

Visualizing Dynamic American Foreign Policy with News Maps in the early Cold War Period

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During the early Cold War period (1945-1955), as with most other American war periods, news journal maps played a crucial role in educating the nation's masses about the dangers to national security by popularizing specific geopolitical views through clever manipulation of news cartography. National news cartographers, then as now, manipulated map projections, icons, coloring, text labeling and other cartographic variables to construct very specific political world views which were sold to the American consumer and helped shape national public opinion. In the first five years of the Cold War, from 1945 to 1950, news journal maps were charged with symbolizing a dynamic American world view that quickly changed from WWII era notions of international Allied cooperation, to short-lived isolationism by 1946, followed by fervent anticommunism and international bipolarity by the end of the decade. This essay will discuss the methods and maps early Cold War era American news journal cartographers used to portray the complex and changing international political world of the early Cold War period while fostering nationalism through the symbolism of geopolitical enemies and allies.

Although *Newsweek* was heavily aligned with the Democratic Party while *Time* had a stalwart Republican bias, both journals presented the same general themes in their news maps during the early stages of the Cold War. Both national journals played to the few political issues that crossed party lines from the end of WWII to the Korean War. These cross-party issues included but were not limited to a short-lived post WWII isolationism that was evident when the 1946 "Three Worlds" map was published, and to the more permanent anticommunism and interventionism that characterized the "Two Worlds" map from 1950.

Weekly news journal maps, rather than maps appearing in daily national newspapers, were selected for review. Weekly news journals regularly have more detailed and colorful maps because the cartographers employed by these journals have much more time to design, draw and paint their maps than do mapmakers from daily papers. As a

result, weekly news journal maps tend to display more artistic license, which usually correlates to a more heightened political bias in the cartographic imagery. Therefore these maps display a more versatile palate, both literally and figuratively, by which cartographic themes can be recognized and dissected. However, several maps from other sources will be used for comparison.

News journal maps have arguably been the most widely read maps in American history since WWII.¹ Indeed a renaissance in American journalistic cartography began in the early 1940s from a combination of a greater public need for news maps to follow the war, and the hiring of innovative news cartographers who were inspired by the new Air Age.² Although national news journal maps were, and still are, one of the most popular and powerful media for portraying Cold War geopolitics, their usage and content have largely gone unnoticed in Cold War historical scholarship. Even cartographic historians have traditionally overlooked news maps while focusing on “visually complex data maps, aesthetically impressive atlases, and thematic maps.”³

From Postwar Isolationism to Cold War Interventionism: a Study in Changing World Views

American foreign policy by 1946 was a curious combination of strident internationalism, embodied by the U.S.-led creation of the United Nations, and growing isolationism evident in the nation’s rapid cancellation of the Lend-Lease program and a general deterioration in Allied cooperation. As national news journals dedicated text to describing postwar rebuilding in Europe and Asia, news maps sought to illustrate these events in symbolism that played to popular opinion. One of the most common features of news journal maps from this period was their use of a flat projection, or Mercator’s projection, to visualize the political world.

A map projection is the method of transferring the characteristics of a globe onto a flat surface. There are numerous and various types of projections, and cartographers

¹ Gilmartin, Patricia. “The Design of Journalistic Maps/Purposes, Parameters and Prospects” in *Cartographica* vol. 22, no. 4 (1985): 1.

² Ristow, Walter W. “Journalistic Cartography” in *Surveying and Mapping* vol. 17, no. 4 (Oct. 1957): 369, 376-7.

³ Monmonier, Mark. Maps with the News: the Development of American Journalistic Cartography (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1989) pp 18.

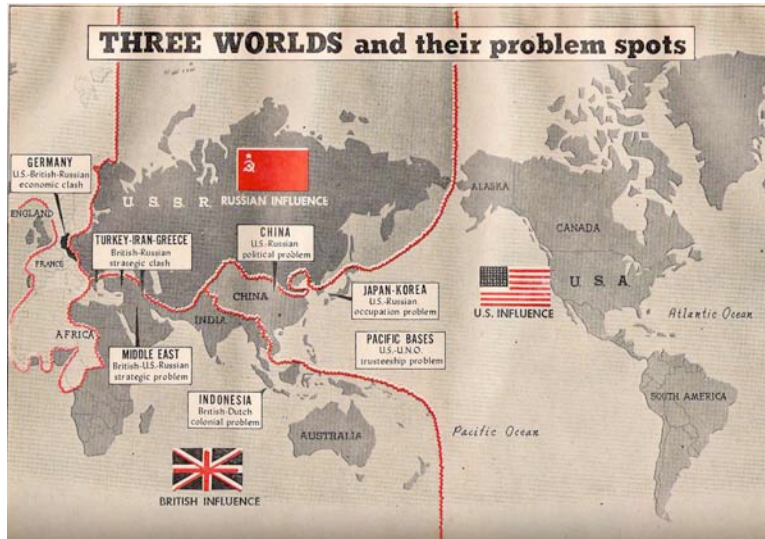
select which one they want based on the perceived needs of the map reader.⁴ Mercator projection maps, named after Gerardus Mercator who invented them in late sixteenth-century Europe, became popular because their flat layout allowed maritime navigators and explorers to follow visibly straight lines, called rhumb lines, while traversing the round globe. However, all map projections are subject to distortions. Mercator maps were made to be most accurate near the equator, where most maritime traffic could benefit from them, while landforms and rhumb lines were severely and progressively distorted—exaggerated—toward the North and South Poles.⁵

Mercator maps received high circulation in American news journals in the immediate post-WWII period for three reasons. First, Mercator maps were what the U.S. government most often used to visualize international geopolitics since well before WWII.⁶ Virtually all of the display maps used at U.S. military and government press conferences during WWII utilized the Mercator projection, for example. The exaggerated size of landforms and oceans offered a clear backdrop to overlay strategic lines and zones of danger. Second, in the few years after 1945 and before Cold War rhetoric began favoring other projections, Mercator maps best represented the American popular sentiment that postwar international events were foreign, not local, problems since all foreign places outside the Western Hemisphere appeared very far away. And third, Mercator projections were excellent for displaying geopolitical spheres of influence because the far flung landmasses offered ample space for the delineation of the spheres. All these benefits of the Mercator projection can be seen in the “Three Worlds” map from early February 1946. (fig.1)

⁴ In 1950, Bartholomew’s Advanced Atlas of Modern Geography listed no less than twenty-one different projections in popular usage.

