutes scrutinizing the lay of the court and individual blades of grass before making a shot. His deliberateness so infuriated friends that whenever any other dawdler took too much time he was addressed as "Averell." Harriman's playing style gave a clue to the oblivious manner he often affected in business and social life: he would sometimes seem to forget which ball was his, act as if he had lost track of the order of the game, and then proceed to execute a carefully plotted strategy. Asked by a novice for the secret to his prowess, he replied: "I just kept at it. Persistence is the key." (At age ninety, he would lament to an interviewer that he had difficulty finding suitable opponents. "There aren't a whole lot of good croquet players still around," he said. "Very subtle game.")

Kitty Harriman had accompanied her husband on his trip to the Soviet manganese mines, and for a while they seemed to enjoy an active social life together. But both were quiet and inward in different ways, and they soon drifted apart. Although he was not the sort to expend much energy chasing other women, Harriman gained the reputation as a man with a wandering eye. He and Kitty were divorced in 1929, and the following year he married Marie Norton Whitney, herself recently divorced from Cornelius Vanderbilt ("Sonny") Whitney.

Whereas Kitty had been shy and retiring, Marie was witty and outspoken, brash to the point of abrasiveness. "Oh, come off it, Ave!" she would snort in her husky voice whenever he became too ponderous. They shared an interest in Impressionist and Post-impressionist art, and on their honeymoon in Europe collected dozens of masterpieces by Van Gogh, Degas, Cézanne, Picasso, and Renoir. Gertrude Stein, whose salon they visited in Paris, was in need of money to publish the Plain Edition of her works, and she sold the Harrimans her treasured Picasso, *Girl with a Fan.* The paintings the Harrimans collected became the nucleus of a gallery

Marie opened on East 57th Street.

Marie also introduced Averell to café society. Although he remained a wallflower even at his own parties, Harriman found his new artistic acquaintances an amusing diversion from the bankers he dealt with by day. The group orbited around Alexander Woollcott, *The New Yorker* magazine and Algonquin Round Table humorist (who later was to remark upon arriving in London during World War II, "There'll always be an England, now that Averell's here"). Woollcott and Marie came up with the idea of filling all the rooms at Arden with guests at Thanksgiving, which soon became an annual tradition. The Harrimans delegated to Woollcott the task of making the guest list for these five-day extravaganzas. Among the celebrants: Harpo Marx, Helen Hayes and Charles MacArthur, Ernest Hemingway, Heywood Broun, Herbert Bayard Swope, George S. Kaufman, Robert Sherwood, William Paley, Moss Hart, Ben Hecht, and Harold Ross.

The frivolity was manic. The cavernous entrance hall with its great organ would be turned into a badminton court. Woollcott and Swope presided over the intensely serious croquet matches on the lawn, while Broun was the master of the indoor bowling alley. The favorite party game was "Murder," in which each guest had to devise a plausible alibi for an imaginary homicide; Broun, who was involved in forming the American Newspaper Guild and other union activities, once won by claiming that he was in the kitchen organizing the Harriman help. Marie seemed to have only the vaguest idea where the kitchen was. After one early-morning bowling tournament, she led an expedition to raid the icebox. After boldly venturing through a maze of subterranean passages, she happened upon one of the large service pantries. One woman opened a walk-in closet and found it filled with priceless silver trays, goblets, flatware, vases, and other loot. "Well, what do you know!" Marie exclaimed. "I never realized all this stuff was here."

Harriman's new social circle often had trouble knowing what to make of the somewhat aloof financier. Despite his general popularity, there was always a shell around him, a wall that separated him from fraternal

comradery. They sometimes wondered whether he had any truly close friends. He was affable enough, even quite interesting when engaged in a discussion of foreign affairs or finance; but in a sharp and witty crowd, Harriman was resolutely neither. His mind would often seem to wander into some distant world. When there was speculation, even back in the 1930s, that Averell might be having trouble with his hearing, friends would use Dorothy Parker's comment when told of Coolidge's death: "How can you tell?"

Harriman's parsimony also became the butt of many barbs. Even though his family foundation was noted for its philanthropy, prying a contribution out of him was next to impossible. Harriman picking up a lunch tab or taxi fare was unheard of. In fact, legend had it that Harriman rarely carried cash. Even in money matters, he operated in a realm of his own.

His was a cheapness, of course, peculiar to the very rich. Even though his most daring international ventures were somewhat less than resounding successes, Harriman prospered in business with shrewd investments in such booming fields as radio stations and commercial airlines. He even weathered the collapse of the stock market in 1929 better than most of his colleagues. Yet by then, with the domestic economy and the prospects for world trade collapsing, Harriman was ready to pull back from his more venturesome financial dealings. His childhood and college ties provided a ready-made opportunity to consolidate his activities.

When he returned to New York after the war, there was no doubt that Robert Lovett was destined for a Wall Street career. Law school was unable to hold his interest. At his parents' homes in Manhattan and Locust Valley, he encountered a much headier atmosphere. His father, then chairman of the Union Pacific, had served on the War Industries Board and become a leader of the economic establishment. Among those who came to his dinner parties were others who had been on the War Industries Board, such as Bernard Baruch, the financier and self-styled

sage of Wall Street. Bob listened to discussions about industrial mobilization and offered his own ideas on the importance of airplanes to the nation's transportation and defense.

He even embarked on a dogged crusade to convince his father that the Union Pacific should establish an airline. While driving his father to work in his snappy new roadster one day, young Lovett wore his father down and convinced him to order a study of the idea. A few hours later the phone rang. "Have you seen the morning paper?" Judge Lovett asked. "Look at page one." There was a picture of an airplane that had crashed into the house of an ex-governor of New Jersey, its tail sticking from the roof.

"Well, that might happen once in a thousand times," said Bob.

"Once is enough," his father replied.

The idea was killed, and by the time Bob became a Union Pacific board member, federal legislation had been passed barring railroads from the air transport business.

Along with the Harriman brothers and other Yale chums, Lovett was a regular at the weekend parties given at the home of James Brown in Oyster Bay, not far from Locust Valley. Lovett had met Adèle, the youngest of Brown's three daughters, before he went off to war. "When he first came over, I thought he wanted to see one of my sisters," she recalls. "But when he kept coming over, I found out he had wanted to see me." Adèle was impressed by Lovett's lanky and angular good looks, his wry smile and humor. Bob was taken by the striking beauty of the girl whose debut had provoked more than the usual fawning in the glossies of the time. They were married in 1919, taking their honeymoon across country by train, stopping at the Harriman hunting lodge on the way.

Judge Lovett, ever eager to hone his son's mind, gave him four volumes of Immanuel Kant to read on his honeymoon. Young Lovett, who prided himself on an agile mind unclouded by dogma, was particularly struck by the section of the *Critique of Pure Reason* called the Antinomies, in which the German philosopher places pairs of contradictory propositions side by side and proceeds to offer airtight "proofs" of each.

his close friend from Groton and Yale who had joined Brown Brothers in 1919. Averell and Roland also brought it up with Lovett, who became a firm advocate of the proposal.

