1994

The emergence of the cold war : critical issues in Soviet-American relations 1917-1948

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.31979/etd.x73s-end4>

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Hubis, Harold Jeffrey, M.A.

San Jose State University, 1994

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**THE EMERGENCE OF THE COLD WAR:
CRITICAL ISSUES IN SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS 1917-1948**

A Thesis

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Department of History
San Jose State University**

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Harold J. Hubis

May, 1994

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ABSTRACT

THE EMERGENCE OF THE COLD WAR: CRITICAL ISSUES IN SOVIET-AMERICAN RELATIONS 1917-1948

by Harold J. Hubis

This thesis addresses the causes of the Cold War and concludes that the seeds of disagreement resulted in inevitable hostility. The Bolshevik Revolution was committed to world revolution and the destruction of capitalism. This resulted in a program to undermine Western governments from within. The United States' rapprochement with the Soviets, begun under Franklin Roosevelt, was based on Wilsonian principles and sought a new international cooperation based on personal diplomacy and Soviet appeasement. With Roosevelt's death, the Soviets challenged the American view of post-war stability, causing a rethinking of American policy.

Assuming the mantle of Western leadership, the U.S. opposed Stalin's incursions into Western Europe and the Middle East. Although neither nation felt immediately imperiled, the threat to national security rekindled old fears. The Cold War was the direct result of this clash of values between two social systems and ultimately resulted in mutual mistrust and antagonism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to offer a special word of thanks and gratitude to Dr. Harry Gailey for his scholarly advice, guidance and encouragement, and for the editorial tasks he undertook so essential to the completion of this study.

Thanks are also expressed to Dr. Billie Jensen and Dr. Charles Keserick of the Department of History for reviewing the manuscript and for offering concise, constructive comments in the most friendly of manners.

Appreciation is also offered to my typist and friend Marcia Morton who aided me in the production of this study; no small task given my illegible hand and propensity for endless revisions.

Last and most emphatically, an ardent "Thank You" goes to my wife Kyra without whose devotion and understanding none of this would have been possible.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There is general agreement that the Cold War ended in 1990; however, there remains considerable discussion as to the nature of the factors that initiated it, presumably beginning with the breakdown of the wartime alliance in 1945. When, in April 1947, American statesman Bernard Baruch declared that the world was in the midst of a Cold War, his words became a catch-phrase, not to denote a particular phase of East-West rivalry, but rather, to denote the very fact of the rivalry between the communist and capitalist systems themselves—one that involved competition and confrontation, but not all out "hot" war. This East-West rivalry was marked by a set of crises in both Europe and the Third World and by an enduring competition in arms. Central as the arms race was, however, the Cold War comprised a broader strategic, ideological, and political contest. In this sense, it can be argued that the Cold War began, not suddenly in 1945, but in 1917, with the accession of the Bolsheviks to power and their proclamation of a worldwide challenge to capitalism.

The determination of historical accuracy has always been exceedingly difficult. It involves issues far more complex than the quip attributed to Winston Churchill (British Prime Minister 1940-45, 1951-55) about history being written by the winners, or Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy's statement that history is nothing but a "collection of fables and useless trifles, cluttered up with a mass of unnecessary figures and proper names."¹ When history becomes inexorably entwined with

¹Jon Winokur, ed., *The Portable Curmudgeon* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 136.

philosophical ideology, ascertaining historical truth becomes more daunting. One example will suffice. A perusal of the most recent edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopedia, comprising thirty-one volumes, reveals only one entry and three footnotes for Leon Trotsky (commissar of foreign affairs in the Soviet Union [1917-24]). That single entry informs us that Trotsky opposed Vladimir Lenin (founder of the Russian Communist Party) during the Soviet-German treaty negotiations at Brest-Litovsk in the winter of 1917-1918. There is no Trotsky bibliography, no mention of his role in either the Petrograd Soviet, the Bolshevik seizure of power, or in the formation of the Red Army. Leon Trotsky, then, exists solely to prove an ideological point.

Throughout his tour of the United States in 1959, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev repeatedly admonished his American hosts for their lack of historical knowledge in general and Soviet-American relations in particular. The Russian people, he stated, have a very long sense of their history and of historical inevitability. This belief in historical determination tied inexorably to a faith, motivated by a dogmatic conviction in their own rightness, has characterized Soviet historical thought and writing since its inception. The Soviet tendency to use this form of historical methodology must be clearly understood in attempting to evaluate the validity and purpose of their historical works.

This study is neither an all inclusive review of Soviet-American diplomatic relations nor an exhaustive evaluation and analysis of United States and Soviet foreign policy. Rather, it has as its purpose the investigation, by historiographic methods, of the origins of the Cold War as they were manifested in the immediate post World War II period. It is hoped thereby to be able to formulate a critical judgment concerning the issues of what the Cold War was, the early sources of the conflict, and the historical responsibility of the nations involved.

CHAPTER II

PERSPECTIVES ON THE COLD WAR

Introduction

Writing on the Cold War has revolved around two broad questions: The first has been that of historical responsibility—which side actually *caused* the Cold War? The seeds of discord and mistrust sown in the early 1920s and 1930s blossomed full blown in the late 1940s. Whereas earlier writings tended to polarize around a Western view that the Soviet Union was responsible and a Soviet view that the "imperialist" countries were to blame, a later school of "revisionist" Western writing stressed forms of U.S. responsibility. In the late 1980s a "postrevisionist" school emerged, locating responsibility in both the Soviet and U.S. blocs.

The second broad set of questions concern what the Cold War was and what the sources of the conflict were. Four broad schools of interpretation have emerged. The first, a traditional application of power politics, saw the Cold War as a continuation under new ideological guises of the kind of great power rivalry for empire, influence, and domination seen in earlier epochs. A second school stressed the subjective factors and the degree of misperception involved in the failure of the two sides to maintain their wartime alliance and resolve subsequent disputes, and to extricate themselves from the reinforcing anxieties of the arms race. A third school viewed the Cold War as an apparent rivalry between two blocs and as a means by which the dominant states within each bloc controlled and disciplined their own populations and clients. It also considered those who stood to benefit from increased arms production and political anxiety by promoting a mythical rivalry.

Fourth, there are those who saw the Cold War not as a conflict between states or as military rivalry but more as a conflict between two distinct, competing social and political systems, each committed to prevailing over the other at the global level.

Traditional Perspectives

In 1944, at the height of World War II, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff determined that the greatest danger to peace in the postwar era lay in either the U.S.S.R. or Great Britain seizing parts of Europe which would be disadvantageous for their political adversaries. That Americans could portray Great Britain as a threat to post-war cooperation and peace may seem absurd, but the Joint Chiefs were not looking at the world from a Cold War perspective. Warren Kimball, in his book, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman*, has informed us that although the Anglo-American relationship had taken on the tone of unselfish friendship born of a basic bond of shared enemies, real conflicts and mutual lack of confidence were never far from the surface. American foreign policy from Wilson to Roosevelt, Kimball argued, had been based on the belief that European leadership had failed. Although Americans distrusted and feared the new totalitarian nations, most had placed the responsibility for the world crises primarily on Great Britain whose greed and power politics, so the argument went, had prevented the development of effective international cooperation and permitted the dictators to drag us into war. While Churchill's policy all along sought Britain's survival, followed by retention of its empire and great power status, Roosevelt believed that the British sought to control the European balance of power and to preserve their empire. These policies, he was convinced, would be disruptive in the postwar world. Thus, it is Kimball's belief that the struggles between the two allies over the future of the British Empire, spheres of influence, and the postwar

economic structure, were more than mere pleasantries. Roosevelt's actions, Kimball has argued, demonstrated his conviction that Britain could not and should not be the broker for Soviet-American relations. If anything, it was the United States that should act as the mediator between the British Empire and the Soviet Union. The President believed, Kimball postulates, that Britain was a barrier to the creation of an atmosphere of trust and cooperation between Stalin and the West. National self-interest, not altruism, had brought the Soviet Union into the war against Germany, and likewise American aid and cooperation were motivated by the same kind of self-interest.²

It has been difficult for many authors to discern constant objectives through the seemingly shifting policies and attitudes of Franklin Roosevelt, but the defense of his nation and of Western civilization from Nazism and the redefining of the postwar world were clearly among them. It is Kimball's contention that Roosevelt favored long-term cooperation with the Soviet Union. The President assumed that in the postwar world, U.S. influence and forces would concentrate on the Western Hemisphere and the Pacific. England and the Soviet Union, he reasoned, would have to work things out in Europe.

That was why he accepted the political spheres—of influence arrangement put together by Stalin and Churchill in the summer and fall of 1944. The President had no objections to special political relationships within the area of Great Power responsibility so long as old style neomercantilist exclusive spheres of influence were a thing of the past.³

By creating relationships of mutual trust among the leaders, and because of his belief in personal diplomacy and economic assistance, he was convinced that he

²Warren F. Kimball, *The Juggler: Franklin Roosevelt as Wartime Statesman* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 99-100; 193-94.

³Ibid., 195.

could make this unlikely alliance survive Hitler's defeat. The President, Kimball has argued, knew that to accomplish this he would need both domestic support and a way of breaking through the communist ideology to speak directly to Stalin's national interests. Roosevelt, he has asserted, was prepared to see Eastern Europe fall within Moscow's sphere of influence if (and here he is in agreement with historian, John L. Gaddis), "the Russians would moderate the severity of measures to maintain their position there."⁴ Despite some apparent "toughening" of his position by 1945, Kimball is of the opinion that Roosevelt maintained his hopes of promoting cooperation with the Soviet Union up to the very end of his life. Surprisingly, he asserts that with the President's commitment to avoiding a postwar confrontation with the Soviets, it was likely that he and Churchill would have disagreed with increasing frequency. There is a great deal of irony in all this, Kimball has concluded, "for it was the Soviet Union and not the Prime Minister's arguments that eventually brought the United States into the ranks of the world's conservatives."⁵

Robert Dallek, in his review of American foreign policy from 1932-1945, tends to concur with Kimball's evaluation of Roosevelt's policy. Increasing Soviet demands raised inevitable questions in the President's mind about postwar Soviet intentions. Roosevelt believed that he had gone far toward working out a realistic accommodation with Stalin for world peace. By subscribing to Soviet control of the Baltic states, their views of altered Polish boundaries, the need for permanent restraints on German and Japanese power, and the predominant role of the Big

⁴John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 12.

⁵Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill and Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 1:15.

Four in a new world league, Roosevelt thought he had disarmed some of Stalin's suspicions about postwar Anglo-American intentions and had advanced the cause of long-term cooperation among the Allies.⁶ According to Dallek, doubts, however, about Soviet intentions remained and they came increasingly in reports from Moscow. The United States ambassador to the Soviet Union, Averell Harriman, summed up these doubts about Soviet behavior in his communications to the White House. With the end of the war in sight, he had reported to the President that U.S.-Soviet relations had taken a startling turn. "They have held up our requests with complete indifference to our interests and have shown an unwillingness even to discuss pressing problems."⁷ He also had complained of Soviet indifference to world opinion regarding their policy toward Poland and of Soviet inclinations to become a "world bully" wherever their interests were involved. The wartime conflicts over Poland, Harriman would later write, and "its contested postwar frontiers with the Soviet Union, and the regime it would be allowed to have, lay at the origins of the U.S.-Soviet disagreement."⁸ He advised the President that the Soviets' policy was to react against any statement of the United States and expected the U.S. to do the same. "We should not allow ourselves to drift into difficulties

⁶Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 337-40; 521-28.

⁷W. Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1944-1946* (New York: Random House, 1975), 318. See also United States, Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: 1944* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1944), XIV, 989. Hereafter cited as *FRUS*.

⁸Harriman and Abel, 320.

as a result of indecision. On the other hand, we should attempt to understand their basic objectives and not make issues where we are not on firm ground."⁹

The results of the conference at Dumbarton Oaks and the fundamental disagreement with the Russians over the United Nations concerned Roosevelt. Dallek is of the opinion that these increasing difficulties with the Russians had finally convinced Roosevelt that he needed to alter his policy and combine accommodation with firmness in his dealings with the Soviets. The Roosevelt-Churchill Correspondence of 1944-1945 makes clear this hardening Anglo-American position. When Churchill wrote the President that "we must not permit anybody to entertain a false impression that we are afraid," Roosevelt replied, "Our armies will in a very few days be in a position that will permit us to become 'tougher' than has heretofore appeared advantageous to the war effort."¹⁰

It is Dallek's opinion that Roosevelt's broad conception of what it would take to assure the postwar peace was fundamentally sound. Dallek writes that this was "a greatly expanded American role abroad, a Soviet-American accord . . . and an end to colonial empire But these developments emerged neither in the way nor to the extent that Roosevelt wished."¹¹ Roosevelt continued to tell the Russians nothing about the atomic bomb, wishing to defer sharing control with the Russians until he had a stronger faith in their readiness to cooperate in other matters affecting world affairs. Dallek has concluded that if Roosevelt had lived, he undoubtedly would have moved more quickly than Truman to confront the Russians. "His greater prestige and reputation as an advocate of Soviet-American

⁹Ibid., 330.

¹⁰Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt*, 3:617.