⁵ Wilford, John Noble. The Mapmakers: the Story of the Great Pioneers in Cartography—from Antiquity to the Space Age (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000) pp 90-2.

⁶ Brzezinski, Zbigniew. Game Plan: a Geostrategic Framework for the Conduct of the U.S.-Soviet Contest (Boston and New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1986) pp 4-7.



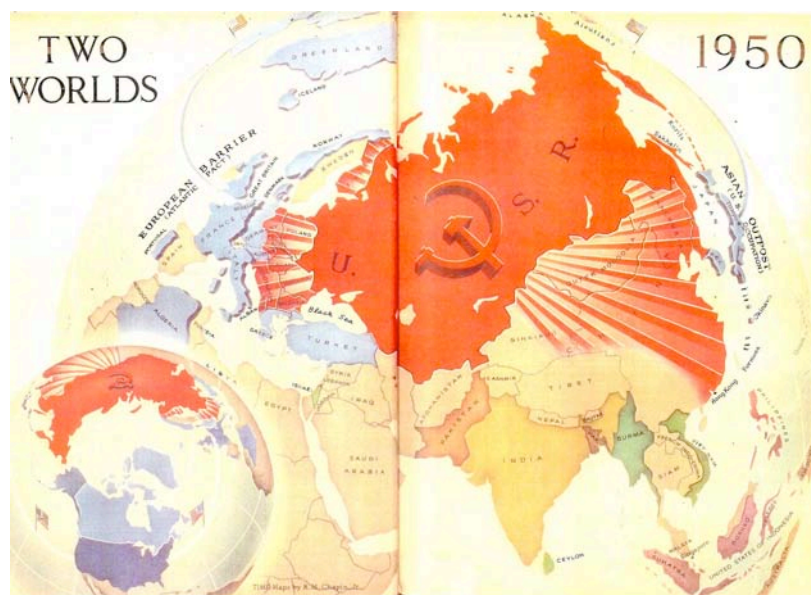
(Fig. 1)

This map's Mercator projection gave the impression that the wide oceans were barriers to whatever international crises were being reported. This was a comforting notion for war-weary Americans in early 1946. Not only was the Western Hemisphere seen to be safely across the Pacific, it was placed opposite the entity of Eurasia—a conception that harkened back to the Monroe Doctrine of early nineteenth century American foreign policy. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of American-made Mercator maps in the twentieth century placed the Western Hemisphere, and specifically the United States, at the center of the map, not close to any edge.⁷ These maps usually divided the Eurasian continent into two halves that were placed opposite each other at the edges of the map—a global view that centered the U.S. on a Western Hemispherical island flanked by two far-flung regions. But the “Three Worlds” map placed the West at the edge which reinforced the idea of a separate and peaceful American sphere of influence.

A striking contrast exists between the Western geographic isolationism visualized by the “Three Worlds” map and that of the “Two Worlds” map issued five years later (fig. 2). By 1950, American foreign policy was firmly committed to global interventionism as the Containment plan for thwarting Communist expansion in Eurasia reached a fever pitch. The “Two Worlds” map utilized another ancient projection, called the polar projection, to send a very different message about the place of the U.S. in the international world than that the isolationism relayed by Mercator projec-

⁷ Brzezinski, pp 5.

tions. Polar projection maps date as far back as the early sixteenth century but their usage was largely overshadowed by the heavy reliance of colonial Europe on the Mercator projection. These maps focus on either the North or South Pole and all lower latitudinal areas are arranged in radial symmetry from the pole outward. Unlike the higher latitude exaggerations inherent in Mercator projections, polar projection maps are most accurate near the poles, while lower latitudinal areas and distances are progressively shrunken away and distorted toward the equator.



(Fig. 2)

The “Two Worlds” map was chosen because it is typical of many of the anticommunist maps that appeared in all national news journals by 1950. These maps used a north polar projection because seeing the northern latitudes from this perspective emphasized the dangerous closeness of the Soviet Union and the United States over the Arctic Circle—an effect not achieved by Mercator maps.⁸ This alarmist map perspective helped rally the American people to support expensive international anticommunism programs such as the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Although the “Two Worlds” main map focused on the ominously expansive Soviet Union, and hence kept the U.S. out of clear view, the two American flags on the horizon marked the nation’s presence. To further the point, the smaller map in the lower left corner featured a north polar projection with the U.S. at the center and the entire U.S.S.R. dangerously visible.

⁸ The revival of polar projection maps in American popular culture can largely be traced to *Fortune* magazine cartographer Richard Edes Harrison who gained influence by WWII. See Susan Schulten’s article “Richard Edes Harrison and the Challenge to American Cartography” in *Imago Mundi*, vol. 50 (1998): 174-88.

Polar projection maps can focus on either the North or South Pole, but since most of the earth's landmasses reside north of the equator, north polar projection maps have been far more popular in cartographic history than their southern oriented counterparts. North polar projection maps have usually been used to foster a sense of geographical connectivity between all the world's landmasses—as noted previously, the reverse effect of a Mercator projection—mainly by displaying all the major continents in a tight ring around the North Pole. It is no coincidence that the United Nations, itself the embodiment of international cooperation, uses a north polar projection map as the dominant feature of its logo.

During WWII and into the first few years of the Cold War, north polar projections were used to symbolize the unity of the Allied effort in defeating fascism and rebuilding postwar Europe. But by the late 1940s these types of maps were most often used to portray the perceived threat of Soviet expansion into Eastern Europe and the Far East. As mentioned previously, the 1950 “Two Worlds” map was a good example of this. A similar, albeit purposefully less colorful, north polar projection map appeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* in late September 1952 (fig. 3).⁹ The map displayed gray oceans and white continents as a background to the ominous dark red coloring used for the Soviet Union, which was flanked by pink colored China and Eastern Europe. The map's polar projection emphasized the closeness of the Communist threat to the U.S.—a point underscored by the attention grabbing red hues of the dangerous areas. More to the point, the map showed no less than twelve icons of Soviet bombers that represented the two thousand mile strike range of Soviet air forces pointing outward from distant Asian and Eastern European points.

⁹ See map entitled “Stalin's Secret War Plans” in *Saturday Evening Post*, vol. 225, no. 12 (Sept. 20, 1952): 37.