From a personal standpoint the merger made great sense. The Harrimans and their two top partners, Prescott Bush* (vice-president of their investment firm, W. A. Harriman & Company) and Knight Wooley (managing partner of their private banking house, Harriman Brothers & Company), had been Bonesmen at Yale with four of the younger partners at Brown Brothers: Lovett, Ellery James, Laurence Tighe, and Charles Dickey. Their friendships had flourished in New York, where they shared each other's apartments and attended many of the same social events, in particular the weekend tennis parties given by James Brown.

The merger was also logical from a financial standpoint. Brown Brothers, with a venerable reputation built on four generations of wise stewardship of other people's fortunes, was faced with the imminent retirement of five of its senior partners, who wished to withdraw their accrued profits. Both of the Harriman brothers had large personal fortunes—about $80 million between them at the time—and an aggressive style of raising and investing cash. "Old-timers in Wall Street have seldom seen a more potent blend of conservative experience and aggressive practice," one financial expert said of the merger.

Thus on the evening of December 11, 1930, a select group of partners was summoned to the home of Thatcher Brown, a tall, scholarly-looking senior partner of Brown Brothers. He was not well known even to the financial press, but reporters were familiar with the man standing next to him in the library of his Park Avenue residence: Averell Harriman, now a bit slouched at age thirty-nine, a chain smoker with a somewhat haggard air, yet still trim, athletic, and imposing. When Brown finished reading his statement, reporters peppered him and Harriman with tough questions about whether the merger indicated any financial difficulties. But the stories that appeared the next day were universally adulatory, even celebratory. It was a welcome piece of good news amid the 1930 gloom. Indeed, the front-page *New York Times* story on the merger ran next to a

report of the closing of the Bank of the United States, a commercial bank with sixty offices in New York City. (The New York *World* front page that day also contained stories on the suicides of two bankers.)

The new Brown Brothers Harriman firm established its headquarters in offices at 59 Wall Street where the Brown family's businesses had been located since 1843. Shortly before the stock market crash and the merger with the Harriman interests, Brown Brothers had built a thirty-six-story addition to its imposing marble building on the corner of Hanover Street. The dominant feature of the new building was the Partners' Room, an ornate sanctum with deep maroon carpeting and dark wood paneling, which had been transferred from the old building along with an imposing painting of four of the original Brown brothers. There the partners worked alongside one another at rows of bulky rolltop desks while British floor attendants, silent and correct, served as clerks.

While the rest of the country slept in deep isolationism, a close-knit clique of Wall Street bankers and lawyers, most of whom had traveled through Europe as children, met in the clubs of London and Paris and Berlin as friendly competitors putting together suitable investments for their firms. In a private and profit-seeking capacity, they were rebuilding a war-ravaged Europe in a manner as grandiose as many of these same men would employ a world war later with the Marshall Plan. In 1927, for example, three years before their merger, Brown Brothers and Harriman Brothers shared in a $250,000 line of credit to finance the export activities of a Berlin metals firm. An advertisement for Brown Brothers Harriman in 1934 boasted of investments in forty-five different countries.

The firm financed much of America's imports of metals, raw materials, and foodstuffs, and it pioneered a system of letters of credit and bankers' acceptances that eventually involved more than five thousand correspondents around the world. Responsibility for these transactions naturally fell to Lovett, who was nimble with complex calculations and enjoyed going on long inspection tours to observe how other companies operated. After the Brown Brothers Harriman merger, Lovett took over the international currency and lending operations of the new firm. On his

twice-a-year trips, he would drive through Belgium, France, and Germany for six weeks at a time, inspecting industries and analyzing their finances. He particularly loved their organization charts, management systems, and details about the flow of products and profits.

Lovett's work was mainly that of an operating officer; Harriman was still the entrepreneurial force behind many of the firm's more venturesome international deals. They each seemed to represent a different stereotype of the Wall Street banker. By nature and breeding, Lovett was tactful, suave, and smooth; he excelled at bringing people together, calming controversies with his congenial wit, resolving problems in a collegial way. Harriman was imperious, or at least gave that appearance. People were able to work under him more easily than they could work with him. He believed in maxims and standards, many of them inherited from his rigid father, and was prone to impose them on situations. Lovett had doubts about Harriman's intelligence, though not his tenacity. Harriman, for his part, thought Lovett too cautious and unimaginative and tended to treat him as a subordinate.

Nonetheless the two men worked together well, Lovett remaining the more deferential, Harriman always a bit more magisterial. Whenever they were apart, they would write each other once or twice a day, special delivery letters speeding back and forth from Lovett on Wall Street to Harriman in his suite at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington or ski lodge in the Rockies.

"I very much hope that your discussion with Vincent Astor will not necessarily develop into an argument," Lovett wrote, with typical conciliatory style, in a "Dear Averell . . . Yours as Ever, Bob L" letter in 1934. The issue at hand was the weekly magazine *Today*, a pallid publication that Harriman, Astor, and others had founded to support both the New Deal and the interests of business. (In 1937, it was merged into another Astor venture to become *Newsweek.)* Lovett convinced Harriman that *Today's* editor, the once and future FDR brain truster Raymond Moley, was turning the publication into "a personal journal dealing very largely with whom the editor hates or loves as the case may

be." Lovett bitingly told Harriman that "the present magazine's slogan, 'A Personal Journal of Public Affairs,' should be changed to 'A Public Journal of Personal Affairs.'"

But when it came time to confront Astor, Lovett, as usual, fretted about Harriman's lack of tact.

> I do want to emphasize what appears to me to be the strategic advantage of making your criticisms broad while at same time being prepared to produce specific examples only if challenged [Lovett wrote]. Unless challenged, I don't think that specific examples do a great deal of good since they most frequently start bickerings about interpretations of language rather than getting the sense of the entire criticisms over . . . There is no point in unnecessarily making an enemy.

Ever since Harriman and Lovett had graduated from college, Judge Lovett had been grooming his son and that of his former boss to help run the Union Pacific railway empire. Averell had been elected to the railroad's board in 1913, while still a senior at Yale, and upon graduation began work in the railroad's operational headquarters in Omaha. "Judge Lovett was anxious for me to get training," recalls Harriman. Although he arrived in Omaha in his own private railway car, Averell had begun work as a lowly "trackwalker," and his fellow inspectors referred to him as "Bill." Within two years, Judge Lovett had made him vice-president in charge of all purchasing for the Union Pacific.

Harriman had quickly displayed his no-nonsense approach. The Union Pacific had been buying locomotives from the nation's two major suppliers, Baldwin and American. Baldwin invariably bid lower on contracts for freight engines, and American always submitted the best bid for passenger engines. The twenty-three-year-old Harriman figured that they were privately dividing the market. "A locomotive costs so much a pound, no matter what its details," he noted. So he calculated a reasonable

price per pound for each locomotive and summoned to his Omaha office the sales executive of Baldwin. The company could have all or nothing at that price, he said. "Well, wait a minute. I can't give you an answer until I talk with my president," said the worried man. Harriman handed him the phone. "He says we'll take the business," the salesman reported after a quick conversation. American was upset, but Harriman saved the Union Pacific hundreds of thousands of dollars.