¹¹Dallek, 537.

friendship would have made it easier for him than for Truman to muster public support for a hard line."¹²

In *Dawning of the Cold War*, authors Randall Woods and Howard Jones took up at the point where the Churchill-Roosevelt correspondence left off. The Roosevelt strategy, they declared, was to convince the Kremlin of the West's good intentions and to trust Stalin not to destroy the independence of those nations occupied by the Red Army. By developing a harsh policy toward Germany, one designed to render the land primarily agricultural and assuming responsibility for the postwar reconstruction of the Soviet Union, Roosevelt had placed himself in direct opposition to Churchill's hopes of restoring the European balance of power and developing non-communist power based in Central Europe. Allaying the Soviets' suspicions, however, and satisfying their demands proved more difficult than Roosevelt had imagined. Having blocked Britain's efforts to lay the foundation for a strong Western European federation through the rehabilitation of Germany, the White House expected the Soviet Union to give up any plans to dominate Central and Eastern Europe. These hopes, the authors demonstrated, were disappointed.¹³

The Warsaw uprising and the shift of the military balance of power enabled Stalin to impose his will on Eastern Europe and was a turning point in Soviet-American and Anglo-American relations. The events that had begun with the Warsaw uprising continued into the spring of 1945, severely hampering the opinions of American moderates and alarming the foreign policy establishments in

¹²Ibid., 534.

¹³Randall B. Woods and Howard Jones, *Dawning of the Cold War: The United States' Quest for Order* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1991), 19-22, 30.

both Britain and the United States. These events made it increasingly difficult for the President to justify his position of seeming to set aside the British so as to placate the Soviets. Admitting that the thrust of their interpretation is orthodox (or as they state, realist), the authors hold that the Soviet leader was prepared to project Russian power into as much of Europe as the capitalist democracies would allow. Stalin did not want a war with the West, they affirm.

What Stalin wanted was nothing less than a continuation of the relationship with the West that had been established during World War II . . . but the entente Stalin desired was not the benign relationship so frequently depicted by revisionists. It was designed to foster Soviet control of Eastern Europe, whether directly (in the case of Poland, Romania and Bulgaria) or indirectly (as in the case of Hungary and Czechoslovakia): to expand Soviet influence in Western Europe, the Near East and Asia; and to position the U.S.S.R. for even greater gains when the next Western economic crisis struck.¹⁴

It is the contention of most revisionist Cold War writers that the United States' policy of "containment" against the Soviet Union began with George F. Kennan's "long telegram" in 1946. Woods and Jones have shown that as early as September 1944 there were calls in the administration for a re-thinking of U.S. foreign policy based upon clear and discernable alterations in internal Soviet politics.¹⁵ Winston Churchill was well aware of Stalin's intentions, but with Britain's declining capabilities, he and his war ministry could see no reasonable alternative other than an Anglo-American alliance, with its military and economic support, although they recognized the dangers of British dependence upon the United States. Even after Yalta had failed to establish and protect the postwar economic and military security of Central and Western Europe, Roosevelt had clung to the hope that personal diplomacy could hold the Grand Alliance intact.

¹⁴Ibid., 30.

¹⁵Ibid., 24.

Until his death in April 1945, Roosevelt kept Britain at arm's length and focused on disarming the Soviet Union, while Churchill was arguing for saving Europe for capitalism, democracy and what was left of the British Empire.¹⁶

Between April and December 1945, Woods and Jones have written, the United States Government was rent by events of profound importance, the implication of which determined foreign policy for the next forty-six years. The failures to produce peace treaties with Italy and Germany; the failures of the London and Moscow Foreign Ministers Conferences; the failure to obtain plebiscites in the nations under Red Army control; the unexplained disappearance of the "London" Poles visiting Moscow on a guarantee of safe conduct; the initiation within the Soviet Union of a reign of terror begun under cultural minister Andrei Zhadnov, all made it increasingly clear that Stalin was not going to permit Western participation in the reconstruction of Eastern Europe. Authors Woods and Jones have marshalled evidence and virtually a daily chronology in support of their contention that after World War II, economic and political instability was conducive to Soviet totalitarianism. The Allied remedies were to restore order and security inside threatened nations and to reestablish a balance of power on the Continent.¹⁷

Soon after assuming the Presidency, the authors argue that Harry Truman abandoned his initial "hard line" with the Soviets and, aligning himself with Secretary of State James Byrnes, Henry Wallace, Walter Lippmann, and the "liberal wing" reverted to Roosevelt's "Tripod of Power" program so as to secure Russia's entry into the war against Japan, and maintain the security of the Western

¹⁶Ibid., 21.

¹⁷Ibid., 91-93, 98.

Hemisphere. Wallace, for example, stated that a "get tough" policy would not get the United States anywhere. He appeared to envision each country possessing "spheres of influence within which each would scrupulously remain in peaceful coexistence . . . [and amid] peaceful competition the Russian world and the American world will gradually become more alike."¹⁸

Woods and Jones have written that the Truman administration was initially of the opinion that the Soviets would abandon power politics and participate in the United Nations if England and America would join Russia in a pact to prevent the recurrence of German military and industrial might. Truman's optimism stemmed, in large part, from his faith in the efficacy of economic and atomic diplomacy. By 1946, however, events had converged to produce a dramatic reversal in American foreign strategy and to propel the Truman Administration toward Anglo-American solidarity and overt resistance to Soviet expansion by a policy of "containment." Soviet intransigence at the Foreign Ministers' Conferences, the British shift of tactics to confront Soviet aggression in the name of the United Nations, the Russian annexation of the northern half of Iran, and, finally, the Republican Party's decision to challenge the Democrats openly on both foreign policy issues and Communism all led the Truman administration gradually to assume a more confrontational posture toward the Soviet Union. At the close of 1946, the East and West were bitterly divided.¹⁹

Woods and Jones concluded that despite the administration's early efforts to avoid sharpening the differences between the East and West, the outcome was a

¹⁸Henry A. Wallace, *The Fight for Peace* (New York: Reynal and Hitchcock: A Pamphlet Press Book, October 1946), 17.

¹⁹Woods and Jones, 61-67; 98-129.

polarization of interests rather than a balance of power on the Continent. The resultant administration policy of firmness and vigilance brought forth the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, the Berlin Airlift, and NATO. All four programs brought about the economic and political rehabilitation of Europe and the establishment of a defensive network strong enough to resist the communist threat.²⁰

John Lewis Gaddis' *Strategies of Containment* contains three essays that concern the time period under discussion. The first is a discussion of Franklin Roosevelt's war policy. Gaddis stated that the President's policy throughout the War was based on the conception of the balance of power, tempered by the need to minimize casualties and the realities of domestic politics. Dissociating himself from former ambassador William Bullitt's admonitions that Stalin's war aims were not those of the West, and that the anti-fascist coalition had not purged the Soviet dictator of his autocratic and expansionist tendencies, the President developed his idea of integrating the Soviet Union into a postwar security structure. The President, argued Gaddis, "had never seen in the ideological orientation of the Soviet state a reason not to have cooperative relations at the interstate level."²¹ His main emphasis, thus, was to win the war and make the Grand Alliance survive by creating relationships of mutual trust among its leaders. Here Gaddis is in complete agreement with Warren F. Kimball and Robert Dallek. He, too, is of the opinion that Roosevelt was convinced the Russians would moderate the severity of their position as their fears of Germany subsided. Despite the President's position, by the end of 1944 there was clear dissatisfaction with the strategy he was

²⁰Ibid., 254-55.

²¹Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 27.

following, and it was becoming increasingly vocal. The State Department, American military chiefs, the British Foreign Office, and most forcefully, United States Ambassador in Moscow, Averell Harriman, all expressed reservations about Russia's unwillingness to share information and coordinate military activities, and of the Soviets' tendency to impose unilateral political settlements in Eastern Europe. Harriman, for example, had written:

What frightens me is that when a country begins to extend its influence by strong arm methods beyond its borders under the guise of security, it is difficult to see how a line can be drawn. If the policy is accepted that the Soviet Union has a right to penetrate her immediate neighbors for security, penetration of the next immediate neighbor becomes at a certain time equally logical."²²

Roosevelt, however, was unwilling to demand a *quid pro quo* attitude while the War was still on; his priority remained to the end to win the war. It is Gaddis' contention that the President would have in time *himself* been forced to modify his strategy.²³

According to Gaddis, despite an initially confused presidential transition period, Harry Truman did, in fact, adopt a *quid pro quo* approach in the belief that he was implementing Roosevelt's policy; but by doing so he convinced the Russians that he had changed it. Truman, like Roosevelt, was not opposed to normal relations with totalitarian nations, particularly as he believed he had "leverage" over the Russians in terms of postwar reconstruction assistance, world opinion, and the secret of the atomic bomb. The Russians, however, were already receiving detailed information about the construction of an atomic bomb and were

²²Harriman to Secretary of State, September 20, 1944, *FRUS: 1944, IV*, 993.

²³Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 11-13.

never dependent enough on American aid to make substantial concessions to get it.

Gaddis is in complete agreement with Woods and Jones when he concluded that:

[The] major difficulty was simply the Soviet Union's imperviousness to external influences . . . there was remarkably little the West could do, in the short time, to shape Stalin's decisions: the Soviet dictator maintained tight control in a mostly self-sufficient country, with little knowledge or understanding . . . of events in the larger world. It was this realization of impermeability—the fact that neither trust or pressure had made any difference—that paved the way for the revision of strategy set off by George Kennan's "long telegram" of February 1946.²⁴

Evidence had been accumulating that Stalin was steering the foreign policy of the Soviet Union on an ominous course. In 1944 Stalin made a triumphant address on the occasion of the annual celebration of the anniversary of the Russian Revolution. He acknowledged that differences did exist and would, of course, arise on other issues. He also admitted to contradictions in opinion within one and the same party, "but there are so few of them . . . that, as a rule, in practically every case they are resolved in a spirit of unity and coordination among the three great powers."²⁵ Now, on February 9, 1946, he reflected the Soviet Union's new postwar policy by openly stating the change. Finding the causes of the late war in the necessities of capitalistic-imperialistic monopoly and the same forces still in control abroad, he concluded "that no peaceful international order was possible. Wars were inevitable so long as the imperialistic system prevailed."²⁶ The Soviet Union must, therefore, be capable of guarding against any eventuality. Thus, the basic materials of national defense—iron and steel—must be trebled, and coal and oil,

²⁴Ibid., 18.

²⁵Joseph Stalin, *For Victory and Enduring Peace* (New York: Worker's Library Publishers, 1944), 13.

²⁶*New York Times*, 10 February, 1946, 1(A).

the sources of energy, doubled. Stalin's offensive against the United States and the West announced in this speech, wrote Dean Acheson, would reach "its crescendo in Korea and the hate America campaign of the early 1950s." "This," he stated, "was the origin of the 'Cold War.'"²⁷ Concurrent with these events was Moscow's decision not to adhere to the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. The then Chargé d'Affaires in Moscow, George Kennan, later wrote:

The anguished cry of bewilderment had floated over the roof of the White House. How did one explain such behavior on the part of the Soviet government? What lay behind it? . . . It was no good trying to brush the question off with a couple of routine sentences describing Soviet views on such things as world banks and international monetary funds. It would not do to give them just a fragment of the truth. Here was a case where nothing but the whole truth would do.²⁸

On February 22, 1946, Kennan dispatched an 8,000 word telegram, analyzing U.S.-Soviet relations, from Moscow to Secretary of State Byrnes.²⁹ This "long telegram," argued Gaddis, paved the way for the resultant revision of U.S.-Soviet foreign policy.³⁰

In Gaddis' essays, "Kennan and Containment," and "Implementing Containment," the author has managed to compile from a series of lesser papers and speeches by the diplomat, a literate and concise understanding of Kennan's thoughts and recommendations. It must be understood that George Kennan did not actually set foreign policy or initiate a new foreign policy. The British, for

²⁷Dean Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department* (New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1969), 150.

²⁸George F. Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967), 293.

²⁹FRUS: 1946, VI, *Eastern Europe; The Soviet Union*, 696-709.

³⁰Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 18.

example, had had a "containment" paper as early as 1944, and a letter by General John Deane, head of the American military mission in Moscow, denouncing Soviet policy had been written in the fall of 1943. What Kennan's paper did, argued Gaddis, was to legitimize U.S. foreign policy by giving it a name and placing it on a solid theoretical foundation.

Both the Truman Administration and Kennan believed in a *flexible* foreign policy, and despite their differences, they were largely in accord on the way the nation's objective should be achieved. Both sought to halt Soviet advances by means short of war. Both thought that Greece was strategically and symbolically important to U.S. interests, and both believed the country capable of salvation. Their disagreements arose over their analyses of the causes of the unrest in Greece. Kennan was convinced that the Soviet threat in 1947 was ideological-political and not military. He was sure that economic palliatives were sufficient.³¹ The White House, however, especially after Iran, was convinced that the underlying economic problems had taken on military dimensions. United States interests were regarded to be at stake, the "remedy" being military in nature. As Kennan would later write in his *Memoirs*, Soviet foreign policy bore little relationship to what the West did or did not do but, rather, arose from basic inner Russian necessities which existed before the war. Thus, "there could be no permanent resolution of differences with such a government which relied on the fiction of external threat to maintain internal legitimacy."³² Kennan strongly objected to the notion that the United States had to resist Communism wherever it appeared. His proposed goal was not

³¹George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs* 25 (July 1947), 566-82. See also Gaddis, 42-53, and Kennan, *Memoirs*, 302.

³²Kennan, *Memoirs*, 302.

a division of the world into Soviet and American spheres of influence, but the emergence of independent centers of power in Europe and Asia. Once the balance of power had been restored, policy should seek to reduce the Soviet Union's ability to project influence beyond its borders and then bring about a change in the Soviet conception of international relations.³³ Military intervention to prevent communist takeovers would only propel the United States into a series of civil wars from which it would be difficult to extricate itself.³⁴ However, by 1950, Gaddis concluded, powerful foreign and domestic pressures (i.e., the "loss" of China, the Soviet atomic bomb, a faltering domestic economy, and increasing assaults from the political right) moved the President to adopt National Security Council resolution #68, which undermined Kennan's policy and introduced the strategy of "perimeter defense" and the "domino theory."