Fig. 3

The Cold War era saw not only the continued proliferation of Mercator and polar projections, it was also a period of significant experimentation with other types of map projections—experimentations fostered by Cold War rhetoric. In 1963 a University of Wisconsin cartographer named Arthur Robinson created the Robinson projection which lessened the exaggeration of lands in the higher latitudes inherent in Mercator and Van der Grinten projections. Van der Grinten projection maps were the preferred maps of the National Geographic Society since the turn of the century but they magnified the relative size of the Soviet Union by over two hundred and twenty percent. Robinson projections reduced this to about eighteen percent no doubt in an effort to “cut the country’s Cold War adversary down to size.”¹⁰ The National Geographic Society eventually adopted the Robinson projection for most of its world maps by 1988. In 1973 Arno Peters, working from Germany, developed the Peters projection in response to “correct the Euro-centered bias of most projections.” The Peters projection was most accurate near the equator where he argued that Third World nations had historically misrepresented. His projection was eventually adopted by the United Nations and the World Council of Churches.¹¹

Although north polar projection maps gained tremendous popularity during the Cold War they never really eclipsed the use of Mercator maps. Both projection types were used regularly throughout the era because each type was valued for the distortions it created. Mercator maps were most often used to illustrate the geostrategic importance

¹⁰ Wilford, pp 101.

¹¹ Ibid, pp 101-2.

of the many international anticommunist defense treaties. After all, on Mercator maps Western European NATO members formed a strikingly visible geopolitical barrier to Communist expansion especially when they were uniformly colored. Mercator maps with the Western Hemisphere positioned on the left and Eurasia on the right (the opposite of the “Three Worlds” map) gave the false impression that Soviet Communism had to expand westward to reach the U.S.—a move blocked completely by European NATO nations. The exaggerated size of the Soviet Union on these maps was often offset by placing map graphics over the large Communist empire.¹²

As noted above, Mercator maps were useful for displaying the layout of the geopolitical spheres of influence that dominated American foreign policy immediately after WWII. The spheres of influence idea, also called the “spheres” ideology, was not new in this period, though. The aforementioned Monroe Doctrine recognized the Western Hemisphere as the domain of the U.S.—a sphere distinguished from its European counterpart, and both were to be policed accordingly. Similarly, the Nazi regime endorsed the “spheres” world view in maps that appeared in many WWII era German propaganda journals. In April 1941, for example, the German (English language) journal *Facts In Review* published a black and white Mercator map that divided the world into four spheres—the Western Hemisphere was the domain of the U.S., Europe and Africa constituted the European sphere, most of Asia was seen as the realm of the Russians while Japan’s area was most ambitious and included all of Southeast Asia, Malaysia, Australia and the Pacific Islands (fig. 4).¹³ This map was accompanied by an editorial defending Germany’s right to create its own sphere in Europe given that all the world’s major powers had long since developed their respective hegemonic domains.

¹² Danzer, Gerald A. *Discovering American History Through Maps and Views* (New York: Harper-Collins, Inc., 1991) pp S87. The page number “S87” refers to the map section “Source Maps,” set 87.

¹³ See *Facts in Review* vol. 3, no. 13 (April 10, 1941): 182.

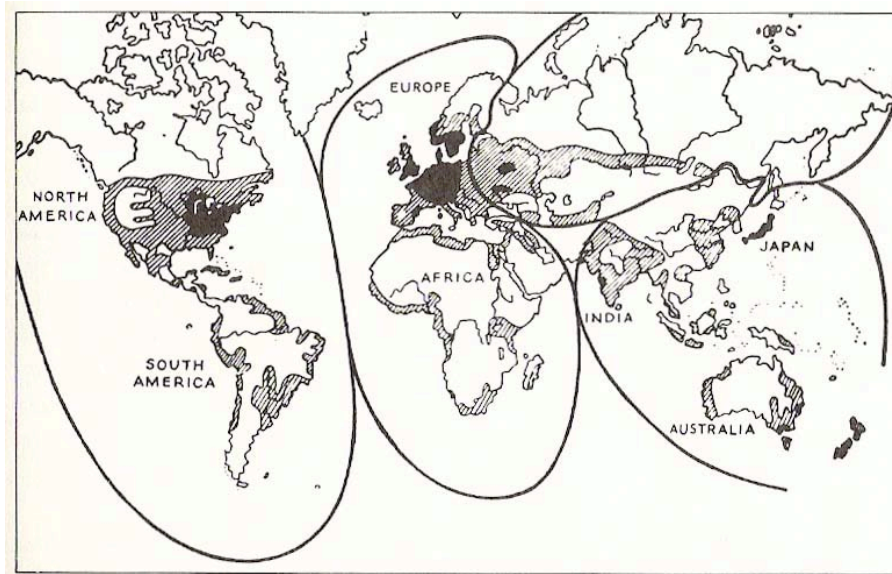


Fig. 4

The idea that geopolitical spheres could be used to maintain post-WWII peace enjoyed high popularity among all the Allies toward the end of the war. But from the American point of view, the “spheres” ideology was only viable as long as all the Allies, specifically the Soviets, maintained open lines of communication and did not interfere in matters outside their respective domains. Also, the weaker countries in the various Allied spheres were supposed to enjoy self determination through free and open democratic processes.¹⁴ However, the Stalinization of Eastern Europe, which gained widespread media attention by 1946, deflated American optimism that the Soviets could be trusted. As a result, as WWII ended and U.S.-Soviet relations deteriorated, the “spheres” idea began to give way to a new geopolitical world view that was not polycentric but bipolar—Communist nations versus capitalist nations. American news journal maps catalogued this process with Mercator and polar projection maps. In July 1944 a Mercator map inspired by famed political analyst Walter Lippmann appeared in *Newsweek* that divided the world into four political spheres (fig. 5).¹⁵ But unlike the imperialistic criteria of the spheres in the 1941 Nazi map, Lippmann’s map divided the world by religion. The most powerful sphere, labeled the “Atlantic Community,” included all the Americas, Greenland, most of Europe, Africa, Australia,

¹⁴ In reality the execution of these spheres involved a vague blending of these philosophical ideas coupled with more immediate materialistic Allied concerns over war reparations, national buffer zones and limited trade agreements. See Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.’s article “Origins of the Cold War: the Russian Revolution—Fifty Years After” in *Foreign Affairs* vol. 45, no. 6 (Oct. 1967): 22-56.

¹⁵ See review of Lippmann’s book *U.S. War Aims* in *Newsweek* vol. 24, no. 2 (July 10, 1944): 96.