While he was engaged in his own shipping and investment ventures during the 1920s, Harriman had let his involvement with the Union Pacific lapse. But after he settled into Brown Brothers Harriman, he once again became active in railroading. The Illinois Central, which was still controlled by the Union Pacific, was in danger of collapse in 1931, and Judge Lovett gave Harriman the task of rescuing it. His remedy was drastic: He cut maintenance, stopped buying rails, reduced service, and laid off employees. "It was rather ruthless or else the company could not have survived," he later recalled. But the cuts pained him. He decided to be more creative and constructive in his approach to the Union Pacific when Judge Lovett died in 1932 and was succeeded as chairman by the son of the man he himself had succeeded twenty-three years earlier.

Bob Lovett was also actively involved with the Union Pacific by then, having been elected to its executive committee in 1926. It was an inauspicious time to be running the railroad: gross revenues had reached a record high in 1929 only to plunge 50 percent by 1932, a year that produced the company's first net deficit in more than thirty years. Harriman and Lovett, along with Roland Harriman, decided that the answer was to upgrade rather than cut back on passenger service.

When Lovett met him at an airplane one day, Harriman pointed to a stewardess and said: "We need those." So female passenger attendants were added to Union Pacific trains. Harriman also came up with the idea of having good, inexpensive meals for all passengers. Lovett, as might be expected, objected; according to his calculations it would be cheaper to pay every passenger the then-grand sum of two dollars to refrain from using the service. But he was overruled. To expand the tourist trade,

Harriman's unholy alliance with the Democrats. In 1933, Lovett joined with the banker J. P. Warburg to issue a public warning that New Deal policies threatened to cast the country into an inflationary spiral. Four years later, he wrote an article for *The Saturday Evening Post* called "Gilt Edged Insecurity" cautioning that what seemed to be blue-chip investments could prove to be less than secure. Keynesian economics he haughtily dismissed.

Scattered blasts at the New Deal's "reign of terror" against business began to crop up in Lovett's regular notes and letters to his partner. "The young hot dogs have taken the first step toward breaking down the channels of private capital," Lovett wrote Harriman in one missive, referring to Felix Frankfurter's protégés. "The Administration should not permit this situation to continue and should no more be intimidated by the Brain Trust than by business interests or the Stock Exchange." But their friendship far transcended politics. As Lovett remarked at the end of a particularly scathing three-page note about Roosevelt's policies: "Don't judge from the heat of this missive that I hold you personally responsible for it."

Indeed, most of their correspondence involving Harriman's government work was of a very practical nature. Like many other financiers of the time, Harriman and Lovett tended to blur the boundaries between their public and private affairs.* Whenever Harriman was down in Washington, Lovett tended to write about economic matters that he thought should be "of vital interest to the Administration."

Some letters were quite specific, involving what today would be seen as clear conflicts of interest. "We have been swamped with cable inquiries from abroad as to whether or not we would buy gold," Lovett wrote in 1934, noting that Brown Brothers Harriman could purchase one million French francs ($63,000) and reap a $2,800 profit if they could be exchanged for gold that the U.S. Treasury would buy. The problem, which Lovett asked Harriman to explain to his colleagues in government, was that the Gold Revaluation Act released the Treasury of the legal obligation to buy private gold offered to it. "This, of course, has thrown

the exchanges into a state of great uncertainty," wrote Lovett, "and it is really a darn shame that someone familiar with the market did not forewarn the Treasury as to what would happen." Unable to resolve all the uncertainties, Lovett wrote the following day that the firm had decided on "marking time" before making a move.

Despite Harriman's dalliances on the periphery of the New Deal, he and Lovett had been mainly concerned with private business affairs during their two decades on Wall Street. Foreign developments tended to be viewed from a financial perspective, with Lovett cautiously guiding the international business of Brown Brothers Harriman while Harriman slowly withdrew from his most venturesome endeavors to become a pillar of the financial establishment.

But by 1939, events were unfolding that would inexorably thrust to the fore those whose visions extended beyond the nation's borders. The portents were confusing. Germany and Russia, briefly joined in a cynical alliance, carved up Poland between them, plunging Europe into a war that seemed at once both menacing and phony. Congress resisted Roosevelt's appeals for revisions in the neutrality legislation; the American people seemed surprisingly sympathetic to Charles Lindbergh's pronouncements that "we must not be misguided by this foreign propaganda that our frontiers lie in Europe." Perhaps most baffling was a discovery that few in America knew anything about: Niels Bohr, at a meeting of the American Physical Society in Washington that year, reported that his colleagues in Copenhagen had produced 200 million volts of electricity by splitting an atom of uranium.

"How do you feel about Europe and everything else?" inquired Harriman in a one-sentence telegram he sent to Lovett from Sun Valley in March of 1939. The tone seemed jovial, even flip. But Lovett knew Harriman well enough to realize that he was not simply making idle telegraphic chatter. The question demanded a serious answer. "Consider Czechoslovakian moves logical result of Munich Pact," Lovett replied that same day. "In north danger seems to be quick thrust on Holland in which event believe British would fight . . . Foreign news overshadows all factors

affecting market here . . . Good faith of domestic appeasement program again being questioned . . . Best regards, Bob."

CHAPTER 4

WORLD COURTS

McCloy and Acheson before the bar

The Cravath firm on Wall Street was a sweatshop, and John McCloy relished it. Told that a complete reshuffling of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad was due to be signed the next morning and that he and another associate would have to spend the night drawing up the reams of contracts, he literally rubbed his hands in glee. Nothing pleased McCloy more than having important people counting on him. Donald Swatland, his fellow associate, ordered out for two steak dinners. McCloy called the restaurant back and asked to have a dozen fat cigars included. Deftly flicking ashes into the corner wastebasket, they polished off the documents before dawn. After showering and changing into fresh shirts, they arrived precisely at the appointed hour for the signing ceremony.

The rush by American bankers and businessmen to invest in Europe after World War I set off a scramble by major Wall Street law firms vying for foreign business. The legal world, like the financial one, had always been part of the backbone of the American Establishment. After the Great War, it offered bright and ambitious young men, such as McCloy and Acheson, entrée into that world and more: it gave them the chance to handle international cases, to avoid the insularity infecting the rest of the country, and to become part of the coterie that would eventually

spearhead America's wider involvement in world affairs.

At the forefront of this international work was the firm of Cravath, Henderson & de Gersdorff (now Cravath, Swaine & Moore), which John McCloy joined as an associate in 1925 after a brief period doing railway work at another Wall Street firm. The shop, whose roots stretched back to 1819, was being transformed by Paul Cravath into the first of the modern Wall Street law firms. He recruited as associates the brightest law graduates from Harvard, Yale, and Columbia, carefully trained them, and after six or seven years of grueling work invited the best of them into the partnership. This produced what is now common at major Wall Street firms: a sweatshop atmosphere in which associates worked eye-blurring hours scrambling to make partner. It also created a meritocracy, where the tenacity of a young man like McCloy was valued more than family status.