What becomes apparent in these historical studies by Gaddis is the recognition that there were two United States "containment policies"—the one before and one following President Truman's speech to Congress in March 1947. Mr. Truman based his appeal for support of Greece and Turkey not on the specific circumstances of the two countries, but on a general formulation of American national interests which held that "totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States."³⁵ This broad "over-containment" policy was certainly not the policy of containment which had been outlined thirteen

³³Ibid., 312.

³⁴Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 44.

³⁵Congress, Senate, President Harry S. Truman delivering an address [later known as *The Truman Doctrine*] to a joint session of Congress, 80th Cong., 1st Sess., *Congressional Record* (12 March 1947), vol. 93, pt. 2, 1980.

months previously by George Kennan in his "long telegram"; nor was it the policy of Dean Acheson (then the Assistant Secretary in the Department of State) who, during the congressional hearings on Greece and Turkey, had stated, ". . . whether there are requests of aid, of course, will be left to the future, but whatever they are, they have to be judged, as you say, according to the circumstances of each specific case."³⁶

³⁶Congress, Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations. *Hearings on S. 938 to Provide for Assistance to Greece and Turkey*, 80th Cong., 1st sess., 22 April 1947, 3780.

CHAPTER III

REVISIONIST PERSPECTIVES

There remains to this day a bitter, long-standing unresolved debate about the origins of the Cold War. The historical problem is not so much a lack of evidence as the fact that historians cannot agree on what the evidence proves. The early 1950s historians of the Cold War (some of whom have already been quoted) were convinced that the United States had reacted rationally to Soviet expansion in Eastern Europe. Traditional accounts presuppose that the Cold War and the division of Europe arose because Joseph Stalin was bent on dictatorial control over as much of Europe as possible. His actions initiated a struggle of nations to organize the political and market economies of Europe. By the time of the 1960s and Viet Nam, however, challengers to Cold War orthodoxy were plentiful. A fundamental indictment of United States foreign policy arose with revisionist historians arguing that America's own expansionist policy had precipitated the Cold War. Thus, the revisionists shifted the major responsibility for the Cold War from Moscow to Washington.

Revisionist historians are certain that Moscow's postwar aims were limited; it was American pressure which triggered the Cold War. Orthodox or traditionalist historians charge the American policy was naive and concessive; the United States should have applied more pressure on Moscow, not less. Traditionalist and revisionist accounts of the Cold War's origins are virtual mirror images of each other. Traditionalists portray American diplomacy as defensive and not particularly effective—precisely the way revisionists describe Stalin's approach. Traditionalists depict the U.S.S.R. as expansionist; they charge Moscow with exaggerating "the

American threat," whether deliberately to cover its own designs, or through paranoia. Revisionists reverse the charges. They find Washington guilty of imperialism; they say the Americans resisted reasonable Soviet claims to an East European sphere of influence, all in the name of an exaggerated notion of a Soviet threat. Revisionists find the roots of American expansionism in American society, particularly in the institutions of capitalism, while traditionalists contend Soviet imperialism reflects Marxist-Leninist ideology, Russian xenophobia, and the logic of totalitarian rule. Franklin Roosevelt's accommodationist policies are models for some revisionists; Truman's hard line, climaxing in the Truman Doctrine in 1947, is an anathema. For traditionalists, Roosevelt's approach encouraged Soviet expansion; Truman is depicted as insufficiently tough minded until he begins decisively to contain Soviet power.

If it is important to recognize the changes in American foreign policy, pre- and post-Truman Doctrine, then this is just what Senator J. William Fulbright has failed to do in his *Truman Doctrine Reconsidered*. For Fulbright, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee: 1959-1974, the Cold War began in March 1947 with President Truman's Congressional speech. The aggressive nature of the President's address, he wrote, precipitated Soviet fears of military confrontation and American imperialism. That the Soviets would retaliate in kind should have been predicted. This posturing on the part of the United States and the resultant Soviet response, Fulbright concluded, proceeded then in a state of heightened belligerence in a direct line to Viet Nam. That the change in the U.S. policy of "containment" did alter U.S.-Soviet relations in the manner Fulbright describes does not, however, alter the fact that for the Senator, the time period January 1944 to March 1947 did not exist. History and governmental policy decisions do not occur in a vacuum. Even Fulbright was cognizant of the fact "that by 1947, with the United States

virtually disarmed and Western Europe in a condition of economic paralysis, the Soviet Union might plausibly have tried to take over Western Europe through the manipulation of communist parties, through military intimidation, through economic strangulation, and possibly even through direct military action."³⁷ The fact is, he states, that Stalin could have done this but for the timely American counteraction through the Marshall Plan and the formation of NATO. Less than three lines later, however, Fulbright reverses his field completely and raises the hypothesis that Soviet truculence actually reflected weakness rather than strength, a weakness born in 1919 when Western powers had intervened in the Civil War. This hypothesis is totally at variance with documented Soviet military activity between those critical years of 1944 to 1947, when the Russians employed military intimidation in Romania, Greece, and Turkey and intervened militarily in Iran. He is incorrect when he claims that postwar foreign policy was formed without the benefit of constructive adversary proceedings. Woods and Jones have made it clear that American foreign policy was being actively fought over by the liberals and hardliners from 1945 until the time of the Truman Doctrine speech in March 1947. What Fulbright's revisionist approach has done has been to distort Stalin's quest for national security into a "blind eye" permission for creating a massive East European sphere of influence, while American policy has been turned from one of defensive reactions of a nation fearful of communist aggrandizement to an open-ended commitment to suppress revolutions. In 1943, James Forrestal, Under Secretary of the Navy, had indignantly, but perhaps correctly, written:

³⁷J. William Fulbright, "The Truman Doctrine Reconsidered: From Greece to Vietnam," in *Caging the Bear: Containment and the Cold War*, ed. Charles Gati (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974), 56.

The American who emphasized national security was apt to be called a goddamned Fascist or Imperialist, while if Uncle Joe suggests that he needs the Baltic provinces, half of Poland, all of Bessarabia, and access to the Mediterranean, all hands agree that he is a fine, frank, candid, and generally a delightful fellow.³⁸

By traditionalist thinking, the United States has been a reactive agent in the international system that is faced with Soviet diplomatic intransigence and territorial expansionism. America has acted defensively to assure the goal of guaranteeing the West's security. The revisionists, by contrast, view American policy as dynamic and even aggressive. The attribution of blame for the origins and subsequent course of the Cold War has been the major theme of the traditionalist-revisionist debate. Most revisionists argue that America's industrial might was mobilized in order to manipulate the international system in America's interest. Of particular interest is the revisionist explanation of an American foreign policy based on a quest for foreign markets. Richard J. Barnet, in his book *The Rocket's Red Glare* proposed such a theory of economic interpretation.

Barnet stated that the investment bankers and corporate lawyers Roosevelt had brought into the administration to manage the war effort became the architects of American foreign policy. With its economy restored by the war, the United States would become the guiding power of the postwar order, devoting its resources to the maintenance of a balance of power in Europe and supervising the task of worldwide economic reconstruction. This, the theory continues, assumed that the postwar peace would be dependent on the military might of the United States and the "containment" of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union, however, had become resistant to opening itself to a world market and an economic order dominated by the United States. Using her own military might, she was now challenging

³⁸Woods and Jones, 24.

Western influence in Eastern Europe. If Communism spread to the Eastern Mediterranean, Europe's access to oil might be cut off. Thus, the Truman Doctrine was preemptive; it served economic interests and, by emphasizing Communism versus Democracy, it served political interests as well. The fear that capitalism was headed for another depression was both the stimulus and the defense of the ensuing Marshall Plan, Barnet concluded.³⁹

Some revisionist historians have argued that the primary motive behind the U.S. economic policy toward the Soviet Union during this period was the "open door." That, above all, Washington wanted to pry open the markets of Eastern Europe for U.S. exports. Thomas J. McCormick also focused his attention on the postwar American economy. Assessing the origins of the Cold War, he incriminates the entire hegemonic thrust of American capitalism and racialism. "Throughout its five centuries, capitalism has been an inherently expansionist type of economy," he writes, "and capitalism must, therefore, embroil national political units in political rivalry and conflict."⁴⁰ American capitalism, he argued, required pressing the socialist countries to "open up" to United States investments. Thus, the demands of capitalism had to be universal, transforming the undeveloped world and insisting on access for products and investment in the socialist world. Hence, America's economic structure was inherently expansionist and naturally provoked a Soviet effort to preserve socialism where Russian influence might still be applied. The Cold War, in this perspective,

³⁹Richard J. Barnet, *The Rocket's Red Glare: War, Politics, and the American Presidency* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990), 269-73.

⁴⁰Thomas J. McCormick, *America's Half Century: United States Foreign Policy in the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 2.

became just the latest episode in the longer-term history of capitalist expansion with the American capitalist imperatives forcing policies of confrontation on the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union with its ambivalent relationships to the world-system, eventually chose not to play by American rules, especially when American policy hardened and made the rules more stringent than those established earlier by the Yalta system. The Soviets ultimately proved the greatest obstacle to American hegemony and its blueprint for a new world order, hence the Cold War.⁴¹

This revisionist approach, however, presents a kind of quasi-conspiratorial view of American foreign policy at the core of which is the economic interpretation which assumes the need for ever-expanding markets. This is an adaptation of the traditional socialist theory of imperialism which sees the United States foreign policy being led by men all under the direct or indirect influence of business interests. Everything that happens fits into this design. There is a serious danger in any *a priori* method. Any approach in which one knows the answer before asking the question effectively eliminates contradictions. Yet, contradictions exist all the time. As Woods and Jones demonstrated, most senior American policy makers were not overly alarmed by the economic consequences of the Soviet trade initiative in Poland and the Baltics. American economic investment was particularly high in areas that were not contested by the Soviet Union; areas in which the United States was supposedly in contest with the Soviet Union, such as Eastern Europe, were of practically no importance for American economic interests. Those concerned about depression in the postwar period wanted to acquire markets primarily for U.S. *industrial* goods. What these regions needed most, however, was food and raw materials. Thus, the economies of Eastern Europe were not good prospective markets for North American products. The Roosevelt and Truman

⁴¹Ibid., 47.

administrations were interested in opening Eastern Europe for *political* rather than for economic reasons.

James MacGregor Burns' biography of Franklin Roosevelt also addressed the origins of the Cold War. He questioned whether its origins lay in British and Russian colonial rivalry in the nineteenth century, or in Pan-Slavism, Marxism, liberal ideology, or in the illusions or broken promises of Yalta. Most of these forces undoubtedly had some part, but perhaps the single most determining factor was "the gap between promise and reality that widened steadily during 1942 and 1943 Behind the facade of unity, statesmen were pursuing Realpolitik and national interest."⁴² This resulted in a cynicism that poisoned wartime unity and created postwar disillusion. The second front delay, "far more than any other factor,"⁴³ Burns concluded, aroused Soviet anger and cynicism and tended to reinforce their feelings that the West was following the strategy of letting Russia and Germany bleed each other to death. Thus, the grand coalition collapsed amidst broken promises and crushed expectations.

As Robert Dallek has written, and as British and American military reports have confirmed, the Allies were not militarily prepared at this time for such a vast and difficult undertaking.⁴⁴ Such a campaign would have cost many more American lives and was unlikely to succeed. Failure would have brought forth new Soviet complaints and even a successful campaign would not have been a guarantee against a Cold War. Citing Russian scholar Adam Ulam's opinion that

⁴²James MacGregor Burns, *Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970), 373-74.

⁴³*Ibid.*

⁴⁴Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Road to Victory, 1941-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986), 85-89. See also Kimball, *The Juggler*, 192.

Soviet suspicions about the intentions of the Western powers were not so easily dissuaded—suspicion being built into the Soviet system—Dallek concluded that, "Russian expansion, Chinese strife and colonial revolutions were beyond Roosevelt's power to prevent."⁴⁵

Cold War revisionism claims that America exploited its supremacy at the end of the War to press for sympathetic governments in Eastern Europe and to extract concessions from the Soviet Union through atomic blackmail. Although there is evidence to indicate Washington's hesitancy in sharing atomic secrets with Great Britain, let alone the Soviet Union, it is all but certain that Klaus Fuchs, the Soviet spy, had been reporting about the atomic bomb project to Moscow as early as 1942. In addition, the Russians themselves had been developing a nuclear program since 1943. Although the appearance of atomic power did raise the question about the political and military value of controlling a large land mass (the goal toward which Stalin had expended so much effort and ingenuity), it is not to say that he perceived the bomb as an immediate threat. As Robert J. Maddox, in his book, *The New Left and the Cold War*, has shown, America abstained scrupulously from brandishing the weapon to blackmail the Soviets—latter day theories to the contrary, notwithstanding.⁴⁶

Foreign policy is not autonomous. It arises from problems in a given society based in part on domestic needs. Maddox has argued that Franklin Roosevelt's foreign policy was based first and foremost on winning the war in the shortest possible time with the fewest American casualties. His belief in the Grand

⁴⁵Dallek, 537.

⁴⁶Robert J. Maddox, *The New Left and the Origins of the Cold War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 63-78.

