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Ramakrishna Surampudi 22 May Red Menace: Real or Sham? It is worth pondering over whether the Cold War was of any benefit to anyone. History tells us about the tensions it caused, about the polarization of the world into military camps and about the deep sense of insecurity and pessimistic views it was responsible for. A closer look tells us that the Cold War encouraged the US and the USSR to indulge in large scale manufacture of arms. In the wake of polarization, both countries had a broad 'customer base' and so the same Cold War ensured prompt sales for the arms manufactured. Thus, the red menace acted like a buffer in keeping the arms race going on and in keeping the business of the two Super Powers from running out. It is as if the two countries had a great degree of understanding in planning and executing the way the Cold War progressed. Indeed, it looks like a game played skillfully with an ulterior business motive. As Eric Berne observes in his book *Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships*, "War is the grimmest of all games" (50). It is interesting to think what the history of the last half of the twentieth century would have been like, had Roosevelt been alive a little longer. Perhaps Hiroshima would not have been destroyed. Perhaps the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan would not have been necessary. But these are idle thoughts, not of any consequence. It is hard to buy the notion that the US disinterestedly spent billions for the 'reconstruction of Europe'. It can only be as true as philanthropy is for helping the poor. It was politically and commercially motivated and the red menace provided a pretext for the maneuvers. The projected pretext ultimately melts down to a joke with Russia joining the NATO in 1992. Today it matters little whether the red menace was notional or real. What is important is whether its contribution to the world was good or bad. Monopoly is always dangerous

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and that was why the monarchical institutions were replaced by democratic systems in the course of history. It cannot be disputed that the principles of communism, all their flaws notwithstanding, defended the rights of those who clung to the lower rungs of the economic ladder. Without the Russian Revolution and the rise of the Soviet Union, there would be no force in history that could challenge the US monopoly, especially in the post World War II scenario. It is also true that in the absence of the so-called red menace, the condition of the workers class across the world would have remained, to this day, much like that of the Oompa-Loompas in Willy Wonka's chocolate factory. To that extent, the red menace, if such a thing did exist, made the world a better place, by helping the mankind zero in on a point of balance between the two extremes of laissez-faire and welfare aspect. It also inspired great literary works, for instance, the essay ' Knowledge and Wisdom' by Bertrand Russell. Ironically, the implications of the Cold War and the red menace seem to be more social and literary rather than military. References Berne, Eric. Games People Play: The Psychology of Human Relationships. New York: Grove Press, 1964. Rosenzweig, Roy and Lichtenstein, Nelson. Who Built America? 1877 to the Present. New York: Pantheon, 2008.