New Guinea and the Philippines—areas generally under the control of Western Christian nations. The “Russian Orbit” consisted of Eastern Europe (except Germany) and all of Russia—areas of Soviet atheistic dominion. The “Chinese Orbit” included China and Indochina while the “Potential Hindu-Muslim Orbit” stretched from Iran and Saudi Arabia to India.

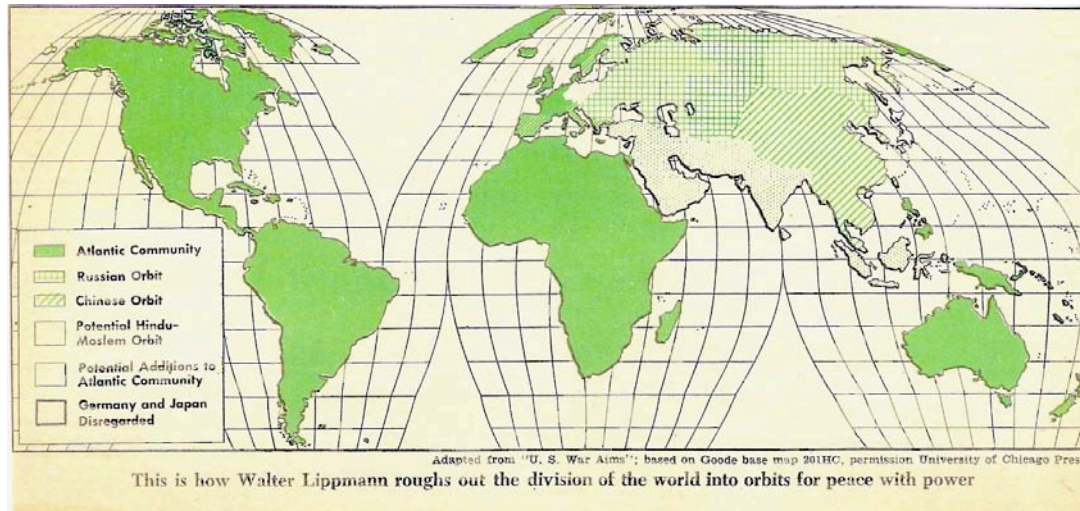


Fig. 5

Two years later, *Newsweek*'s “Three Worlds” map proved that the world's spheres were moving toward polarization in the American mind due to conflicts mainly between the Russians, British and the U.S.—the three superpowers which dominated the shaping of the postwar world. But both the Lippmann map and the “Three Worlds” map made use of the wide expanses offered by Mercator projections and placed the Western Hemisphere safely across a wide ocean expanse; the Lippmann map used the Atlantic Ocean for this while the “Three Worlds” map used the Pacific. By the time *Time*'s “Two Worlds” map came out in 1950 all notions of Allied cooperation, and ideas of political spheres based on religion or national interests, were gone. The clarion call for American anticommunist intervention made by this polar projection map would not have been nearly as convincing on the Mercator projections used by the two 1940s era maps.

As the number of geopolitical spheres decreased on maps so did the number of flags that represented national domains. The 1946 “Three Worlds” map displayed the flags of the three world superpowers—the U.S., England and the Soviet Union—not only to mark their respective domains, but also to set the superpowers apart from the weaker nations. The three large colorful flags and their accompanying bold text labels drew

attention toward the superpowers and away from the other ten political entities labeled with only text—entities with their own flags that were not shown. The 1950 “Two Worlds” map displayed four flags (two on each map) to represent the U.S. and placed them in the Western Hemisphere, as did the “Three Worlds” map with its single U.S. flag. Gone with the British sphere was any sign of a British flag as the island nation was, by then, valued more for its participation in the “European Barrier.” Instead of using a Soviet flag the map used the familiar hammer and sickle icons to represent the Soviet Union, but this was a common feature of anticommunist maps by 1950.

As the Cold War heated up American news journal maps began representing the Soviet Union with many icons, including flags, but the maps almost never used the appropriate national flag of the U.S.S.R. As mentioned above, the “Three Worlds” map used the appropriate Soviet flag but the “Two Worlds” map instead used an icon—an aggressive red hammer and sickle. The absence of a Soviet flag de-legitimized the perceived Communist expansionist threat by robbing it of any connotations of nationalism. Similarly, the presence of the distant and threatened U.S. flags in the background fostered the idea that American nationalism depended on the “European Barrier” and the “Asian Outpost.”

Time magazine’s influential Chief Cartographer in the 1940s and 1950s, Robert M. Chapin, Jr., presided over the creation of dozens anticommunist maps that cleverly used flags for political rhetoric.¹⁶ His most common technique was to symbolize any Communist force—whether it was Soviet, Chinese, North Korean, etc—with a nondescript red flag with a centered white star. This had the effect of symbolically linking all Communist forces all over Europe and Asia in the American mind and made Communism seem like a unified international conspiracy. Chapin began deviating from using the proper Soviet flag on maps around 1946 when maps were needed to portray the aggressive Stalinization of Eastern Europe. For example, in October 1946 a Chapin map comparing U.S., British and Soviet troops in Eastern Europe used a large red star to symbolize the U.S.S.R. while the proper flags were used for the Western powers (fig. 6).¹⁷

¹⁶ Cartographic historian Walter W. Ristow described Chapin’s work at *Time* as “one of the major pillars of American journalistic cartography” in “Journalistic Cartography” in *Surveying and Mapping*, vol. 17, no. 4 (Oct. 1957): 384.

¹⁷ See Chapin’s map entitled “Marking Time” in *Time*, vol. 48, no. 16 (Oct. 14, 1946): 31.