Alliance comprised two elements: getting Russia to stay in the War and second, as a poorly disguised Wilsonian, to make the United Nations work. Neither Churchill nor Stalin had any expectations for the United Nations, and both viewed the alliance as a temporary military expediency to destroy Hitler. By 1944, with the war's termination no longer in doubt and Stalin beginning to go his own way, Roosevelt, not oblivious to the warnings coming from both the United States and British foreign offices, deliberately chose to set them in abeyance and clung to his policy of promoting Soviet cooperation even if it meant sacrificing Great Britain and Eastern Europe. As he told Churchill after Yalta, it was the best deal they could have gotten under the circumstances (with the Red Army already stationed in Eastern Europe). Even Roosevelt, however, not previously inclined to "linkage," began to have reservations about sharing the atomic bomb secret with the Russians and would have been forced by Soviet actions to have modified his strategy.⁴⁷ With the war won, Harry Truman, upon his assumption of the Presidency, did not feel the same rigid obligations of policy that had confined Roosevelt. Stalin's policy, he and his advisors concurred, was based upon a security in Eastern Europe to be achieved by an offensive military posture—not by political means. The Russian dictator, Maddox recounts, fully expected the West to make concessions (as Roosevelt had done throughout the War), as the Soviet military posed an ever-increasing threat to Eastern and Southern Europe. Stalin was still engaged in a class struggle as a "zero sum game" in which only one side can win and the other must lose. This he had outlined fully in the 1946 speech, wherein he stated that the world was divided into two camps and conflict was inevitable. Seemingly thwarted at negotiation and alarmed by the increasing Soviet military threat,

⁴⁷Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 13.

Maddox has concluded, Truman and Byrnes abandoned Roosevelt's policy of personal diplomacy and adopted the austere strategy of "containment."⁴⁸

At the heart of the revisionist concepts lies a curiously inverted logic: American politics are presented as essentially provocative—whether or not they were intended to be—while the behavior of America's adversaries is seen as an expression of their legitimate national interests. America is the guilty party, and the United States, and certainly the world, would have been better off and happier had this country acted in other ways. This kind of historical recreation rests upon assumptions which, by the very nature of this kind of logic, cannot be proven. It simply ignores the assumptions underlying yesterday's policies as if they had little or no basis in reality; as if they were the products of the imagination of either hostile or well-intentioned leaders who misunderstood and misperceived the world around them.

Post-Revisionist Perspectives

The latest of the Cold War historians have been called the post-revisionists. Although they do not exactly "split the difference" between previous debaters, they do come down somewhere in the nebulous in-between. Neither the Soviets nor the Americans, they say, were without responsibility for the Cold War; each was victim as well as villain. Gaddis has tended to view post-revisionism as a synthesis of sorts which insists that Washington's diplomacy was non-aggressive but recognizes that reciprocal escalation of the conflict was almost inevitable. Domestic politics constrained American leaders as much as or more than did economic forces—with the result that Roosevelt and Truman had less leeway to accommodate Stalin than he had (being free of such restraints to conciliate them).

⁴⁸Maddox, 63-78.

Robert Dallek, in turn, has stated that Roosevelt wanted to grant Stalin an Eastern-European sphere of influence while, at the same time, containing Soviet power within that zone.⁴⁹

What has been needed all along, of course, has been information about Soviet expectations and objectives. Most of the available Soviet writings on World War II are predicated upon the cardinal assumptions that the defeat of Germany was accomplished almost entirely by the U.S.S.R. and that the United States and capitalist imperialism are bent upon world domination. This attitude adopted by Grigori Deborin, the Director of the Department on World War II in the Institute of Marxism-Leninism of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, is that far from giving the Soviet Union any effective aid, Britain and the United States "actually tried to hinder the Soviet war effort and deliberately sabotaged the common Allied aims whenever they could in the hope of weakening the postwar might of the U.S.S.R."⁵⁰ The governments of the United States and Great Britain wanted the Soviet Union and Germany to fight a war of mutual annihilation. This, according to Deborin, was the real reason behind the "dilatatory tactics with regard to the second front."⁵¹ American businessmen and monopolists would, thus, be in a position to continue their "business as usual" policies with a strong Germany after the war; and by making the most of the difficulties experienced by the Soviet Union, would deploy their troops from the Middle East to the Caucasus and seize the Soviet oil fields.

⁴⁹Dallek, 533.

⁵⁰Grigori Deborin, "The Second World War," in *Readings in Russian Civilization: Soviet Russia, 1917-1963*, ed. Thomas Riha (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), 685.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, 686.

A number of important Soviet documents have recently been released in official publications, most notably the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939. In 1990 the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a copy of a previously unpublished cable sent by Soviet Ambassador to the United States, Nikolai Novikov, to Foreign Minister Molotov on September 17, 1946. This most interesting cable reported that the foreign policy of the United States, "which reflects the imperialist tendencies of American monopolistic capital, is characterized in the postwar period by a striving for world supremacy."⁵² The U.S. foreign policy, Novikov wrote, is being conducted in a situation that differs greatly from the one that existed in the prewar period, as well as during Roosevelt's lifetime.

The ascendance to power of President Truman . . . means a strengthening of the influence on U.S. foreign policy of the most reactionary circles . . . and a decline in the influence on foreign policy of those who follow Roosevelt's course for cooperation among peace loving countries.⁵³

The upshot of these changes reflects the desire of the Truman Administration to proceed in the path of an expansionist policy toward world domination. Thus, the United States, in its understanding with England, is prepared to partition the world on the basis of mutual concessions, i.e., to include Japan and China in its sphere of influence, infiltrate the national economies of the newly democratic nations of Eastern Europe by means of its monopolistic capital, and penetrate intensively into the oil rich economies of the Near Eastern countries. The United States, he wrote, is taking all measures to strengthen the reactionary forces in Germany and oppose democratic reconstruction. It hopes to weaken and overthrow the democratic

⁵²"The Novikov Telegram," Washington 27, 1946, reprinted in *Origins of the Cold War: The Novikov, Kennan and Roberts "Long Telegrams" of 1946* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1991), 2.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 6.

governments in Eastern Europe "which are friendly toward the U.S.S.R. and replace them in the future with new governments that would obediently carry out a policy dictated from the United States."⁵⁴ Novikov concluded that the preparation by the United States for a future war is being conducted with the prospect of "war against the Soviet Union which, in the eyes of American imperialists, is the main obstacle in the path of the United States to world domination."⁵⁵

In what has been described as the "First Glasnost Biography," author Dimitri Volkoganov, the head of the Institute of Military History in Moscow, has written a new evaluation of Joseph Stalin. Although the author enlarges our knowledge of Stalin the man, the political and ideological ideas that drove the postwar Soviet state are lacking. There is an unexplainable gap in Soviet foreign policy between the Teheran Conference in 1943 and the "outbreak of the Cold War signaled by Churchill's speech at Fulton, Missouri, on 5 March 1946."⁵⁶ The entire complex issue of the Cold War is relegated to a single paragraph.

[Stalin] felt that a difficult and unequal confrontation had begun, but he had no thought of yielding. He would turn the country into a fortress. In his view, the anti-communist Truman Doctrine made it impossible for the U.S.S.R. to accept the Marshall Plan.⁵⁷

The pressing need for information about Soviet expectations and objectives has been fulfilled to a degree by Vojtech Mastny's book, *Russia's Road to the Cold War 1941-1945*. As an example, Mastny has quoted Stalin who, in a conversation

⁵⁴Ibid., 14.

⁵⁵Ibid., 16.

⁵⁶Dimitri Volkoganov, *Stalin: Triumph and Tragedy* (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1991), 508.

⁵⁷Ibid., 531.

with Milovan Djilas in 1945, explained that World War II was not as wars had been in the past. Whoever occupied a territory also imposed on it its own social system, and that degree of imposition was limited only by the extent and success of the army.⁵⁸ Furthermore, Mastny shows how Stalin's appreciation of the importance of the United Nations to Roosevelt enabled the Soviet leader to advance Russia's international status and gain Anglo-American support for any settlement the Kremlin wished to enforce in Eastern Europe. This support was indispensable for Russia's security. At the same time, however, "Russia's striving for power and influence far in excess of its reasonable security requirements was the primary source of the [Cold War] conflict, and the Western failure to resist it early enough an important secondary one."⁵⁹ Part of the problem is that Roosevelt failed to define his limits. Stalin might have acted with more restraint, Mastny has concluded, if the Western powers had taken a firm and unequivocal stand.

Another Cold War post-revisionist writing is by Ralph Levering, and it, too, is a synthesis. The author spends considerable time evaluating what he calls, "Yalta and other Cold War Myths," for it was at Yalta that the persistent and destructive tendency of the conference leaders to see events from the narrow perspective of one's own group was most pronounced.

Two myths important to the development of the Cold War emerged . . . in the immediate aftermath of Yalta and gradually intensified over the following five years: first, the myth that Stalin had made at the conference and then broken, clear cut commitments in regard to Eastern Europe and, hence, could not be trusted to keep his word; and second, the myth . . . that the seriously

⁵⁸Vojtech Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 212.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, 283.

ill somewhat naive Roosevelt had "sold out" Poland and other American interests at Yalta.⁶⁰

In fact, as Levering shows, the Soviets had never made such commitments and, furthermore, the Anglo-American alliance had no power, short of war, to alter the Soviet position anywhere in Eastern Europe. Yet, it was the perception of agreements at Yalta that would eventually produce, in part, the breakdown of trust between the Allies in the weeks following the conference and "may well be viewed as the beginning of the Cold War."⁶¹ Beginning with the post-Yalta acrimony in the spring of 1945, Soviet-American relations deteriorated gradually and then more sharply and steadily after the beginning of 1946. This breakdown, Levering wrote, was a result of a number of issues, images, and personalities, all of which had divided the former allies. In addition, "domestic political factors, bureaucratic considerations and America's special relationship with England helped to establish what Stalin called the 'two camps.'"⁶² Levering also addressed the issue of the United States' decision to use the atomic bomb. He cited the recent study of Martin Sherwin which concluded that President Truman's use of the weapon was not primarily to intimidate the Russians but, "rather that the decision resulted more from the momentum of bureaucratic decision-making on the subject" and from the desire to use any weapon which might win the War more rapidly.⁶³

⁶⁰Ralph B. Levering, *The Cold War 1945-1987* (Arlington Heights: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 1982), 6-7.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Ibid., 16.

⁶³Ibid, 21.

Another revisionist study is by Melvyn P. Leffler. Published in 1992, *A Preponderance of Power* is a study of the Truman Administration and the Cold War. Privy to declassified government documents, Leffler redefined the Cold War, not as a struggle for power in terms of military capabilities, but power in economic terms. He revealed that U.S. officials did not fear Soviet military power, nor were they concerned that the Soviets might go to war. U.S. officials came to define their nation's security in terms of power relationships.

In their view, power was determined by a country's industrial infrastructure, technological prowess, natural resources, and skilled labor. At the end of World War II, the United States possessed incomparably more power than any other nation. Aware of this, U.S. officials hoped to sustain the wartime alliance, transform vanquished enemies into democratic and capitalistic friends, and persuade imperial Allies to pursue orderly decolonization policies. Thus, they argued, "If friends, as well as foes, could be convinced of the beneficent character of a liberal capitalist multi-lateral order, U.S. officials believed that the world would enter a new era of peace and harmony and that the United States would recover its traditional sense of safety from external threats."⁶⁴ This was a wonderful vision, but it was threatened by interrelated phenomena. First, the presence of Soviet armies in Eastern Europe meant that the Kremlin might absorb these areas into its own sphere in order to expedite reconstruction and enlarge its long-term military capabilities. The rise of the left in Italy, Greece, France, China and other countries meant that communists might win or seize power, reject the liberal capitalist multilateralism espoused by the United States, and bring these nations into the Soviet orbit. Likewise the awakening of nationalist impulses in the Middle East

⁶⁴Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 496.

and Southeast Asia, and the demoralization and deprivation in postwar Germany and Japan might result in these nations becoming susceptible to the appeal of Marxist ideology.

Faced with these possibilities, the United States shifted tactics. Initially content with the role of financial dominance, U.S. officials came to believe that "they had to offer economic assistance in amounts they had not anticipated; had to establish linkages with foreign elites in ways they had not envisioned; and they had to incur strategic commitments and assume political-military responsibilities in places that they had not contemplated."⁶⁵ According to Leffler, these new tactics were deemed essential to establish a basis of power that safeguarded U.S. security and that institutionalized Washington's preponderant influence in the international system. Faced with the reality of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe and the prospective growth of Soviet power throughout Eurasia, America's Cold War policies took shape.

The Soviet threat, Leffler continued, resided principally in the Kremlin's capacity to exploit economic vulnerabilities, nascent nationalism and to capitalize on social dislocation. The policy makers in Washington "understood that their principal task was not to deal with Russian military power but to fill the vacuums of power, infuse a spirit of hope, promote economic reconstruction and champion the principle of self-determination without compromising vital interests."⁶⁶

Truman administration officials were willing to accept a rupture in the Soviet-U.S. relationship because they were convinced that the dangers of inaction greatly exceeded the risks inherent in provoking the Soviets. The Cold War and

⁶⁵Ibid., 498.

⁶⁶Ibid., 499.

the division of Europe, Leffler concluded, were regrettable prospects but not nearly so ominous as the dangers of economic contraction, communist gains, and the prospective erosion of U.S. influence throughout the industrial core of Western Eurasia. Soviet capabilities were limited, and if the U.S.A. acted with sufficient resolve and imagination, Soviet actions would be circumscribed. Although U.S. fears of the Soviets may have been exaggerated, Leffler believed that they were not irrational. True, there were inherent risks in attempting to thwart indigenous communists, rebuild Western Europe, and co-opt German and Japanese power, but the prospect of trying to implement solutions with an entity whose ability to exploit internal vulnerabilities had proven substantial appeared even more hazardous.⁶⁷

⁶⁷Ibid., 506.