Through his work at Cravath, McCloy became friends with Lovett and Harriman. In the ten years after he joined the Cravath firm, McCloy helped paper more than $77 million worth of bond issues for the Union Pacific. Later he joined Lovett and Harriman on the railroad's board of directors. McCloy even became the paper president of a railroad, albeit briefly. In 1926, he and Swatland worked on a purchase plan for the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad. For technical reasons, they had to organize a temporary holding company in Delaware. McCloy was designated the president. The next day, just as the holding company was being dissolved, the newspapers published his youthful, shock-haired photograph as America's youngest railway president.

More importantly, McCloy dealt with Lovett and Harriman through Cravath's international work. In 1925, for example, the firm collaborated with Brown Brothers & Company on the issuance of $30 million of bonds for the kingdom of Norway. That year the firm also dealt with some of the mineral concessions being offered by the Soviet Union; McCloy worked closely with Harriman, who was considering an investment in a British firm that had acquired some Soviet mining rights. "The friendships and associations I made, and the work habits I developed, were of lasting value," McCloy recalled later. "I knew I could

Corporation. Long nights were spent discussing the irrepressible Frenchman's evolving vision of a unified European economy.

One day in 1929, McCloy was in Arizona on business. When he boarded the train for the return home, he unexpectedly ran into his old friend and classmate Lew Douglas, by then an Arizona congressman, and his wife, Peggy. They rode together all the way to New York, where Peggy's sister, Ellen, the one who used to accompany Peggy on visits to Amherst, met them at Pennsylvania Station. The daughters of Frederick Zinsser and Emma Scharman Zinsser, Peggy and Ellen had been raised in a household where German was the first language. The Zinssers were a large family, both in the U.S. and in Germany (one cousin married Konrad Adenauer), and had been involved in various chemical businesses in the U.S. since before the Civil War. In 1897, Frederick Zinsser founded his own company in Hastings-on-Hudson, where he eventually moved his family.

Ellen had what was known in her family as *Fingerspitzengefühl,* a sensitive touch for dealing with people and situations. She knew how to handle the stolid yet driven young lawyer; for McCloy's part, he decided she was exactly what he wanted in a wife. He called her within a week, and courted her for more than a year. Yet he approached marriage in a typically judicious manner, discussing its pros and cons, and the effect it would have on his career, until it became something of a joke among his friends. Finally his hand was forced by his firm: he was chosen to head Cravath's Paris office and was ordered to set sail on April 25, 1930. That morning he married Ellen and they sailed together.

Soon after he arrived in Paris, McCloy got a call from his New York office that would change the course of his career. He was told to travel to The Hague, where one of the firm's clients, Bethlehem Steel, was party to a complex case before the Mixed Claims Commission. It involved a mysterious explosion in July of 1916 at a munitions depot on a small spit of land near Jersey City known as "Black Tom." Bethlehem Steel, which had manufactured the munitions (scheduled for shipment to Russia), and the other plaintiffs sought to prove that the Germans had arranged the

sabotage and to collect damages from German funds held in the U.S. McCloy sat in on the hearings and reported back to the firm that the suit would be lost because of lack of evidence. When his prediction proved true, he asked to be assigned to the case to begin work on getting a rehearing.

It turned out to be a ten-year assignment, replete with spooky midnight meetings and evidence worthy of a pulp thriller. One clue came in the form of a message written in invisible ink (actually lemon juice) on the pages of a 1917 issue of *Blue Book* magazine. The message was in the form of numbers that referred to pages in the magazine where pinpricks in the text spelled out words. They seemed to show that Fred Herrmann, a known German saboteur, had arranged the explosion with Paul Hilken, an American acting as a German agent. McCloy tracked down Hilken to a rooming house in Baltimore. He had disappeared, but an old suitcase in the attic contained check stubs showing his connection to German agents.

The Claims Commission again rejected the case in 1932, but McCloy refused to give up. He helped push through a law in Congress giving the U.S. attorneys power to subpoena witnesses. Along with Ellen, he crisscrossed Europe searching for more evidence. In Ireland they met with the fiery labor leader James Larkin, who had worked with German agents during the war. In Germany McCloy tracked down a furtive Russian agent named Alexander Nelidoff, who claimed to have incriminating documents. At one point McCloy reached for Nelidoff's pen, only to have the Russian grab it back and explain it was actually a canister of poison gas. McCloy followed Nelidoff to Berlin, where he got the documents, but research by British intelligence showed them to be frauds, probably planted by German agents seeking to discredit the American case. McCloy also met with Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess, and other top Nazi leaders (who invited him to their box at the 1936 Olympic Games) to see if a settlement could be negotiated. But the potential agreement fell through when neither the claimants nor the Germans showed a willingness to honor it.

By 1935, McCloy had moved to Washington as the de facto

commander of the large battery of lawyers and officials handling the case for the various plaintiffs. He showed an enormous ability for getting people to put aside their own rivalries, brusquely assigning tasks and coordinating the assemblage of mountains of evidence. An important break came when one of the lawyers discovered a handwritten postscript on a letter from an official of a German shipping company that linked German agents to the explosion.

After three more years on the case, McCloy retreated to the Ausable Club, a private community in the Adirondacks where he was a member, to dictate new briefs. When they were presented in 1939, the German representative on the Claims Commission walked out. Nevertheless, the commission rendered a judgment: it awarded approximately $21 million plus interest to the American claimants. After two more years of legal wrangling, Bethlehem Steel and the other companies received their checks.

Such perseverance was typical of McCloy, who was by then becoming a legend on Wall Street. In addition, the case established him as a deft coordinator, one who could get people to accomplish a task with a minimum of problems. Prominent lawyers at the time, unlike some of their counterparts today, made it a top priority to keep their cases and clients out of court, to settle issues rather than resort to confrontation and litigation. McCloy was a master at seeking accommodation and negotiating agreements; rarely did he or his clients appear in court.

All of this was done in a manner that avoided making McCloy any enemies; indeed, the history of the Cravath firm notes that "no Cravath partner has had greater personal popularity in the firm than McCloy." He showed an ability to delegate (knowing that oral arguments were not his forte, he hired former Attorney General William Mitchell for the job) and also to shoulder great burdens when necessary (he worked virtually around the clock in the summer of 1938 drafting the major briefs).

Particularly impressed was a man who had been peripherally involved in the case and who had a cabin near McCloy's at the Ausable Club: Henry Lewis Stimson. The once and future Secretary of War knew that the day was fast approaching when men with a knowledge of German

espionage, and men who could be trusted to get things done, would be in great demand.

Like McCloy, Dean Acheson spent the two decades after leaving Harvard Law School making a national and international reputation as a worldly lawyer. But though Acheson forged many Wall Street connections, he decided from the start that Washington was the place to be.