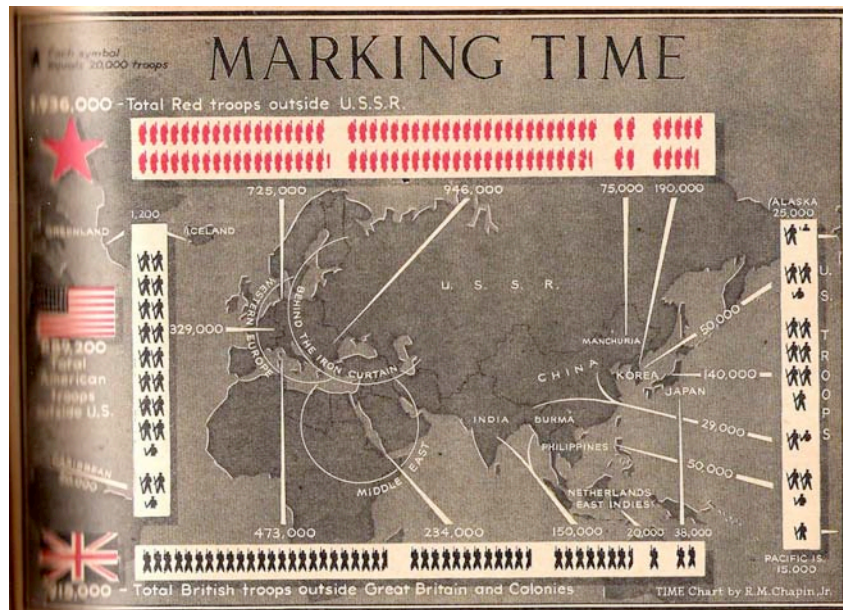


Fig. 6

But Chapin’s selective use of flags is best seen in his portrayal of the unfolding Chinese civil war that culminated in Communist victory by 1949. In September 1946, when the Chinese Communist rebels were still held firmly at bay by the U.S.-backed Chinese Nationalist forces under Chiang Kai-Shek, Chapin produced many maps to illustrate the struggle. Virtually all of these maps symbolized the Chinese Communist forces with the same generic flag he used for Soviet forces, while the Chinese Nationalist forces were always denoted with the appropriate flag (fig. 7).¹⁸ It is interesting to note that on many of Chapin’s maps depicting the struggle against Communism in the Far East, especially when portraying struggles in Korea and China, a U.S. flag was often used to symbolize anticommunist forces until 1949 (fig. 8).¹⁹ But by 1949, when it became obvious that the anticommunist movement in those places was not winning the struggle, Chapin frequently omitted U.S. flags or used only Chinese Nationalist flags to symbolize anticommunist forces (fig. 8).²⁰ Chapin’s purposeful use of generic Communist flag symbols is more suspect when one considers that *Time* magazine did display the correct Communist Chinese flag in editorial commentary by 1949 (fig. 9).²¹

¹⁸ See maps: “Two-Way Gate” in *Time*, vol. 48, no. 10 (Sept. 2, 1946): 26, “Communist Crisis” in *Time* vol. 48, no. 14 (Sept. 30, 1946): 38, and “Two Down, One To Go” in *Time*, vol. 48, no. 20 (Nov. 11, 1946): 37.

¹⁹ See Chapin’s map entitled “Lost Horizon” in *Time*, vol. 52, no. 23 (Dec. 6, 1948): 28.

²⁰ See Chapin’s map entitled “Red Sweep” in *Time*, vol. 54, no. 9 (Sept. 2, 1949): 20.

²¹ See the “International” section of *Time*, vol. 54, no. 15 (Oct. 10, 1949): 28.

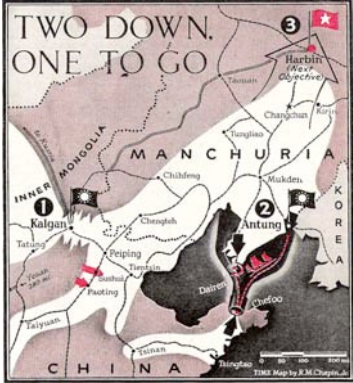
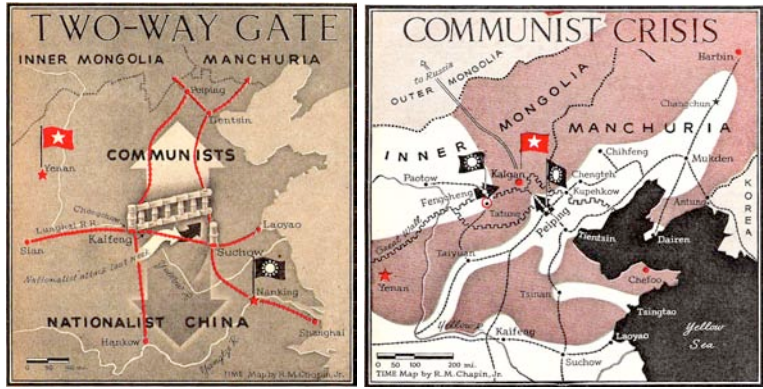


Fig. 7

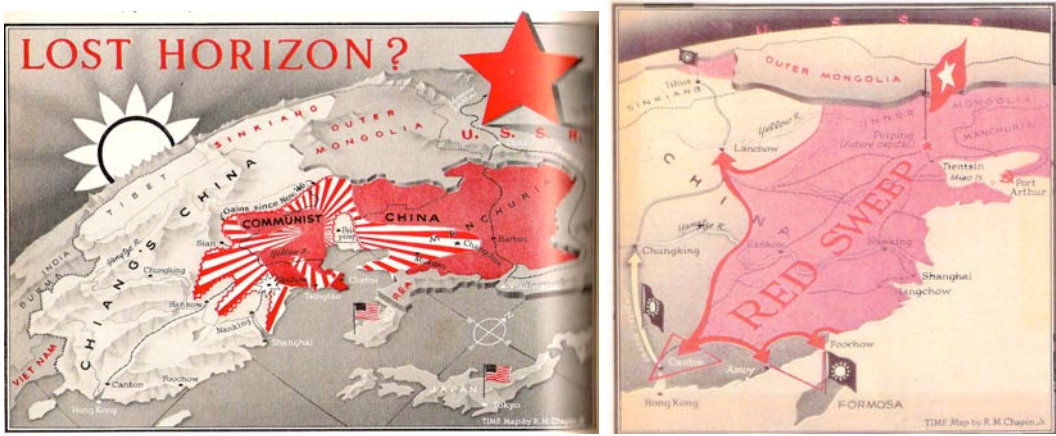


Fig. 8



CHINESE COMMUNIST FLAG

Fig. 9

Although the use of proper or improper flags on news journal maps may seem merely an academic debate, the power these cartographic icons have to rally nationalistic sentiment, and international reactions, is surprisingly great. Consider a map that appeared on the front cover of *Collier's*, a weekly American journal, in October 1951 (fig. 10).²² The issue centered on several fictional stories depicting World War III, or as the cover title read, “Preview of the War We Do Not Want.” The premise for most of the issue’s articles, and for the map on the cover, was that if WWII did happen it would result from United Nations troops advancing on the Soviet Union and occupying Moscow. The front cover featured a U.S. infantryman in a United Nations (U.N.) uniform with a gun in hand before a large Mercator map of Eastern Europe and Asia Minor. On the map all of Eastern Europe was labeled “OCCUPIED” and two U.N. flags—one in Eastern Europe and the other in Moscow—marked the conquered Soviet territory. Below the Moscow U.N. flag was the text “OCCUPATION HEAD-QUARTERS.”