CHAPTER IV

SEEDS OF THE COLD WAR

Introduction

The historical writings on the Cold War and the resultant interpretive theories, must be seen as an ongoing response to changing views of American history. The lack of Soviet documents has spawned an historical world view of events seen from only one side of the conflict. Soviet intentions during the Cold War have been all but obscured, while American intentions have been subjected to the greatest scrutiny. This unidimensional approach to historical evaluation has too often been overlooked.

For more than a decade after the beginning of the Cold War, few historians saw any reason to challenge the official American interpretation of its origins. The breakdown of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union was, most agreed, a direct result of Soviet expansionism and of Stalin's violation of wartime agreements forged at Yalta and Potsdam. The Soviet imposition of communist regimes in Eastern Europe was part of a larger ideological design to spread Communism throughout the world. American policy was the logical and necessary response.

Disillusionment with the official justifications for the Cold War began to find expression even in the late 1950s (when anticommunist sentiment in America became excessively pervasive), primarily as a response to McCarthyism, and the "Red Scare." Works, such as William Appleman Williams' *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (1959), now insisted that the Cold War was simply the most recent version of a consistent American effort in the twentieth century to preserve

an "open door" for American trade in world markets. The confrontation with the Soviet Union, he argued, was less a response to Soviet aggressive designs than an expression of the American belief in the necessity of capitalist expansion.⁶⁸

As the Vietnam War grew larger and more unpopular in the 1960s, the scholarly critique of the United States and the Cold War quickly gained intensity. Walter La Feber's, *America, Russia, and the Cold War*, maintained that America's supposedly idealistic internationalism at the close of the war was, in reality, an effort to ensure a postwar order, shaped in the American image—with every nation open to American influence (and to American trade). That was why the United States was so eager to misinterpret Soviet policy, much of which reflected a perfectly reasonable concern to ensure the security of the Soviet Union itself, as part of a larger aggressive design.⁶⁹

Important to many revisionist arguments has been the American decision to use atomic weapons against Japan in 1945. Gar Alperovitz's *Atomic Diplomacy* (1985) expanded on arguments that had begun to appear as early as 1948, and claimed that American decision makers used the bombs not to win the war (for Japan was already effectively defeated), but to impress and intimidate the Soviet Union so as to make it more "manageable" after the war.⁷⁰

The revisionist interpretations of the Cold War (virtually all of which ignored the ideological struggle between capitalist democracy and one party

⁶⁸William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: Norton, 1988).

⁶⁹Walter La Feber, *America, Russia, and the Cold War 1945-1975*, 5th ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985).

⁷⁰Gar Alperovitz, *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam: The Use of the Atomic Bomb and the American Confrontation with Soviet Power* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985).

communist rule and tended to see all Soviet moves as reasonable responses to national security), ultimately produced a reaction of their own. Some of the post-revisionists have done little more than revive the traditional orthodox interpretations of the 1950s. Nevertheless, the most important works in this school have attempted to strike a balance between orthodoxy and revisionism and to identify areas of blame and patterns of misconception on both sides of the conflict. Thomas G. Paterson,⁷¹ John L. Gaddis, Melvyn Leffler, and others have presented a picture of two nations—each with a highly inadequate understanding of the other—struggling to preserve a wartime alliance that had, in fact, temporarily disguised a basic difference in outlook and interests.

The Cold War is over and the Soviet Union no longer exists. With the United States and the former Soviet Union now trying to bury their nuclear arms instead of each other, American historians are beginning to write more candidly about the Cold War and their own country's role in its formation. But, modern criticism has tended to remain a Cold War criticism. It remains steeped in anxieties and the kind of skepticism that the Cold War engendered. The Cold War mentality may have impaired the ability of historical theorists to talk about the politics of criticism in an effective way. Thus, some of the most recent publications are written in one dimension with simplified conclusions and with accusations abounding. The writing itself tends at times to resemble a "blowtorch" more than historical analysis.⁷²

⁷¹Thomas Graham Paterson, *On Every Front: The Making of the Cold War* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1979).

⁷²*The New York Times*, 27 December 1993, 2(B). See also B.W. Brands, *The Devil We Know: Americans and the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).

It is this writer's contention that a more dispassionate, less accusatory tone is needed and that a return to the root causes of the conflict is of primary importance. For too long, revisionist literature has accused the West of fighting a phantom of its own fevered imagination. The peaceful collapse of the Soviet Union and the release of previously classified Soviet and American documents has given us the opportunity to examine once again the events as they occurred. It also gives us the opportunity to provide a corrective not only to the new wave of Cold War revisionism, but to some of the more unsophisticated varieties of Anti-Communist literature. It is the purpose of this study to engage in such an exercise.

Seeds of the Cold War: 1917-1920

The seeds of the Cold War, that clash of Soviet and Western ideology, may be said to have begun on day one of the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917. The first official act of the new Soviet government was the issuance of the Decree of Peace⁷³—an act performed without any prior notification of its war-time allies. That act and the subsequent American intervention have engendered feelings of Soviet-American distrust and animosity which have persisted to this very day.

Soviet authors have argued that capitalism "during the years of the First World War, had entered a state of general crisis, which became the determining feature in the history of the bourgeois world after the October Revolution."⁷⁴ Having overthrown the power of the bourgeoisie and the land-owners and

⁷³James Bunyan and H. H. Fisher, eds., *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917-1918*, vol. 3 (Palo Alto: Hoover War Library Publications, Stanford University Press, 1934), 121.

⁷⁴Nikolai V. Sivachev and Nikolai N. Yakovlev, *Russia and the United States: U.S.-Soviet Relations from the Soviet Point of View* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 32.

converted the means of production into public property, the Soviet socialist state adopted a new line in the principle of foreign policy. It regarded its fundamental foreign policy problem as that of ensuring external conditions that could favor the consolidation of the victory of the Socialist Revolution. "The Bolshevik Party never advanced the slogan of 'world revolution' as a policy for undermining the existing regimes in other countries, or as an idea for a worldwide march against capitalism," say Sivachev and Yakovlev.⁷⁵ From its first years, the Soviet government built its relations with capitalist countries on principles which came to be called the principles of "peaceful coexistence" of states having different social systems. But the capitalistic nations, unwilling to coexist with Soviet Russia, and engaged in an ideological-political struggle by the bourgeoisie against the world of socialism, unleashed a war against her, without any provocation.

The Bolsheviks claimed to have attempted to end the continuation of the "imperialist" war, at once upon seizing power. Their objective was to open the possibility of bringing into being the principles of peaceful co-existence. The notion of the inevitability of peaceful co-existence, it is stated, grew naturally out of Lenin's theory of the successful triumph of socialism, initially in one country only. The Soviet people, therefore, had to defend their rights to peaceful coexistence against the armed struggle forced upon them by world imperialism. The military intervention against the Soviet state "was a war to destroy the socialist system and seize the territories of a sovereign people."⁷⁶

Some Soviet historians state that the United States government regarded the Socialist Revolution as a hostile act. American intervention was, in essence, a

⁷⁵Ibid., 34.

⁷⁶Ibid.

counterrevolutionary "crusade" against Bolshevism. The action of intervention into the Soviet Union in 1917 was predicated upon those theoretical considerations of bourgeoisie capitalism that engender the international policy decisions of the United States today. Soviet historians Sivachev and Yakovlev have argued that the true practical goals of the intervention were "first to overthrow the revolutionary power; and second to consolidate American positions in the 'new Russia.'"⁷⁷ There was the expectation in bourgeois public opinion in the United States that the Soviet power would soon fall, and having been made "safe for democracy," the Russian people would welcome American economic interests and American business.

If this Soviet interpretation of the events following the Bolshevik coup can be explained on the basis of class conflict and Marxist-Leninist principles, then the American and British evaluation of these same events is seen in the context of Allied war aims. The promise to take Russia out of the war, the promise of peace, had long been one of the major political commitments of the Soviet leaders, dating back to 1915. It had become a basic tenet of Bolshevik policy. But the Soviet November 8, 1917 broadcast appeal, a "Decree on Peace," coming as it did without prior consultation with, or warning to, the Allied governments, could only be viewed from the Allied point of view as an unfriendly move. It clearly was a violation of the formal dedication Russia had made in 1914, not to make a separate peace with the Alliance powers. Now, in 1917, at the peak of the war, the abrupt threat of Russia's defection represented not only a grievous setback to the "cause of the Entente, but in the eyes of much of the western public, an act of outright perfidy and betrayal."⁷⁸ Furthermore, the forms and terms of the appeal, to "all

⁷⁷Ibid., 47.

⁷⁸George F. Kennan, *Russia Leaves the War* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 75.

belligerent peoples" to bypass their governments, take things into their own hands, and set up new organs for the purpose of defining not only the conditions of peace, but for the immediate abolition of all colonial relationships, was, in effect, a summons to revolution.⁷⁹ The Decree on Peace, having never been addressed or formally communicated to the Allied governments, was thus viewed, together with the overthrow of the Provisional Government by the Bolsheviks, with alarm and indignation. The Decree coming as it did at a crucial stage of the war was regarded as provocative and offensive. Western countries regarded the Soviet Revolution essentially in its relationship to the fortunes of war. "It could not fail, in these circumstances, to arouse feelings of bitter resentment and negation in a host of Western minds, engrossed as they were with wartime emotion."⁸⁰ Two weeks later, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Leon Trotsky charged that the British bourgeoisie was not unfavorably inclined to a prolongation of the war. The United States government, he also suggested, desired the weakening of the Allies, and aimed to sabotage the common war effort.⁸¹ The exhaustion of Germany, he argued, had only intensified the greed of the American capitalists and the lust of American financiers.⁸² Needless to say, this pronouncement did not enjoy a sympathetic reception in Washington. Had the world not been in the midst of a great war, it is conceivable that the West might have shown more readiness to reflect on the social and political realities behind the Bolshevik success. But

⁷⁹Bunyan and Fisher, 121-22.

⁸⁰Kennan, 76-77.

⁸¹Bunyan and Fisher, 237-39. See also "Izvestiia's Comment on the French and American Note," 250.

⁸²Ibid., 245.

Trotsky's provocative statements, and the unilateral publication by the Soviet government of the Allied Secret Treaties on November 22, 1917, were clearly insulting to Western governments and decreased still further the desire to engage in dealings with the Bolshevik leaders.⁸³

Concomitant with the increasing disillusion with Soviet rhetoric was a sincere illusion that the Bolshevik leadership was a temporary manifestation.⁸⁴ Here it is well to recall that less than a generation before the height of Stalinism and only four years before it took power, the Bolshevik Party had been a small sect, numbering only a few thousand members. It was regarded, even by the rest of the European and Russian revolutionary left, as a narrow-minded fanatical aberration. It was believed that there existed a far larger segment of Russian opinion and political expression, which still favored continuation of the war, and which felt an emotional tie to the purposes for which the Western allies presumably were fighting.

The United States and the other allied nations, furthermore, were strongly opposed to separate peace negotiations, on the grounds that a separate peace would be injurious to Russia and disloyal to the democracies at war with German imperialism.

On November 19, 1917, U.S. Ambassador to Russia, David R. Francis, issued a long statement addressed "to the People of Russia." He warned the Russian people against placing their hopes for peace in their new government; for a Soviet government which "fails to fulfill its obligations to live up to its agreements

⁸³Ibid., 243.

⁸⁴*FRUS: 1918, Russia, I*, 234-35.

cannot command the respect of civilization and neither merit nor receive the loyal support of its own citizens, and consequently cannot survive."⁸⁵

On a subsequent report to the State Department, Francis said: "I have a strong suspicion that Lenin and Trotsky are working in the interests of Germany, but whether that suspicion is correct or not, their success will unquestionably result in Germany's gain."⁸⁶

Lenin was under the impression that his peace proposal of November 8, 1917, had placed all the belligerents in an awkward and serious predicament. When he published the secret Allied treaties and simultaneously moved to end the War on the basis of no annexations or indemnities, he was of the opinion that this and the Soviet influence on the industrial workers and soldiers of the Western countries would blackmail these nations into making peace or cause them to be crushed in a series of revolutionary upheavals. Having already begun secret preliminary discussions with the Germans, Trotsky then announced on November 27, 1917, that the Allied governments, having failed to respond to the November 8 Decree, would now be held responsible for any separate peace the Soviets concluded with the Germans. He went on to call once more, and in the plainest terms, for action by the proletariat of the Allied countries against their governments.⁸⁷ There is no evidence that Trotsky's proposal ever received any serious consideration from the Allies who regarded it as a preposterous suggestion.

The Allies, in turn, were becoming ever more anxious about the future course of the war. A Russian departure from the war would mean the removal of

⁸⁵Ibid., 177.

⁸⁶Ibid., 243.

⁸⁷Bunyan and Fisher, 258-59.

at least forty German divisions to the Western front before spring, and a realization that this action would strengthen German morale as it weakened that of the Entente. However, the Allied nations, in their lack of response, failed to perceive the minimal importance which international affairs had for the average Russian peasant-soldier and citizen. In comparison with domestic issues, the collapse of their traditional political system, and the tragic war losses, Wilson's war aims and the making of the "world safe for democracy," seemed distant and inadequate at best for the average Russian. Furthermore, the Allies failed to appreciate the ruthlessness of political competition in Russia and the profundity of Bolshevik contempt and hatred for the capitalist world.