On a golden March day in 1921, he and a small group of friends stood in front of a house on S Street in Northwest Washington and watched as a crippled, depleted man was helped through the door. Most of the town had flocked to see the inaugural parade of Warren Harding, featuring the world's largest broom topped by an American flag. But Acheson was more interested in paying his respects to a bowed and weary Woodrow Wilson, visionary of new freedom and international order.

Acheson, through his father's sermons and Frankfurter's teachings, had become a conscientious liberal, albeit one who would have felt slightly more at home in nineteenth-century England (with Lord Shaftesbury and the Factory Acts) than in twentieth-century America. There was still within him that tension between elitism and democratic romanticism exhibited in his Groton essay on American snobbery; even as he defended the struggles of the workingman, he chafed at the vulgarity of the masses. In addition, although he supported the League of Nations and labor unions, he disdained the Utopian panaceas and socialist visions promulgated by the more woolly-minded reformers within the liberal movement.

In short, Acheson was a suitable protégé of the consummate liberal whom Felix Frankfurter sent him to serve: Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, that imposing admixture of proper Bostonian, courtly Kentuckian, and Anglicized Jew. "I don't think the Justice puts the slightest faith in mass salvation through universal Plumb Plans," Acheson wrote in 1920, responding to Frankfurter's request for his opinion of

Brandeis's philosophy. "People haven't the intelligence for that sort of thing. They have only the intelligence to operate in small personal groups which deal with the things with which they are intimately acquainted." Brandeis's creed combined liberalism with individualism, Acheson later wrote, and was concerned not with "the Holy Grail" of a Utopian society but with removing the obstacles placed by cumbersome institutions "in the way of the individual search for fulfillment." In future years, Acheson would denigrate grandiose schemes such as the United Nations by using Brandeis's derogatory phrase, "Plumb Plans."

Acheson's duties included helping host the Brandeis "at homes" attended by the great thinkers and socialites of Washington, such as the aging progressive Senator Robert La Follette and the crusading social critic Norman Hapgood, and serving as confidant during late-night talks at the justice's office while Mrs. Brandeis was recuperating from a nervous breakdown. "What is the latest dirt?" Brandeis would ask conspiratorially as the Harding Administration scandals unfolded. Acheson recorded Brandeis's pronouncements in his journal. "Isn't there any way out?" a worried Acheson asked during the bitter coal strike in 1919. "Yes," replied the patient Brandeis, "and the men will find it, if only their money holds out and the west freezes for a couple of weeks."

More importantly, Acheson helped write Brandeis's opinions, the two of them swapping notes back and forth as Acheson worked at his typewriter and the justice wrote in longhand. Brandeis was a stern taskmaster. "Please remember that your function is to correct my errors, not to introduce errors of your own," he thundered after discovering two faulty citations in the draft of an opinion rejecting an argument by Elihu Root, who was challenging the nation's Prohibition laws. As Acheson noted in *Morning and Noon:* "Justice Brandeis's standard for our work was perfection as a norm, to be better on special occasions."

Acheson became a meticulous craftsman, approaching both the law and logic with the same precision as his master. Brandeis taught him to be both a pragmatist and an empiricist, to be guided above all by the facts of a situation. Yet he also learned that the law could not be divorced from

clients, its flamboyant president, David Dubinsky, introduced Acheson to his union convention as "not only brilliant as a lawyer, well known as a progressive, but one who could understand the heart of our labor movement."

His pro-union sentiments, however, never took precedence over his concern for social stability. A breakdown of order, he felt, was an irrational abandonment of common interests, and there was nothing Acheson valued more than rationality. In a letter to Frankfurter in 1921, Acheson discussed the question of whether unions should be "free to organize and strike and picket and throw bricks and generally bust up the other fellow's business." His conclusion: "It may be that the best way is just to bust the other fellow; but when your method would apply to busting any order which possibly could be conceived you must expect to run afoul of the legal tradition."

Brandeis took the unusual step of asking Acheson to stay on as his clerk for a second year, noting sardonically that it would be improper to unloose him on the legal world with his shocking state of ignorance. When it finally came time to foray into less exalted realms, Acheson became one of nine lawyers in the fledgling Washington firm of Covington & Burling, soon to become Covington, Burling & Rublee.

J. Harry Covington was a prominent Wilsonian Democrat who served as a Maryland congressman and as Chief Justice of the District of Columbia Supreme Court. Edward "Ned" Burling, a poor boy from Iowa who had gone on to Harvard College and then the law school, had been the general counsel of the Shipping Board, handling contracts with young Averell Harriman among others. George Rublee, who was to become one of Acheson's closest friends, was in the first class to graduate from Groton, and his athletic and academic prowess, chiseled on the walls of the school, was still legendary when Acheson and Harriman were there. After Harvard College and law school, Rublee alternated between being a professional success and an international social dilettante. He joined Brandeis in the crusade to establish the Federal Trade Commission; with Jean Monnet, he worked on the Allied Maritime Transport Council

during World War I.

The firm they formed in Washington was designed to take advantage of the international commerce that boomed at the end of World War I. Just as Wall Street was then discovering the new world of opportunity, the concurrent expansion of American trade and federal regulation in the 1920s transformed the sleepy swamp of Washington into a center of international legal work. By far the firm's biggest case was the one that Acheson was hired to work on: representing the Norwegian government in its $16 million claim against the U.S. for Norwegian property (mainly ships on order) seized during the war. The case was to be heard by the Permanent Court of Arbitration sitting at the Peace Palace in The Hague.

Acheson was fascinated both by the grand stage on which he found himself and by the notion that international order could be based on abstract principles of law. Yet his training with Brandeis taught him that the facts, and not the theory, should sway the case. Returning to the stacks of the Library of Congress, where he had researched his drafts for Brandeis, Acheson compiled an impressive array of precedents showing the U.S. to be liable for the full value of the contracts it had expropriated.

Faced with the impressive brief of the case for Norway, lawyers representing the U.S. countered by challenging the legitimacy of the contracts, arguing that they had been "tainted" because most were "purely speculative" agreements negotiated by a shady Norwegian, Christoffer Hannevig. Acheson and Burling sailed to The Hague in the summer of 1922 to argue the case. Although it seemed to be going well, the "taint of Hannevig" argument was muddying the issue. The challenge faced by Acheson, Burling, and the other lawyers for Norway was to force the U.S. hand, to get the U.S. to admit that the claims were valid and that only their value was in dispute. Acheson was delegated to make the argument.

As he climbed the elevated pulpit in the Peace Palace, the young lawyer decided to gamble by attacking head on the American suggestion that the claims were made in bad faith. "Some very severe things were said about these claims," he noted, "things which look to us as though they related to the validity of the claims and the good faith of the purchasers, and,

perhaps, in some cases they tended to reflect somewhat on the Kingdom of Norway in presenting these claims." He challenged the U.S. agents to clear up this implication: "We felt that some statement was due us. We felt that some statement was due the Kingdom of Norway."