Fig. 10

Although the map was wholly provocative in this time of the Korean War, as were the stories in the issue, it was the U.N. flags on the cover’s map that caused an international stir. In this case the “War We Do Not Want” was portrayed as being a U.S.-backed effort, symbolized by the U.N. soldier with a U.N. and a U.S. flag on his helmet, but the tragedy of the war was heaped on the U.N. and its occupying forces and

²² See the front cover of *Collier's*, vol. 128, no. 17 (Oct. 27, 1951).

flags—not on the U.S.²³ This is another example of non-U.S. flags being used to depict unsuccessful anticommunist forces. When U.N. delegates saw the map, and specifically the flag placement, it immediately caused “some rumblings of discontent.”²⁴ The controversy deepened when the *Collier's* issue hit the stands near the Chailiot Palace in Paris—the site of the 1951 U.N. Assembly meeting. The French journal *L'Observateur* fired back with a cover image of a Soviet soldier posing in front of a large map of an occupied United States; the caption read “A Psychoanalysis of *Collier's*—23 Americans Dream Out Loud.” Other nations chimed in to condemn the *Collier's* map including Canada, Germany, Mexico and England.²⁵

Flags were often the most colorful features on the otherwise grayscale news maps from the WWII and early Cold War periods. In the 1946 “Three Worlds” map, for example, there was no need to distinguish the three major geopolitical spheres with different colors because the Allies were still cooperating relatively well. Similarly the 1944 Lippmann map used only one color—light green—to illustrate the four spheres of influence; the spheres were differentiated by contrasting hatch mark patterns. But as the spheres ideology gave way to Cold War polarization by the late 1940s American news journal maps began using wider color palates to symbolize areas of geopolitical friends and foes. Compare the drab appearance of the “Three Worlds” map with the vibrantly colorful 1950 “Two Worlds” map. The most striking aspect of the “Two Worlds” map is the ominously red Soviet Union and its surrounding areas of influence—made more noticeable by the cool blue colored U.S., “European Barrier” and the “Asian Outpost.” Even the many Third World nations were differentiated with hues of brown and green to indicate areas of Western influence or interest. The “Two Worlds” map was exceptionally colorful, however, as it was part of a special collection of *Time* maps issued to visualize several stages of European political history.

Most Cold War era maps relied solely on the use of red hues to portray dangerous areas of Communist influence as this color tends to connote negative emotions in the Western mind. When these red areas were contrasted against a grayscale or pale background of non-Communist areas they tended to draw the map reader's attention

²³ According to the *Collier's* article on WWII the U.N. forces were only successful in occupying Moscow after three major U.S. cities had been razed by a Soviet nuclear attack.

²⁴ Aronson, James. *The Press and the Cold War* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Press, 1970) pp 111.

²⁵ *Ibid*, pp 112. The “23 Americans” referred to the number of prominent authors and journalists who contributed to the controversial *Collier's* issue.

to the areas of Communism and, hence, focus the reader's attention on the anticommunist theme. Such was the case with a large feature map that appeared in the *New York Daily News* in early November 1947 (fig. 11).²⁶ The north polar projection map focused on the Soviet Union, which was colored vibrant red, while areas of perceived Soviet influence (Eastern Europe and northern China) were colored light pink. Western Europe, North Africa and the Far East were, by contrast, all colored light tan. The message of the map—that the Soviet Union was dangerously expansive—was made with these colors as well as with the map title “Red Russia—1917-1947.” Coloring the noncommunist areas uniformly gave the false impression that these nations were allied against the red menace.



Fig. 11

Smaller maps that accompanied news articles were often just as colorful as the larger feature maps discussed above. These smaller maps usually portrayed more local or regional international areas and they often used several hues of gray to differentiate Communist and Western zones of influence while the Soviet Union was almost always colored red. In a map of Europe that appeared in *Newsweek* in February 1946 the Soviet Union was colored deep red with a white hammer and sickle to underscore the presence of the enemy.²⁷ Eastern Europe, which was labeled “Soviet Security Zone” in similar red lettering, was colored light gray with a red border between it and Western Europe. All noncommunist areas were colored dark gray. A *Time* map from November 1948 used similar coloring techniques in a map depicting Soviet expansion

²⁶ Barson, Michael and Steven Heller. *Red Scared: the Commie Menace in Propaganda and Popular Culture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001) pp 60-1.

²⁷ See map entitled “Pressure on the Line” in *Newsweek*, vol. 27, no. 14 (Feb. 8, 1946): 39.

into Eastern Europe (fig 12).²⁸ The map, entitled “Piece by Piece,” colored the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe bright red with large Russian sickles piercing Czechoslovakia and Finland. The Soviet takeover of the Czechoslovak government in 1948 explains the sickle there, but the similar portrayal of Finland is dubious since that nation was never formally aligned with the Soviet bloc. Germany, Austria and Italy were colored white and labeled areas of “Disunion” while Great Britain, France and the Benelux nations were dark gray.

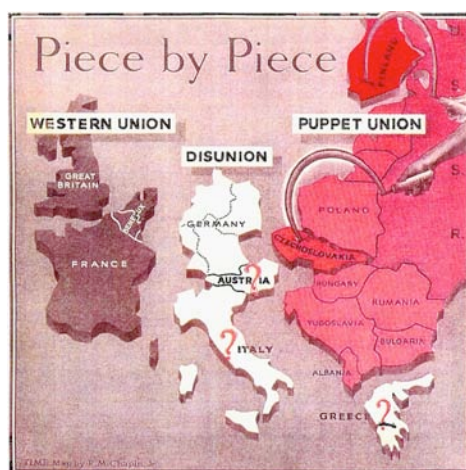


Fig. 12

One of the most interesting ways that Cold War era news journal maps vilified the Soviet Union was by equating its large size on maps to great political power, and hence, as a great geopolitical threat. But this practice only became popular by the late 1940s when the U.S. saw the Soviets as an implacable enemy. Earlier post WWII era maps, like the 1946 “Three Worlds” map, used Mercator projections which exaggerated both the Soviet Union and the United States as both nations are located in higher latitudes (fig. 1). As noted previously, as long as these maps used uniform coloring for all continents, the Soviet Union, although large in appearance, was seen to be safely across the wide oceans afforded by the Mercator projection. The 1950 “Two Worlds” map, by contrast, maximized the sprawling red appearance of the U.S.S.R. by centering it on a polar projection which negated the large oceanic expanses of the Mercator maps and made the Communists appear to be wrapping around the Arctic Circle toward the U.S (fig. 2).