With Trotsky continuing to argue that the Entente policy was being dictated by the capitalistic fear of social revolution, and Soviet-German peace negotiations proceeding apace, the Allied leaders became unified in their opposition to the Soviet government and its foreign policies. They refused to recognize the Bolsheviks, believing that their seizure of power was a minority insurrection and that their influence was limited to a few well-defined localities. Secretary of State Robert Lansing, in a memorandum to President Wilson, outlined United States opposition to the Soviet government. The Bolshevik faction, he wrote,

was of such a nature, politically and ideologically, that it was impossible to give it recognition. It was characterized by a lack of sentiment of nationality and a determination, frankly avowed, to overthrow all existing governments and establish on the ruins a despotism of the proletariat in every country.⁸⁸

To recognize the Bolsheviks would be to encourage their followers in other countries. One should leave them alone and have no direct dealings with them. The only remedy, the Secretary believed, would be for a "strong commanding

⁸⁸*FRUS, 1918, Russia, I, 270-71.*

personality" to restore order and set up a new government. Do nothing should be our policy until the black period of terrorism comes to an end.⁸⁹ The Bolshevik seizure of power was regarded as something inimical to democracy. In the light of the German menace, the United States government had anticipated that Russian democracy would prosecute the war. Now it watched with disappointment and amazement the efforts of the Bolsheviks to withdraw from the conflict at the expense of national honor and the future safety of democracy in Russia. Such a regime would not be recognized. From that time forward, the policy of non-recognition of the Bolsheviks was pursued without variation and was, at last, proclaimed by Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby on August 10, 1920 in a letter to the Italian ambassador (referred to as the "Colby Note").⁹⁰

The refusal of the Allies to join in the armistice negotiations with Russia and Germany, coupled with the continued failure of the proletariat in the Western countries to overthrow their governments in the expected manner, confronted the Soviet leaders with the necessity of preparing alone to face the formidable representatives of Imperial Germany at Brest-Litovsk.

For the Allies, there seemed nothing to do but hold to the policy of Soviet non-recognition, watchful waiting, and extending covert financial aid to those anti-Bolshevik centers elsewhere in Russia. By the summer of 1918, however, after the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, the policy of mere financial aid had changed to the dispatch of Allied forces to North Russia and Siberia. Secretary Lansing in 1917 had recognized the significance of the revolutionary internationalism of the Soviet regime. He also forecast with accuracy the years of

⁸⁹Ibid., 271.

⁹⁰*FRUS: 1920, III*, 463-68.

civil war, terror, and suffering that lay ahead for Russia.⁹¹ He showed a sound and healthy skepticism concerning various military figures who might be considered potential leaders of a movement against Bolshevism. He failed, to be sure, to foresee the early breakdown of Germany, the significance of the Allied intervention, or that in the end, the communists would succeed in bringing all of Russia under their power. But, neither he nor any of the Allied leaders could have foreseen the extent to which the confusion created by the Allied intervention in the Russian Civil War would eventually assist the Bolsheviks in obtaining a position of final ascendancy in the former Russian Empire.

⁹¹*FRUS: 1918, Russia, I*, 270-71.

CHAPTER V

THE YEARS 1920-1934

1920-1932: The Years of Stabilization

Day after day, month after month, the recently victorious Bolsheviks awaited the European revolution that never came. One of Lenin's first questions to Emma Goldman was: "When could the Social Revolution be expected in America?"⁹² By 1920, however, Lenin became so convinced that the revolutionary wave had receded that he began to turn his attention primarily to the economic development of Russia itself. Lenin's opportunism was based on a simple rule: new situations demand new tactics. He gave up the illusion of the imminent world revolution and reasoned that offensive tactics had to give way to defensive ones. The diplomatic and the revolutionary functions of government had early on been interchangeable. Now, as world revolution receded, a division of labor became necessary and he launched the Third International and, subsequently, the Communist International (Comintern).

Beginning with Lenin's New Economic Policy and the Treaty of Rapallo with Germany in the early 1920s, the Bolsheviks embarked on a concerted program to revive Soviet economy and began what proved to be a remarkably successful effort to recruit foreign technology and capital—including substantial American technology and capital—to aid development of both civilian and military sectors.⁹³

⁹²Emma Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia* (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1923), 15.

⁹³Anthony C. Sutton, *Western Technology and Soviet Economic Development, Vol. 1, 1917 to 1930* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1968).

Lenin's strategy of "socialism in one country" was to rebuild the country's industrial and military infrastructure while awaiting the moment when, the Bolsheviks believed, the world would be ripe for revolutionary change.

To ensure the success of the latter, the Bolsheviks concluded that Soviet national interests were best advanced by manipulating Western states through Communist and non-Communist personalities, institutions and sources. "American and other Communists accepted the political authority of the Comintern because it became their only direct human and organizational link to the Russian Revolution, the reason for their very political existence."⁹⁴ At the center of these beliefs was a deeply rooted commitment to egalitarianism, brotherhood and the possibility of reshaping the human psyche. Thus, while there was improved commercial interaction between the Western nations and the Soviets, including cooperation in food relief to Russia, Soviet foreign policy continued to plan the subversion of Western nations, particularly Britain and the United States.

Drawing upon recently declassified Central Party Archives in Moscow, which included the papers of the Communist International, Steven Koch has written that another Soviet goal was:

To create for the right-thinking non-Communist West, the dominating political prejudice of the era; the belief that any opinion that happened to serve the foreign policy of the Soviet Union was derived from the most essential elements of human decency. . . . To criticize or challenge Soviet policy was the unfailing mark of a bad, bigoted and probably stupid person, while support was equally infallible proof of a forward-looking mind

⁹⁴Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc., 1957), 264.

committed to all that was best for humanity and mankind by an uplifting refinement of sensibility."⁹⁵

Accordingly, Communist activity became heavily involved in their subsidization of labor unions, recruiting students for Soviet espionage, Negro issues, political parties and sensational events, like the Sacco-Vanzetti case. "This activity was aimed at instilling a reflexive loathing of the United States and its people To be shown as an almost insanely xenophobic place, murderously hostile to foreigners."⁹⁶

By signing the Kellogg-Briand Peace Pact (1928), the Soviet Union could be said to have finally joined the world community. From 1917 through the 1920s, however, there had been little change in American policy toward the Bolsheviks, although some Republican leaders, notably Senator William Borah of Idaho, favored a change in Wilson's anti-Bolshevik stand. The successive Republican administrations during the 1920s adhered to the policy that the Soviet Union would not be recognized unless certain essential conditions were met: agreement on repayment of outstanding debts, compensation for nationalized enterprises and a pledge not to engage in propaganda activities in the United States. Such a rigid stance all but ensured that there would be no establishment of diplomatic relations between Washington and Moscow. Neither of the two countries believed the establishment of formal diplomatic ties was urgently needed; they could deal with one another irrespective of such ties. Thus, neither side took the initiative to alter the situation.

⁹⁵Stephen Koch, *Double Lives: Spies and Writers in the Secret Soviet War of Ideas Against the West* (New York: The Free Press, 1993), 12-13.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, 31. See also Draper, 387-90.

1932-1934: U.S. Recognition of the Soviet Union

Nations have coexisted throughout history on the basis of interests. Whether those nations were autocratic or democratic, common interests were assumed to take precedence over ideology. Yet, in the early years of Soviet Russia, Soviet-American relations were governed more by ideological differences than by shared interests. Beginning with President Wilson, American-Soviet relations became concentrated on the Marxist ideological orientation of the new Russia, even to the extent of not attempting to find common interests to restrain Germany. In 1918, this culminated in the abortive American intervention (alongside its major World War I allies) into Siberia and North Russia. A case may be made that the Americans, more than the Russians, were prisoners of ideology. Clearly Lenin himself never subordinated interests to ideology. The policy of non-recognition proclaimed during the Wilson administration, began to change only with the emergence of Franklin Roosevelt as President. In the intervening years, the Soviet government had neither become weakened nor isolated. Soviet-American economic contacts had flourished despite non-recognition and could be expected to increase still further.

Soviet historians have argued that the government of the United States became interested in the political value of establishing diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union as a means of establishing a balance of power. Roosevelt, Sivachev and Yakovlev have written, was motivated not by any sympathies for the socialist state, but "by a realization of its growing strength, which served as a dependable guarantee of the defense of mankind, including the American people, from the threat of Fascist involvement."⁹⁷ The Americans, they believe, did not lose sight of

⁹⁷Sivachev and Yakovlev, *Russia and the United States*, 150.

the paramount interest of the United States in normalizing political relations with a nation that was acquiring an ever-increasing importance in its plans to contain the aggressive activity of Japan and Germany.

The Soviets, for their part, had been altering their position on relations with the major Western nations since the early 1920s. First and foremost they had wanted credits, money and capital. This plan, of course, was to be on terms that would in no way "limit their freedom of action as a revolutionary regime—their freedom, that is, to proceed with the realization of the goals of socialism at home, and to pursue their world revolutionary activity abroad."⁹⁸ Second, they wanted trade, unencumbered by boycotts, political attitudes and lack of credit. Finally, they wanted full fledged diplomatic recognition from the major capitalist governments so as to facilitate the extension of credits abroad, the development of foreign trade, the added protection against any renewal of military intervention, and "partly because they had already become aware of the political value, and the subjective satisfactions, of prestige—even in the community of non-Communist states."⁹⁹ All the while, Soviet official utterances and Comintern resolutions kept referring to the leaders of the Western countries as imperialists, oppressors, or criminals. The historical mission of the Communist International remained that of destroying bourgeois society.

By 1932 Russia under Stalin was suffering from continued internal difficulties. Political discontent with the Party and the governmental and cultural elite generally was widespread. The hardships which he had brought on the

⁹⁸George F. Kennan, *Russia and the West under Lenin and Stalin* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 183.

⁹⁹*Ibid.*, 184.

country by the industrialization and collectivization programs persisted. The year 1933 saw Adolf Hitler's rise to power and the establishment of Nazi rule. Of greater concern to Stalin, however, was the Japanese seizure of Manchuria—an act which posed an immediate threat to the Soviet Far Eastern borders. This uneasiness over Japan, which aroused in the American public mind the strong attachment it had come to feel for the political and territorial integrity of China, was exploited by Soviet representatives. They spread the thesis that Japan's aggressive policies in Manchuria were a reflection of the absence of regular relations between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The Soviet contention that U.S.-U.S.S.R. recognition was based primarily on military rather than trade considerations received support from both George Kennan and John Lewis Gaddis. Kennan argued that the Soviet pressures vis á vis Japan and China, which had failed to affect the Hoover administration, found their mark with Roosevelt. This was no doubt increased by Hitler's ascension to power in the weeks just prior to his inauguration as President. Naturally, although F.D.R. did insist that the Soviets sign a number of "assurances" dealing with subjects, on which it was assumed Americans might have some anxiety, such as propaganda, the legal protection of Americans in Russia, and their right of religious liberty on Russian soil; "no one who knew anything about the Soviet Union could have imagined for a moment that they would restrain or modify the established behavior of the Soviet government in any way."¹⁰⁰

It is Gaddis' opinion that the strongest justification, in Roosevelt's mind, for normalizing relations with Moscow (despite the obvious commercial advantages to a depressed economy) was the need to counter the rise of potentially aggressive

¹⁰⁰Ibid.

regimes in Berlin and Tokyo. But, even here, while Western European democracies were themselves appeasing Hitler, the nature of the Soviet regime itself operated against the kind of cooperative relationship Roosevelt had envisaged. The onset of Stalin's purges made the idea that common interests might exist with such a government distasteful to most Americans and "imposed obvious limits on the extent to which Washington could do anything more than maintain minimal diplomatic contacts with the Russians."¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the End of the Cold War: Implications, Reconsiderations, Provocations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 26. See also Dallek, 78-81; Ronald Steel, *Walter Lippmann and the American Century* (New York: Random House, 1980), 251-55.

CHAPTER VI

THE ROAD TO WAR: 1934-1940

By the mid-1930s, the utopian atmosphere that had pervaded the first decade after the Russian Revolution was no longer in evidence. With the onset of industrialization and the consolidation of Stalin's dictatorship, utopian speculation and social experimentation were repudiated and abandoned in favor of a huge centralized political machine driven by industrial concerns and legitimized by a semi-religious cult of Stalin.¹⁰² In the West, the activities of the Comintern had succeeded in diverting attention from Stalin's efforts to consolidate his power, while the creation of the Popular Front against fascism served to divert the world's attention from the reign of terror Stalin had visited upon his followers.¹⁰³

The dominant historical factor in the 1930s, however, was German and Japanese totalitarianism. After first ignoring Hitler, Stalin changed in 1934. Russia joined the League of Nations, and became the strongest protagonist at Geneva of a policy of collective resistance to the aggressive tendencies of Nazi Germany. The Soviet government entered into negotiations with the French and Czechoslovak governments and concluded treaties of alliance with them, directed against Hitler.