In effect, he was demanding that his own government apologize, a demand that the presiding judge noted with surprise and which Acheson confirmed. If the U.S. side decided to respond by vigorously pursuing its contention that the contracts were invalid, the whole case might be lost. Burling scribbled a note and handed it up to Acheson at the lectern. "SHUT UP," it said in a large, emphatic scrawl. But the gamble had been made, and it paid off. The U.S. side was unwilling to hinge its case on the make-or-break argument that the claims were not legitimate. The contracts were valid, conceded the U.S. lawyer, only their value was in question. With that, the Hannevig issue was put into perspective. The court ended up awarding the claimants $12 million.

Upon his return, Acheson settled down to the life of a prosperous corporate lawyer. Years later, Jean Monnet talked of the role played by lawyers in foreign policy. Expressing his surprise at how the law was such an important training ground for statesmanship in the U.S., he speculated that it was because attorneys were trained to deal with complex situations by finding both precedents and innovative pragmatic approaches for dealing with them. Indeed, two of Monnet's closest friends, Acheson and McCloy, came from such a tradition.

Kennan was of a contrary view; he often complained that legalistic captains of foreign policy were continually drafting complex treaties that were never invoked and bore little resemblance to the realities of power. Lovett was also of the school that legal training produced a cadre of bickering wordsmiths who were inept at getting things done. As for Acheson, he occasionally cast a jaundiced eye on lawyers in government, admitting that they were better suited to taking directions from clients than making policy decisions of their own (he attributed Cordell Hull's maddening fecklessness to his years as a judicious attorney); yet Acheson also felt that the best statesmen were those who had the attributes of great

lawyers, in particular an ability to remain emotionally detached from a case and appreciate the facts on both sides.

One case that brought Acheson into contact with Harriman and Lovett involved Richard Whitney, a Groton-Porcellian man who became president of the New York Stock Exchange and was later convicted of securities fraud. Harriman was among those who innocently lent Whitney money (fifty thousand dollars in Harriman's case) when he was secretly trying to cover the funds he had embezzled and lost. Acheson represented the interests of the Stock Exchange in the case. He also took on a case at the behest of his friend Lew Douglas, the Arizona congressman and in-law of McCloy, in which he opposed the building of the Boulder Dam. His argument that the Colorado River was not navigable, and thus could not be altered with federal funds, was dismissed by the Supreme Court on the grounds that a handful of adventurers had in fact navigated its course. Brandeis sent down from the bench a consolation note to his protégé: "Felicitations on an excellent argument."

Acheson, in fact, lost every one of the first fifteen cases that he argued before the Supreme Court. Yet much to the envy of the other young members of his firm, who resented his talent for self-aggrandizement and impressing his powerful elders, Acheson's reputation as a brilliant legal conceptualizer tended to rise with each loss. Even senior partner George Rublee took to describing the younger Grotonian, in words William James applied to George Santayana, as "the shiniest fish that ever came out of the sea."

"He always maintained a cool detachment," one associate later remembered. "Some lawyers get so steamed up they think their client is the Lord God Almighty fifteen minutes after he has stepped into the office. Acheson always saw the client as representing a soluble problem, and nothing more." He once wrote a complex brief that prompted an impressed client to accost him at the Oak Bar of the Plaza in New York. "Your brief is a work of art, a masterpiece of legal thinking," said the client, pumping Acheson's hand. With the bemused tolerance he bestowed upon the overly enthusiastic, Acheson replied: "Not a bad brief.

It almost convinced me." As another colleague put it: "Dean always had a haughty attitude about clients, as he did about most everything, which was evident whenever he would arch his eyebrows or twitch his mustache."

The mustache. Throughout his life, when friends endeavored to describe him, the subject of Acheson's reddish-gray bushy mustache would come up, as if it were a reflection of what lay behind it. While he was a young lawyer, it was somewhat untamed and overgrown, seeming to mask a remnant of schoolboy insecurity, a touch of defiance. It was tailored not by wax but by Acheson's rough tugging while he thought, making it bristle upward. As he matured, so did the mustache. It came to symbolize his urbane elegance. "Though it once seemed about to climb his cheeks, like a vine seeking sunlight, it now is comparatively self-controlled and at peace with itself, quietly aware of its responsibilities," wrote *The New Yorker* magazine in a 1949 profile. "While still giving off gay hints of the unpredictable, it is the adornment of a man who has conquered not only himself but his mustache."

Acheson took justifiable pride in his ability to cut through a morass of complexities and facts to reach the kernel of a problem. Yet he had neither Harriman's probing curiosity nor Kennan's philosophical depth. "Dean took pleasure in finding the answer to riddles," said a former law partner. "The nature of the riddles did not concern him. He was not a man to wander into the penumbra of thought."

Acheson's success at Covington & Burling (of which he was made a partner in 1926) allowed him to live in the manner he fancied. He and Alice bought, for thirteen thousand dollars, a red brick house on P Street in Georgetown, built in 1843, to which they steadily added rooms over the years. Also during the 1920s, he bought a rambling 1795-vintage farmhouse called Harewood, seventeen miles away in Sandy Spring, Maryland. There he and Alice tended to the horses (including Brandeis's aging horse, named Sir Gareth), gardening, and the raising of their three children.

Perhaps it was his abundance of charm, his polished manner and wit,

Henry Morgenthau, Jr., then head of the Farm Credit Administration, persuaded the President that the Depression could be alleviated by raising prices. That meant devaluing the dollar, which in turn meant allowing the price of gold to rise above the price ($20.67 an ounce) that Congress had set by law. A more conservative faction, some of whom saw the unpegging of the dollar from gold as "the end of Western civilization," was led by Acheson's close friends Budget Director Lew Douglas and Wall Street financier James Warburg. For Acheson, who was Acting Secretary because of Woodin's illness, the question was less an ideological one than a legal one. He drafted an opinion telling Roosevelt what the law forbade him to do; Roosevelt responded, to Acheson's annoyance, that a lawyer's job was to find ways to circumvent such laws.

When Roosevelt decided to order a legal opinion from Attorney General Cummings saying that the Reconstruction Finance Corporation could buy gold at higher than the fixed price, Acheson paid a call on Brandeis to solicit his advice. "If I wanted a legal opinion, I would prefer to get it from you than Homer Cummings" was the justice's Delphic pronouncement. To Acheson, that meant he should stand his ground. He did. When Roosevelt summoned him to the Oval Office, Acheson said that he was being asked to do something "contrary to the law." Asked FDR: "Don't you take my word for it that it will be all right?" Acheson lost his temper, replying that he was being asked to sign illegal documents. "That will do!" thundered Roosevelt.

Acheson wrote a short and graceful letter of resignation, thanking the President for his "many marks of kindness." Roosevelt did not respond, and Acheson learned from journalists that the President had accepted his resignation and chosen Morgenthau as his replacement. Nor was Acheson invited to Morgenthau's induction ceremony in the Oval Office, but he went anyway. Roosevelt, barely acknowledging Acheson's presence, gave a speech to the small gathering in praise of loyalty. There was a silence when he finished. Seeking to dispel the tension, Acheson walked up to the President, offered his hand, and thanked him for the opportunity to be of service. Roosevelt pulled him closer. "I've been awfully angry with you,"

he whispered, "but you are a real sportsman." Years later, when another official submitted a bristling letter of resignation, Roosevelt gave it to an assistant and said: "Return it to him and tell him to ask Dean Acheson how a gentleman resigns."