The practice of equating cartographic area to political power was not new in the Cold War, however. The aforementioned WWII era Nazi journal, *Facts In Review*, often

²⁸ See map entitled “Piece By Piece” in *Time*, vol. 52, no.21 (Nov. 22, 1948): 29.

used this technique to validate German expansion in Europe. In early February 1940 the journal published two maps entitled “A Study In Empires” which compared the German state with the vast British empire (fig. 13).²⁹ The map of Germany was subtitled “The Aggressor Nation?” while the Great Britain map was labeled “26 % of the World (The British Empire).” Nor did this practice end in the early Cold War. In 1973 the Jewish National Fund of Canada published a map entitled “Visual proof of the Arab lie about Israeli ‘aggression.’”(fig. 13)³⁰ The map focused on North Africa and the Middle East and displayed tiny, white-colored Israel surrounded by the very large, black-colored Saudi Arabia and North African nations. But for American news cartographers trying to rally American anticommunism by the late 1940s the Soviet Union offered a more intimidating cartographic comparison in the early Cold War era not just by maximizing the effects of polar projection distortions but also by directly comparing the large Communist nation with selected areas of the U.S.

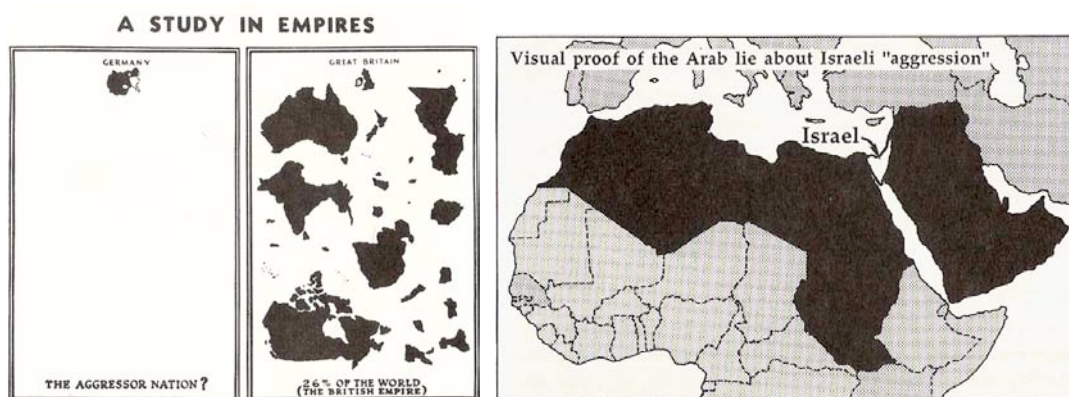


Fig. 13

For example, the aforementioned “Red Russia—1917-1947” map from the *New York Daily News* (fig. 11) included a map inset of “New York State in Comparison with Russia.” New York in 1947 was the most populous state in the U.S. with about fourteen million people but the state itself is relatively small compared to larger western states like California and Texas. This skewed comparison made the Soviet Union seem all the more ominous by cartographic comparison. However, a map from *Look* magazine in October of the same year used a reverse technique of cartographic area comparison to make a similar point. The map, entitled “The Truth About Russia’s 12,000,000 Slave Laborers,” consisted of two maps (fig. 14). The main map was of

²⁹ See *Facts In Review*, vol. 2, no. 5 (Feb. 5, 1940): 33.

³⁰ Monmonier, Mark. *How to Lie with Maps* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1991) pp 95.

Russia and displayed several icons of slave miners working in various places throughout the vast Soviet landmass. The inset map was of the U.S. with the caption “The number of slaves in Russia is equal to the population of these 14 Western states.” The states darkened for comparison were Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, North and South Dakota, Wyoming, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, Nebraska, Kansas, Arizona and New Mexico—all geographically large states with relatively low population densities and large square mileages. These large, sparsely populated states did have a combined population of about twelve million people but their combined cartographic size occupied about half of the U.S. This gave the false impression that the number of Russian slaves equaled the population of about half the U.S. Ironically, these states total population was less than that of New York—a state unsuitable for this comparison given its small size.

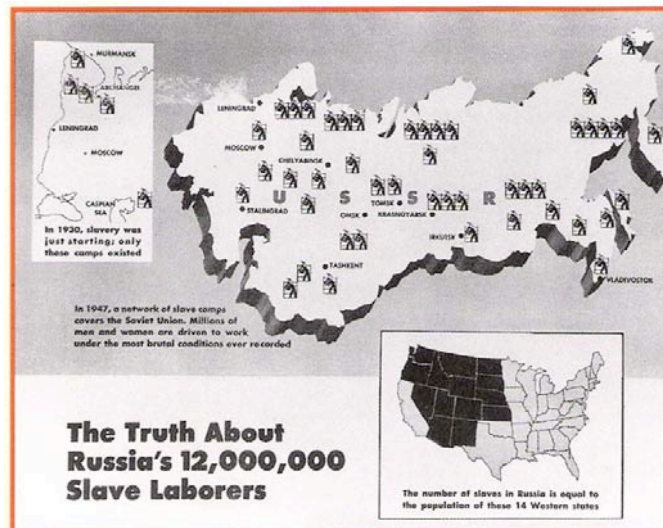


Fig. 14

A Case Study: *Time*'s Cartographic Portrayal of Post WWII Germany

In December 1949 *Time* magazine published a map depicting the division of Germany which had been formalized earlier that year (fig. 15).³¹ This map displayed almost all the cartographic anticommunism techniques prevalent by the late 1940s and such it bears special attention. Designed by Robert Chapin, Jr., this map was unusually rich in cartographic icons, text labeling and political rhetoric even for *Time* magazine—a

³¹ See Chapin's "West's Germany" map in *Time*, vol. 54, no. 23 (Dec. 5, 1949): 30.

journal known for its extensive use of artistic news maps. Virtually every aspect of this detailed, hand painted map makes it a case study of cartographic anticommunism in action.