In mid-July 1936 the Spanish Civil War began suddenly. The Soviet military aid efforts appear on the surface to have been conducted in perfectly good faith, with no other purpose than to assure the victory of the Spanish Republic and

¹⁰²Richard Stites, *Revolutionary Dreams: Utopian Vision and Experimental Life in the Russian Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

¹⁰³Koch, 137-38.

to hamper Hitler's action toward France and Continental Europe. However, Soviet military intervention lasted less than six months when it began to taper off and give way to a policy of limited economic aid. Kennan has admitted to being unable to determine the nature of this Soviet action but, in the end, has attributed it to "the last bizarre phase of Moscow's effort to strengthen the antifascist cause in western Europe."¹⁰⁴

Stephen Koch has argued that the continued dichotomy between the apparent and real motivations behind Soviet policy can be seen clearly in the case of the Spanish Civil War. The author has stated that Stalin's objective was very decidedly not the victory of the Republic but, rather, the creation of front groups in Western Europe and the United States to raise money for other less noble causes.¹⁰⁵

According to Koch, Soviet "anti-fascism" in general was nothing but an illusion. Stalin sought an understanding with Hitler, not in 1939, as most historians think, but from the very beginning of the Nazi regime. To justify this assertion, Koch produced what appears to be incontrovertible evidence: continuous contacts between the two dictators from 1934 on. Stalin's real objective then, Koch has concluded, was to deflect Hitler westward, while reaching an agreement with him on the division of Eastern Europe. Thus, the anti-fascist pose so vigorously upheld by the Soviets was intended not to stem the spread of German power, but merely to ensure the pro-Soviet allegiances of "enlightened" circles in the West.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁴Kennan, *Russia and the West*, 312.

¹⁰⁵Koch, 275-85.

¹⁰⁶*Ibid.*, 127-45; 300-301. See also Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr M. Nekrich, *Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to the Present* (New York: Summit Books, 1980), 316-69.

Winston Churchill's credentials as an anti-Bolshevik went back as far as 1917. At that time he had told the British Cabinet that Lenin and Trotsky should be captured and hanged, "as the object upon whom justice will be executed, however long it takes, and to make them feel that their punishment will become an important object of British policy."¹⁰⁷ Now, throughout the 1930s, he warned against Hitler and the Nazis and called for England's rearmament. His isolation in Parliament remained complete, however, until the Austrian *Anschluss* in March 1938. He then proposed a plan to confront Nazi aggression with an interlocking alliance of nations. He urged a restoration of the balance of powers and included America in his plan. He was convinced that constructive action was still possible, telling the House of Commons that there should be "a solemn treaty for mutual defence against aggression," organized by Britain and France, "in what you may call a Grand Alliance."¹⁰⁸

Throughout 1938 and 1939 Churchill continued to advocate a grand alliance of nations, including the Soviet Union as a bulwark against Nazism. The impressive growth of Soviet military power during the 1930s helps to explain why Churchill, despite an unwavering anti-communism, welcomed the Soviet Union's call in the spring of 1939 for a three-power alliance linking France, Britain, and the Soviet Union. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, still wedded to his policy of appeasement, rejected the idea.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: The Stricken World 1916-1922* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1977), 225.

¹⁰⁸Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: The Prophet of Truth 1922-1939* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1977), 917.

¹⁰⁹Winston Churchill, *The Second World War: The Gathering Storm* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1948), 362-65.

The Nazi-Soviet pact several weeks later constituted a major disaster for the West, for this resulted in an enormous shift in the balance of power. Not until 1940 did Churchill, by then Prime Minister, with the war almost lost and German troops invading Russia, achieve his wartime alliance.

In the United States, President Roosevelt had been virtually immobilized in developing foreign policy because of his preoccupation with domestic economic problems. His internationalism seemed essentially rhetorical rather than practical. He was not to blame for the state of unilateral disarmament in which he found America in the 1930s but did little to remedy matters. George Kennan noted that Roosevelt's statements were made for their internal political effect rather than their impact on world events.¹¹⁰ Furthermore, Roosevelt's progressive bent caused him to rate Soviet Russia as a bigger influence for world peace than Britain. He sent the anti-British Joseph Kennedy as ambassador to London and democratic politician and lawyer Joseph E. Davies as ambassador to the Soviet Union. The latter move was particularly destructive, as Davies was unfit for the position. His gullibility resulted in great measure in the eventual destruction of the State Department's Division of Eastern European Affairs. In George Kennan's words:

What mortified us most of all was the impression we received that the President himself knew nothing about, or cared nothing for, what we had accomplished in building up the embassy at Moscow; that the post, with all that it stood for, and all that depended on it, was for him only another political plum, to be handed out in return for campaign contributions.¹¹¹

Roosevelt was never prepared to discuss specific military and diplomatic backing for Britain and France against Germany. Admittedly, he did not want to

¹¹⁰Kennan, *Memoirs*, 53.

¹¹¹*Ibid.*, 82.

go too far ahead of public opinion, and in official pronouncements, he continued to profess his determination to keep the country out of foreign complications. The president's demand in April 1939 that Hitler give ten-year non-aggression guarantees to thirty-one countries only succeeded in convincing Hitler that under no circumstances would the U.S. actually intervene militarily.¹¹²

Roosevelt continued to appeal to world leaders to settle international disputes peacefully, but with tensions mounting in Europe with the expectation of war in the near future, he submitted a budget plan for fiscal year 1940, which for the first time, included an increase for defense spending. It was only in November 1939, after the outbreak of World War II. that the existing neutrality legislation was repealed. Beyond such steps, however, he did not want to take his country farther in the direction of direct involvement in European affairs.

In contrast, President Roosevelt was willing to be more forceful toward Japan. New legislation was passed which, as of January 1940, would abrogate the treaty of commerce between the two nations. Thus, Japanese shippers, merchants, and bankers engaged in American trade would no longer be protected by treaty rights.

It was only the deteriorating conditions in Europe—the Blitzkrieg War and the German-Japanese Alliance of 1940—that propelled Roosevelt to transform American foreign policy and to embrace military force, power politics, and international collective action as being necessary to preserve the peace and prevent aggression.

¹¹²Dallek, 186.

CHAPTER VII

THE ROOSEVELT WAR YEARS: 1941-1945

It has long been acknowledged by Western commentators and historians that the United States' adherence to Wilsonianism—and disarmament and arms efforts—played an important role in setting the stage for World War II. Less widely appreciated has been the crucial role played by the Wilson vision in the genesis of the Cold War. As liberal-pacifist assumptions blinded Western leaders in the 1930s to the growing threat posed by Nazi Germany, so the Wilsonian perspective continued to blind American officials during World War II to the dangers posed by the emergent power of the Soviet Union.

Winston Churchill had sought to persuade his fellow Western politicians to regard the Soviet Union with wariness and to remain attentive to the principles of a military balance of power. Western leaders largely ignored him, opting instead for a policy of appeasement anchored in Wilsonian hopes. Accordingly, between 1941 and 1945, under the influence of Wilsonian ideals, the United States made a series of specific policy choices the effect of which was to strengthen the Soviet position vis-à-vis the West and cede ever greater exposure of European and Asian territory to Soviet control.

Franklin Roosevelt, like Wilson before him, miscalculated in attempting to shape a postwar peace. In this miscalculation, Wilsonian hopes and assumptions played a pivotal role. Believing he could see the future more clearly than his British contemporary, and locked within the Wilsonian framework, Roosevelt continually failed to heed the advice of Churchill concerning their third partner in the Grand Alliance, Joseph Stalin.

From early on, Churchill sought to persuade Roosevelt to share his own suspicions of Stalin, so that when the War ended the two English-speaking democracies might stand together as a united front against potential Soviet aggression or encroachment. From the start, however, Roosevelt rejected Churchill's traditional, balance-of-power approach to the Soviet Union and of international politics generally, as reactionary and anachronistic. He adhered closely to the hope that Wilson's vision of a united world could be brought to fruition by his own hand. He led his advisors to believe that he could persuade Stalin to share his vision and, accordingly, made extraordinary efforts to win the trust and goodwill of the Soviet dictator. He did so, not only at the expense of Anglo-American friendship, but also at the expense of the sovereignty of many smaller states.

Patrick Glynn has stated that Roosevelt made extraordinary efforts to win the trust and good will of the Soviet dictator

through a series of specific and ill-advised decisions—major territorial and political concessions to Stalin at the Teheran Conference, rejection of Churchill's principle of interposing Western military power in the way of Stalin's westward advance, refusal to press Stalin on behalf of Poland's government-in-exile in London, refusal to aid the Warsaw uprising in the face of Stalin's objections, failure at Yalta to back British demands for machinery to protect democratic forces in Poland, and finally, the refusal to permit American armies to march eastward as Soviet armies approached from the West, thereby allowing the Red Army to take Vienna, Prague, and Berlin—the United States opened the way for a major expansion of Soviet power on the European Continent.¹¹³

¹¹³Patrick Glynn, *Closing Pandora's Box: Arms Races, Arms Control, and the History of the Cold War* (New York: A New Republic Book/Basic Books, 1992), 85-86. See also Robert Nisbet, *Roosevelt and Stalin: The Failed Courtship* (Washington: Regnery Gateway, 1988).

One key to understanding the immediate origins of the Cold War is to recognize the profound differences between Churchill and Roosevelt regarding the subject of Stalin and the Soviet Union. From the outset, Churchill, while hopeful that long-term relations between the Soviet Union and the West might be improved as a result of the War, understood the essential nature of the Soviet regime and of Stalin. Roosevelt, whatever his other virtues and abilities might have been, never did. "If Hitler invaded Hell," said Churchill, "I would make at least a favourable reference to the Devil in the House of Commons."¹¹⁴ John Lewis Gaddis has cited a similar remark of Roosevelt's made to Churchill in 1942 to illustrate Roosevelt's view of Stalin. "'My children, it is permitted for you in time of grave danger to walk with the devil until you have crossed the bridge.'"¹¹⁵ However, Gaddis has taken the citation out of context—with quite misleading results. Roosevelt was referring here, not to Stalin, but to Admiral Darlan, the Vice Premier of Vichy France.¹¹⁶ In fact, Roosevelt was quite suspicious of the French. The Soviets were another matter. One searches Roosevelt's correspondence in vain for an expression of suspicion toward the Soviet Union equalling that which the American President routinely expressed for the French. If Churchill knew that in doing business with Stalin he was dealing with the "devil," there is little evidence that Roosevelt felt any of the same suspicion toward his Soviet comrade-at-arms.

The profoundly contrasting views of Churchill and Roosevelt reflected the fundamentally different paradigms within which they approached foreign

¹¹⁴Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: The Grand Alliance* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1950), 370-71.

¹¹⁵Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 3.

¹¹⁶Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt*, 2:22.

affairs—rooted, in turn, in their larger visions of politics. Churchill's framework was that of traditional power politics. He believed in military power and alliances. He saw peace as the product, not primarily of good feelings among nations, but of the balance of power. The world contained a number of relatively peaceful, democratic states, along with a number of more authoritarian states that were potential aggressors. Peace required that a preponderance of military power remain in the hands of the peaceful nations. In the relations among great nations, Churchill knew, relative military strength and control of territory always counted and counted greatly. Churchill was also sensitive to the differences between political regimes—the way in which totalitarianism, whether as manifested under Hitler or under Stalin, stood in natural enmity with democracy. He was not particularly moralistic about the conflict between totalitarianism and democracy; still, he understood how ideology shaped interests.

American policy, meanwhile, was shaped by a combination of Wilsonianism and New Deal progressivism. Throughout the War, the rhetoric of American diplomacy remained remarkably Wilsonian in tenor. As late as February 1945, Roosevelt was promising that the accords coming out of Yalta would "spell the end of the system of unilateral action, the exclusive alliances, the spheres of influence, the balances of power, and all the other expedients that have been tried for centuries—and have always failed."¹¹⁷ This was Wilson's language of 1919.

While Churchill's Britain, in Roosevelt's mind, represented the old order, Stalin's Soviet Union, through its "socialist" ideals, was connected to the new. Wilsonian hopes for a changed world were thus reinforced by the fashionable New Deal view that the Soviet Union, for all its imagined faults and failings, constituted

¹¹⁷*FRUS:1945, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, V, 975.*

a "progressive" society with elements of real democracy and represented the true wave of the future. This was a view to which Roosevelt himself subscribed. As Averell Harriman recalled, Roosevelt became a believer in what was called the "convergence" theory of U.S.-Soviet relations—that the Soviet Union and the United States would gradually become more like one another—the Soviet Union less centralized, the United States more socialistic.¹¹⁸

In this view, the President received support from an unexpected source. Knowing of Stalin's firsthand knowledge of the Anglo-Soviet invasion in the early days of the Soviet state, and of Churchill's animosity toward that state, Eleanor Roosevelt sent her husband a memo quoting from a 1919 remark by Churchill criticizing the Bolsheviks. Mrs. Roosevelt's comment was blunt and pointed: "It is not surprising if Mr. Stalin's slow to forget," she wrote.¹¹⁹

American foreign policy from Wilson to Roosevelt, then, had been a continuum, based on the premise that international relations, as conducted by the European powers, had been a failure. Accordingly, Kimball has argued, Roosevelt was in favor of

arms control, the elimination of trade barriers, and the establishment of governments responsive to the needs and aspirations of their citizens—thus ending colonialism and oppressive spheres of influence Bolshevism, Nazism, and Fascism were distrusted and feared, but not blamed for the collapse of the interwar order.¹²⁰

Thus, at its basis, the premises of Roosevelt's diplomacy were precisely the premises of the disarmament and arms control projects between the wars.

¹¹⁸Harriman and Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1941-1946*, 169-70.

¹¹⁹Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt*, 3:288.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 1:14.

Roosevelt's diplomacy, like disarmament itself, was an effort to transcend "power politics."