Acheson's friend Harriman would never have gone to the mat over a matter of principle with a President; he would likely have merely sidled away from the conflict to work on problems that he would be left to solve on his own. Lovett would probably have worked out some compromise, making any mountainous dispute seem suddenly like a small bump. So too would have John McCloy, the loyal workhorse; like Bohlen, he would have been willing to go along. Kennan would no doubt have agonized about resignation only to become lost in philosophical broodings. But Dean Acheson had a code, a fledgling one perhaps, but one he was stubbornly proud of.

In a peculiar way, Acheson seemed to have relished the fight. It was a chance to affirm his honor. Yet the stance he took was hardly typical: he was, at heart, a man of action, one who believed in the use of presidential power to accomplish social goals. Like most liberals, he objected to the legal obstacles that the Supreme Court was putting in front of the New Deal. In a 1936 speech to the Maryland Bar Association, he criticized the obstructionism of the court and defended the Administration's right to take forceful action to remedy the Depression. A few years later, in a similar situation, Acheson worked with Harriman and McCloy to devise a legal maneuver to circumvent Congress's Neutrality Act and arrange for Britain to use mothballed American ships. When he served Harry Truman, he came to understand better the need for loyalty and deference. "I did not have enough consideration for the problems of the President," he later conceded of the gold-standard crisis.

Part of Acheson's problem was with Roosevelt personally. "I respected his ability to rule, but I did not like him," he later told a seminar at Princeton. The patronizing informality with which FDR treated other officials, using nicknames and summoning them to early-morning bedside meetings, rankled the proper Acheson. "He condescended," Acheson

wrote of FDR in *Morning and Noon.* "To accord the President the greatest deference and respect should be a gratification to any citizen. It is not gratifying to receive the easy greeting which milord might give a promising stable boy and pull one's forelock in return."

An avid reader of English biography and history, particularly of the Victorian era, Acheson glorified that period as one when the Royal Navy and London merchant banks had enforced a Pax Britannica by ruling the high seas and extending capital for development around the world. The Great War had started, he believed, because a breakdown in that order led to the rise of dictators who responded to economic limitations with expansionist policies; it could happen again if America did not step into the vacuum left by Britain's decline. In the midst of the battle over the value of gold, Acheson led another unsuccessful effort to persuade FDR to loosen the terms for the repayment of the British war debt.

The League of Nations, he came to feel, was one of those "universal Plumb Plans" of which Brandeis had been so leery. The foundation for world order, Acheson was convinced, depended upon a free flow of American capital and a pragmatic military outlook. As he wrote in a letter to his son, David, at Groton: "The important thing in thinking about international affairs is not to make moral judgments or apportion blame but to understand the nature of the forces at work as the foundation for thinking about what, if anything, can be done."

Regarding the Soviet Union, Acheson was similarly pragmatic. Although they had no love for the Bolshevik system, Acheson and Frankfurter were strong proponents of recognition, often engaging in long arguments with others on the subject. "Refusing to recognize a situation makes it a difficult one to work with," Acheson noted to a friend.

Upon returning to Covington & Burling after his short stint in government, Acheson appeared to some as a potential leader of the Democratic conservative opposition to the New Deal. Among his major clients was a utility company seeking to enjoin the Public Works Administration from proceeding with rural electrification. He was

considered a "sound" man, and was selected as a trustee of the Brookings Institution (then quite conservative) and of the Yale Corporation (edging out Senator Robert Taft for the honor). Yet, as he noted later, "not all my efforts were devoted to representing the forces of reaction in opposition to the children of light." He served as a forceful advocate for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union in its battles to organize factories and defend minimum wage laws. "I understand your difficulty in classifying me as a pro- or anti-New Dealer," he wrote a friend. "I couldn't classify myself. It is much more satisfying to me to consider specific proposals from the point of view of whether they are practicable methods of dealing with immediate problems."

When Lew Douglas and James Warburg, his allies in the gold fight, approached him about joining a Democrats for Landon movement in 1936, Acheson replied that nothing could be so foolish. In fact, he decided to go public with his support for Roosevelt's re-election in a letter to the Baltimore *Sun* (whose editors were so surprised to receive it that they called him for verification). What bothered him the most about the Republican campaign were the Red-scare tactics being used. "It seems to me utterly fantastic to suggest that Communism is in any manner involved in this campaign," he wrote. "It serves only to arouse a spirit of bigotry which we have experienced before and which always results in violation of constitutional guarantees of liberty and makes impossible sane consideration of public questions."

Years later Acheson would find himself the subject of Red-scare rhetoric. In 1939, it was his friend Frankfurter who was on the hot seat. The professor had been appointed by FDR to the Supreme Court and retained Acheson as a counselor for the confirmation hearings featuring Senator Patrick McCarran. Frankfurter refused to be intimidated by the Nevada senator or to be drawn into a discussion of Marxism. "Senator," Frankfurter replied at one point, "I do not believe you are more attached to the theories and practices of Americanism than I am. I rest my answer on that statement."

The room began to stir. Senator Matthew Neely of West Virginia

motioned Acheson for a private word. Frankfurter, the senator warned, was falling into a trap. He would have to make some accommodation; he would have to answer a question on Communism directly. Acheson the pragmatist agreed. He returned to the witness table to beseech Frankfurter to be sensible.

When Neely asked his friendly question—"Are you a Communist, or have you ever been one?"—Frankfurter played the game.

"I have never been and I am not now," replied Frankfurter.

"By that do you mean that you have never been enrolled as a member of the Communist Party?" the senator added.

"I mean much more than that," said Frankfurter. "I mean that I have never been enrolled, and have never been qualified to be enrolled, because that does not represent my view of life nor my view of government."

As the crowd erupted in cheers, Acheson breathed a sigh of relief. The Red-baiters in Congress had been staved off. Principles and pragmatism had come to a suitable balance. In order to make sure that the newsreel cameras recorded the scene properly, Acheson had Neely and Frankfurter repeat it a few more times for their benefit.

"Let's see the President before going home," a jubilant Frankfurter suggested afterward. Acheson demurred, but Frankfurter persisted. They were waved past the White House gates and ushered through a back door of the President's office, where Roosevelt greeted Acheson as he would an old friend. Several weeks later, the President called Acheson at home on a Sunday afternoon. "Hello, Judge!" the President proclaimed.

"I'm afraid there's some mistake," he replied. "This is Dean Acheson."

"Not at all," FDR said. "Judge Acheson of the Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia. Your nomination goes to the Senate in the morning."

"But I don't want to be a judge," protested Acheson. "Would you?"

"No," said Roosevelt, "but I'm not going to be one and you are. That's the great difference."

Acheson eventually convinced FDR that he was too young to be sentenced to sedentary confinement on a court bench. "I would rather

new career. "I haven't much hope of passing these exams," he wrote his father, "and when I've found out for sure that I have failed, I won't stay here any longer."