Fig. 15

The map was ostensibly designed to help describe the state of affairs in West Germany after the 1949 German constitution (*Grundgesetz*) formally divided the nation into the capitalist Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the Communist German Democratic Republic (GDR). The title of the map was not “West Germany” but “West’s Germany”—a subtle wordplay implying that the FRG belonged to Western Europe. The GDR was not labeled as such, nor was it labeled “East Germany.” Rather, it was labeled “Russia’s Germany”—a not so subtle reminder of its dangerous Communist overlords. Chapin frequently used these labels for the two Germanies throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s.³² The coloring used in the map underscored the same points as the text labels. The FRG was painted pale tan while the GDR appeared ominously deep red.

³² Chapin used both labels on his June 1950 map entitled “Border Shift” in *Time*, vol. 55, no. 25 (Jun. 21, 1950): 30. He used the “Russia’s Germany” label on his “Front Line Fields” map in *Time*, vol. 55, no. 19 (May 8, 1950): 22.

Each half of Germany was represented by flags, too, but these flags were suspect. The FRG had a larger flag than its Communist counterpart which seemed to de-legitimize the latter. The flags were symbolically flying in opposite directions—the FRG flag flew toward the West while the GDR flag flew eastward toward the Soviet Union. The FRG flag was correct as it showed the familiar three horizontal colored bars. The GDR flag, though, was the generic red flag with a white centered star that Chapin used for all Communist powers. It is interesting to note that the proper GDR flag looked exactly like the FRG flag except it had a large golden seal in the center. To use the proper GDR flag would have made the GDR too similar to the FRG.

The map's catalog of FRG cities reveals subtle propaganda and downright purposeful lies on the part of the mapmaker. Of the twenty-eight West German cities listed, virtually all of them had cultural labels or were located next to meaningful symbols of German industry and culture. But only three cities on the East German side were shown—Berlin, Magdeburg and Weimar—and none were associated with any cultural icons. Many FRG cities had labels of famous people who were born there such as Trier, which was subtitled “Karl Marx born here.” Similarly Brahms was noted at Hamburg, Goethe at Frankfurt and Holbein (the elder) at Augsburg. This would lead the map reader to conclude that the other FRG cities denoted with famous German names indicated their birthplace, but this was misleading. Worms was affixed with the label “Martin Luther” but he was actually born in Eisleben—a city located firmly in the GDR but not shown on the map. Wagner's name appeared next to the FRG city of Bayreuth, no doubt due to the annual festival in his honor held there. But like Luther, Wagner's birthplace (Leipzig) was located deep within Communist territory and hence was ignored. These were obvious measures to elevate “West's Germany's” culture while ignoring all claims of German culture in “Russia's Germany.”

The map's inclusion and labeling of cities also showed a strong attempt to remind Americans of Germany's recent Nazi past. On the FRG side many small cities with Nazi affiliations were shown while larger cities were omitted. Hitler's vacation spot at Berchtesgaden, with a 1955 population of only 38,000 people, was indicated with an ominous Nazi swastika. But the much larger city of Heilbronn (population 145,500) was not shown.³³ Similarly, Dachau (pop. 61,200) was shown as a reminder

³³ West German city populations taken from Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Stuttgart and Köln: W. Kohlhammer, 1955). East German city populations taken from Statistisches Jahrbuch für die Deutsche Reich (Berlin: von Reimar Hobbing, 1929).

of Nazi interment camps while Ulm (pop. 76,100) was left out. Nürnberg was labeled as “Nazi Party HQ” when, in fact, Nazi party headquarters was always located in Berlin. These reminders of Nazism in “West’s Germany” corresponded to several mentions in the accompanying article that the new FRG was both “genius and monster,” or that Germany had a mixed history of high culture and great tyranny. The inclusion of Weimar (pop. 45, 957) on the GDR side while larger East German cities like Leipzig (pop. 679,159) and Dresden (pop. 619,157), made a similar point. To see Weimar, as the city associated with the Weimar Republic before the rise of Nazism, located in “Russia’s Germany” was a powerful reminder that the rise of Communism, like Nazism, guaranteed that democracy was dead in the new GDR.

Other map symbols elevated “West’s Germany’s” industrial might while portraying “Russia’s Germany” as an industrially underdeveloped region. West German industry was illustrated by port shipping icons at Bremen and Hamburg. Grapes were seen along the Moselle River next to a large iconic miner near the Saar Valley. Frankfurt’s international airport was represented by a large airplane. The GDR, however, had no icons of industry. The only rail line in the GDR was portrayed as merely an extended loop from a network of FRG rail lines. Similarly, West Germany was seen to have an autobahn system that spanned the state and stopped at the East German border.

Chapin’s comparison of East and West German industry and transportation was not consistent as it changed to convey different cartographic messages. The “West’s Germany” map sought to elevate the FRG while devaluing the GDR, which explains why German cultural and industrial icons only appeared in the western state. But less than a year after the “West’s Germany” map appeared Chapin produced two maps that reversed his portrayal of the East-West German industrial comparison. In the May 1950 “Front Line Fields” map, which sought to illustrate the dangerous mobility of GDR air forces, East Germany was portrayed as a veritable network of twenty-nine coordinated airfields.³⁴ The formerly overlooked GDR cities of Leipzig and Dresden were included this time to make the Communist state look all the more powerful. The West German side was absent of any visible defenses, cities or airfields. Similarly, an August 1950 map entitled “Reds in the Reich,” which detailed GDR military ground forces, displayed twelve Communist cities surrounded by numerous military icons.³⁵ Over fifty “Red Army Units,” ten tank divisions and ten motorized divisions rounded

³⁴ “Front Line Fields” map in *Time*, vol. 55, no. 19 (May 8, 1950): 22.

³⁵ “Reds in the Reich” map in *Time*, vol. 56, no. 6 (Aug. 7, 1950): 26.

out the GDR land space while none were seen across the border. The East German Autobahn and railroads networked across the state to link the ground forces—a complete reversal of the “West’s Germany” details.

These examples of cartographic manipulation are excellent displays of political propaganda. But more than that, these maps graphically illustrate the wide palate of cartographic tools map makers have to manipulate maps to construct very different world views. During the early Cold War period news journal cartographers needed all of these tools to keep pace with a dynamic and often alarmist world of international foreign politics which saw the rise of Communism as the greatest threat to world peace. News journal maps, therefore, represent one of the most powerful media for public education of world politics which helped shape popular opinion of foreign places in the early Cold War era. But as yet these maps remain largely underappreciated by modern scholars of cartography and Cold War history.