Although the vigor and solitude of a summer job on a cargo ship had temporarily restored Kennan's erratic health, he literally worried himself sick as he studied. "I hope you will not be alarmed at the heading of this letter," he scrawled on the stationery of a Washington hospital. "I am generally run-down." He continued to live frugally, work intensely, and spurn those who (either out of pity or because he could sometimes be charming despite himself) sought to engage him socially. "By refusing four invitations for Christmas dinner," he wrote in another letter, "I did manage to get a little studying done."

Despite his worries, Kennan was among the 16 students out of 110 to pass the written exam, though he barely made the 80 percent cutoff. His best subjects were international law and German; his worst, arithmetic (which he failed to finish) and modern history. At the oral exam, his voice broke into a squeaky falsetto when Under Secretary Joseph Grew asked the first question, yet he managed to pass that too. "I should be fairly satisfied had I not been forced to reveal an inexcusable ignorance about west central Africa, getting Nigeria and the Gold Coast all tangled up," he reported home. His only failure came on the physical. (In addition to his stomach woes, he had his tonsils removed that winter.) After a few days' scurrying around, he managed to persuade government doctors that he was fit.

With his breezy immunity to the anxieties that afflicted Kennan, Chip Bohlen thoroughly enjoyed his time spent preparing for the Foreign Service exams. Crawford—fond of Bourbon, shapely women, and the Democratic Party—was a character after Bohlen's heart. The day after Herbert Hoover carried Virginia in his 1928 election triumph, Bohlen recalled, "Crawford came to class drunk, delivered an impassioned lecture on the 'black shame of the Dominion of Virginia,' then disappeared for a week." As for the Washington social life, a relative of Bohlen's notes that perhaps the single greatest understatement in his autobiography is the

comment that "as a bachelor in a city with many single girls, I enjoyed those charming days."

Although he never had Kennan's analytic depth, Bohlen had a more nimble mind. He found the written tests to be simple, a mere recollection of facts, and scored well above 90 percent. Nor did he get overwrought about the orals; with the help of some bootleg gin, he arrived at the inquisition noticeably relaxed. He muffed a question on the percentage of the U.S. population then living on farms (the correct answer, 25 percent; his answer, 40 percent), but otherwise performed with flawless grace.

One panelist, however, smelled the gin on Bohlen's breath and argued that he should be disqualified for his breach of decorum and of the nation's Prohibition laws. To his rescue came William Castle, the Assistant Secretary who had convinced Bohlen to join the Foreign Service. A member of the examining board, Castle persuaded the others to overlook the indiscretion.

The Foreign Service that Kennan and Bohlen joined was slowly being transformed into a professional outfit. During the nineteenth century, while America indulged in a self-satisfied isolation from the intrigues of Europe, the diplomatic corps was dominated by upper-class easterners who thought it might be nice, after a career in industry and finance, to dally in the royal courts of the Old World. Ministerial appointments were political plums, and junior secretaries tended to be young dilettantes chosen for their family connections and prowess on the polo field. Most red-blooded Americans disparaged them as effete "cookie pushers" and "boys in striped pants."

The pressures for reform came mainly from the same enlightened elite of upper-class progressives who were attempting to root out patronage from the rest of government. At the forefront were men like Joseph Grew (Boston's Back Bay, Groton, Harvard). They advocated a professional and dedicated Foreign Service, one that would represent to the world the best of their nation's heritage, culture, and breeding.

The reforms, however, were not exactly an attempt to democratize the diplomatic corps; Grew, after all, took price in wearing his full regalia,

including gold sword and fore-and-aft hat, when he presented himself to his Russian counterparts while serving in St. Petersburg in 1908. Of the new embassy secretaries recruited between 1914, and 1922, no less than 75 percent were from eastern prep schools, mainly Groton or St. Paul's. "They possessed a common background, common experience, and a common liking for old wines, proper English and Savile Row clothing," wrote Grew's biographer. The Foreign Service became, in the proud words of diplomat Hugh Wilson (of The Hill School and Yale), "a pretty good club."

The Rogers Act of 1924 carried the crusade for a professional Foreign Service one step further, a bit too far in fact for the likes of Grew and his coterie. The law merged the diplomatic and consular corps, provided for moderate salaries, and instituted standard tests for those seeking membership. After the law passed despite his qualms, Grew made sure that selection would depend heavily on an oral examination by elders in the State Department. It was important, he felt, that the new recruits, whatever their background, be the type who would adopt the values of the old club.

They generally did. Loy Henderson, one of the service's most successful products, recalls: "We accepted the baggage that distinguished the most elite of our members, and in fact did so eagerly. We liked the cloth they were cut from, and did not hesitate to tailor ourselves in their image." Many tried to be, in Felix Frankfurter's words, "more Grotty than the men who actually went to Groton in the State Department." Along with careers in international law and finance, service in the diplomatic corps offered young men a chance to become part of the country's foreign policy elite.

Bohlen instinctively knew the value of having the right connections, and he carefully cultivated the patronage of men like William Castle. For Kennan the discovery came slowly, and it intrigued him. Indeed, the social outcast from Princeton found the idea of being part of an exclusive society quite enticing. As his fellow students discussed whom they knew in the State Department, it belatedly dawned on him that college provided

not just an education, but a network of professional and social contacts. When the president of his Princeton class, a celebrated athlete who had never spoken to Kennan as an undergraduate, ran into him on the street and invited him to dinner, Kennan wrote home excitedly: "I'm beginning to appreciate more than ever the value of a Princeton diploma; it's helped me out about ten times just since I've been in Washington."

The candidate in Kennan's class with perhaps the most pull was John M. Cabot, a member of the prominent Boston family and a relative of Grew's. That spring Cabot's mother came down to Washington, rented a big house, and set about putting those connections to work. Just before the oral exams, which Grew was conducting, Mrs. Cabot hosted a dinner in honor of the Under Secretary. To his astonishment, Kennan was one of five students she invited. "I was amazed to be asked, because I had never met her, hadn't called on her or anything," Kennan recalled. He spent sixty-four dollars on a new suit (blue pinstripes, as per a friend's advice) and made an impression as the serious scholar among that year's crop of hopefuls. "I always thought I got in the service because of being invited to the party," he later said.

Upon completing his training, Bohlen was posted to Prague, where he found that the Foreign Service reforms still had a way to go. One member of the mission had suffered a nervous breakdown, locked himself in his hotel room, and lived on raw beef and beer. "When he got word that the consul was coming to take him into custody," Bohlen recalled, "he jumped into a taxicab and headed for Carlsbad, scattering hunks of beef on the way, presumably to divert his pursuers." Bohlen's tasks were often less than lofty. Once, in an attempt to protect the dignity of the American flag, Bohlen sought to persuade a clothing manufacturer to quit displaying it on his products. "But I only use the Stars and Stripes," the businessman replied, "on our top-grade brassieres."

Bohlen lived well in Prague, fully indulging his taste for brandy and the theater. But he also impressed his superiors with his diligent interest in