Part of Roosevelt's confidence concerning "convergence" and changes in the Soviet Union came from Joseph E. Davies, Roosevelt's ambassador to Moscow in the late 1930s and a key wartime advisor to the President on the Soviet Union. Present at the very height of Stalin's Great Terror and the Red Army purge, Davies managed nonetheless to form and sustain an overwhelmingly favorable view of Stalin and the Soviet regime. His book, *Mission to Moscow*, presented a remarkably distorted vision of Soviet realities which, especially from today's perspective, appears horrifyingly naive. The Soviet Union, as portrayed in his book, was changing and reforming. Communism was failing, and the communists under Stalin were turning to capitalistic methods. "Human nature," as he put it, was reasserting itself.¹²¹ He wrote that incentive and profit were reviving as were social classes.

Personally, I do not think that the world is in any real danger from Communism for many years to come. Communism won't work. It hasn't worked here. This government is not communism. It is a socialism. And this socialism has been modified, and is being compelled to accede more and more to the methods of capitalism and individualism in order to make the machine work.¹²²

Davies' extensive Soviet contacts and his special claims to understand the Soviets may help explain Roosevelt's curious remark in a letter to Churchill on March 18, 1942: "I can personally handle Stalin better than either your Foreign Office or my State Department. Stalin hates the guts of all your top people. He

¹²¹Joseph E. Davies, *Mission to Moscow* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1941), 423.

¹²²*Ibid.*, 318.

thinks he likes me better, and I hope he will continue to do so."¹²³ Roosevelt became increasingly self-confident in his relations with Stalin, going so far as to suggest a meeting of the two leaders without the presence of Churchill. The Soviets were extremely suspicious of Churchill, whom they recognized as a formidable political opponent. With time, they began to recognize to what degree Roosevelt's outlook differed from Churchill's and to what extent it would be possible to drive a wedge between the two Western allies.

Antagonism toward Churchill eventually was to provide the foundation of Soviet-American friendship. In this process, Davies was a witting or unwitting agent. He would stress to Roosevelt the Soviet suspicion of Churchill and argued in 1943 that friendship between Russia and the United States was natural, because neither nation wanted anything the other had: neither could impose its will upon the other. Not so the friendship between Britain and the USSR, which was complicated by British imperial designs. What was needed, Davies affirmed, was someone (that is, Roosevelt) to "allay the old fears and suspicions" of the Soviets and to "prevent the needs of the British Empire from disrupting [Allied] unity."¹²⁴ A series of correspondences and meetings then ensued between Davies and the Soviets, so "as to come to a complete and final agreement upon matters which would preserve the vital interests of each country."¹²⁵

Davies' advice to Roosevelt that Stalin could be trusted, that the U.S. confidence in the Soviet Union must be complete, that Stalin had no real territorial

¹²³Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt*, 1:421.

¹²⁴Quoted in Glynn, *Closing Pandora's Box: Arms Races, Arms Control and the History of the Cold War*, 97.

¹²⁵*Ibid.*, 98.

expansionist plans, and that the Soviet system was bound to become more liberal—these were all things Roosevelt wanted to hear. There was no evidence to support Davies' claims, but they mirrored the President's own thoughts.¹²⁶

Davies was also indirectly responsible for Roosevelt's ill-advised 1942 promise to launch a second front. When Soviet ambassador to the U.S., Maxim Litvinov, complained to Davies that Churchill opposed a cross-channel operation "for political and empire reasons," Davies relayed this information to Roosevelt, bolstering the President's confidence in his own ability to win Stalin's trust, which paralleled that of Davies.¹²⁷

Despite warnings from the British and advice from his own military chiefs about the limits of Allied capabilities, Roosevelt agreed to a misleading public statement, drafted by Soviet Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, indicating that "in the due course of the conversations, full understanding was reached with regard to the urgent task of creating a second front in Europe in 1942."¹²⁸ This was a short-term expedient, according to Kimball, intended by Roosevelt to boost Soviet morale and counter the ever-present danger of a negotiated settlement between Moscow and Berlin.¹²⁹ Roosevelt wrote to Churchill, "I am especially anxious that he [Molotov] carry back some real results of his mission and that he will give a favorable account to Stalin. I am inclined to

¹²⁶Elizabeth Kimball MacLean, "Joseph E. Davies and Soviet-American Relations, 1941-1943," *Diplomatic History*, 4 (Winter 1980): 73-93. See also Amos Perlmutter, *FDR and Stalin: A Not So Grand Alliance 1943-1945* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 65-70.

¹²⁷MacLean, 82, 83, 89.

¹²⁸*FRUS: 1942, III*, 594.

¹²⁹Kimball, *The Juggler*, 192.

think that at present all the Russians are a bit down in the mouth."¹³⁰ Roosevelt's desire for an invasion of Western Europe in 1942 seemed to stem more from his concern about events in the Soviet Union than from any domestic pressure to get American troops into the fight against Germany. The public statement never spelled out the nature of the "full understanding," but the Soviets chose to treat it as a firm, unconditional commitment.¹³¹

In short, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that even before the Teheran Conference in 1943, the Soviets had secured a broad, in-principle agreement from Roosevelt on their most important demands regarding Eastern Europe. Roosevelt had gone out of his way to distance himself from Churchill, having surrendered on the question of the Polish border and even failing to support Churchill's drive to assure a democratic, Western-leaning government for Poland.

Roosevelt's decision to tilt toward Stalin at the expense of Churchill was to have far-reaching strategic consequences. He was convinced that even if he could not convert Stalin into a good democrat, he would still be able to come to a working agreement with him. After all, he had spent his life managing men, and Stalin could not be so different from other people. While Roosevelt struggled to maintain a tone of mutual good will, Stalin moved to consolidate his power over Poland. The Soviet leader sat idly by while the Polish underground rose against the Nazis, even to the point of denying permission to land British planes, so that parachute drops of supplies could be made to the beleaguered rebels in the city. For the first time since becoming ambassador to Moscow in 1943, Averell

¹³⁰Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt*, vol. 1, *Alliance Emerging*, 198-99; 503-4.

¹³¹Kimball, *The Juggler*, 192. See also Mark A. Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front: American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1977).

Harriman grew suspicious of the Soviet attitude—fearing that Soviet refusal to permit our drops was "based on ruthless political considerations."¹³² His suggestion to press the Soviets harder was not supported in Washington.

The atomic bomb may have ended the war, but it did not end the struggle against totalitarianism and authoritarian forces. A new post-World War II conflict, the Cold War, was rapidly emerging, the seeds of which had been planted long before and in Franklin Roosevelt's ambitious and ill-considered diplomacy toward Stalin. The prevailing effort among recent American historians has been to defend FDR's diplomacy and attempt to counter, or at least to mitigate, the impression that his approach to Stalin was misguided or naive. John L. Gaddis, whose book *Strategies of Containment* has been cited previously, has framed his thesis on Roosevelt's attitude toward Stalin with a quotation from FDR's letter to Churchill of April 6, 1945, to the effect that "our armies will be in a very few days in a position that will permit us to become tougher than heretofore appeared advantageous to the war effort."¹³³ Gaddis is here implying a more realistic approach to Stalin's war aims on the part of the President. However, White House logs show the letter to have been drafted by White House Chief of Staff Admiral William D. Leahy. The message did not mean that the President had finally accepted the idea of a postwar Soviet threat and was advocating an early form of military containment. This message merely endorsed the strong British protests over Soviet accusations stemming from the German surrender talks in Bern; it did not refer to the broader issue of Eastern Europe and Soviet actions there. Moreover, it came right after Roosevelt had rejected Churchill's plea for a drive on

¹³²Harriman and Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1941-1946*, 336.

¹³³Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt*, 3:617.

Berlin and earlier proposals for Allied forces to move into Austria and Czechoslovakia. Admiral Leahy, in fact, had supported the pleas from Ambassador Harriman in Moscow and others for a change in policy toward the Soviet Union. Kimball, commenting on this letter, has concluded that

Harriman believed that the Soviets understood only power, and that the United States should demand a *quid pro quo* for any aid. Sent to Warm Springs for Roosevelt's approval, the telegram was sent back to Washington without comment in only one hour and twenty-eight minutes, hardly time enough for Roosevelt to have reconsidered and redirected the entire thrust of his wartime and postwar policy toward the Soviet Union. In fact, one wonders if the President gave this message any consideration at all, particularly in view of his poor health.¹³⁴

Gaddis also suggested that Roosevelt's many concessions to the Soviet Union, especially late in the War, may have been part of a strategy designed to conserve American lives by allowing Soviets to take the brunt of the war's casualties. However, he appears to have forgotten that it was the Americans who insisted on mounting an invasion of Europe in 1942 (Sledgehammer), and it was Roosevelt's idea of putting air power directly on the Russian front in July 1942. In both instances, it was Churchill who had resisted, the key issue having been the loss of Allied lives.

Although Gaddis has contended that Roosevelt's priority to the end "was to win the War: *quid pro quo* bargaining [with the Soviets] might follow, but it would not precede that accomplishment."¹³⁵ Roosevelt's dealings with Stalin were actually shaped as much, if not more, by the President's hopes for the postwar world and his plan of enlisting the Soviets in a Concert of Powers [the United Nations Organization], as by wartime considerations. He did not engage in *quid pro quo*

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment*, 15.

bargaining, because he did not believe it was necessary. Stalin was "not an imperialist," FDR declared. The Soviets had no "crazy ideas of conquest."¹³⁶

Likewise, Robert Dallek, in his 1979 book on FDR's foreign policy, rests his case for Roosevelt's partial realism on the contention that FDR decided against sharing the secret of the Manhattan Project with Stalin.¹³⁷ However, there is no evidence to suggest that Roosevelt was unalterably opposed to divulging the secret to Stalin, and quite possibly might have done so had not Churchill strenuously intervened and convinced the President to sign an explicit agreement with Britain to the effect that knowledge of the bomb was not to be shared with other countries without mutual consent.¹³⁸

Niels Bohr was convinced that the American and British governments should inform the Soviet Union at the earliest possible date of the existence of the secret atomic bomb project. Such a gesture, Bohr felt, was necessary to build the trust that would be required to establish effective international control of atomic energy at the end of the War. By control, Bohr meant complete abolition of nuclear weapons and international cooperation to exploit atomic energy for purely peaceful uses. Throughout 1944, Bohr lobbied Roosevelt and Churchill eventually visiting each leader on behalf of his program. The story of Bohr's unsuccessful effort of persuasion vis-à-vis Roosevelt and Churchill has increasingly come to be seen as the first in a series of what are perceived by some to have been "lost chances"—squandered opportunities to circumvent and transcend the problem of the

¹³⁶Cited in Robert Nisbet, *Roosevelt and Stalin: The Failed Courtship*, 73.

¹³⁷Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, 545.

¹³⁸Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt*, 3:318-19. See also Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill: Road to Victory 1941-1945* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co, 1986), 470-71.

nuclear arms race. However, even an author of such persuasion as Martin Sherwin is forced to acknowledge that Bohr's vision of the Soviet Union was hopelessly naive. He was certain, Sherwin wrote, that Russian scientists could influence Soviet policy; "That their influence with the Soviet government on political matters might be nil was a possibility that apparently did not occur to him."¹³⁹

The full extent and naiveté of Bohr's faith in "openness" must be understood when, as late as June 1948, long after the Cold War was under way and just one month before the Soviets would launch the first Berlin crisis, Bohr wrote a lengthy letter to Secretary of State George Marshall, recommending that the United States immediately offer to open *all* of its military facilities, including its atomic weapons facilities, to inspectors from other countries on a reciprocal basis. The ostensible purpose of this grand gesture was to end international suspicions and forestall an arms race once and for all.¹⁴⁰

Yet, given Stalin's overriding priorities in Poland, and the ruthlessness with which he was willing to pursue his aims there and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, it is difficult to imagine how American openness about the bomb could have changed these objectives. Stalin, of course, already knew about the American project from his spies, and atomic research in the Soviet Union had been underway as early as 1942. Churchill was acutely aware of these problems, but it is uncertain if Roosevelt was and whether, left to his own devices, the American President might well have divulged the existence of the Manhattan Project to Stalin in 1944 as Bohr had suggested.

¹³⁹Martin J. Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance* (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 98.

¹⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 68.

Roosevelt's policy of accommodation toward the Soviet Union continued until his death in April 1945. As noted previously, this attitude was engendered by his sincere belief that in the postwar world the system of unilateral action, exclusive alliances, spheres of influence, and the balance of power would all but disappear.¹⁴¹ This Wilsonian dream probably accounts for some curious American military decisions which occurred near the end of the war. At the end of March 1945, American and British armies stood in striking distance of Berlin and Prague. It was likely that the Soviet Army would take Vienna, but the possibility also existed of introducing a large Allied force into Austria as well. Previous Allied planning had assumed that the Americans and British would drive as deep as possible into the "heart of Germany," and before D-Day Berlin had been among explicit American objectives.¹⁴²

Now, Eisenhower changed his plan to advance, not to Berlin as previously agreed, but in a more southerly direction to Dresden. Eisenhower had contacted Stalin about this on his own initiative, and the British Chiefs of Staff were angered not to have been consulted beforehand and protested to the United States Chiefs of Staff against this procedure and change of plan without any consultation with Combined Chiefs of Staff.¹⁴³ Churchill replied to Eisenhower that this change in plans had important political significance, as the Russian armies in the South seemed certain to enter Vienna and overrun Austria. "If we deliberately leave Berlin to them, even if it should be in our grasp, the double event may strengthen

¹⁴¹*FRUS: 1945, Conferences at Malta and Yalta, V, 975.*

¹⁴²Martin Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Road to Victory, 1941-1945* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1986), 1273.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*

their conviction, already apparent, that they have done everything."¹⁴⁴ The strategic consequences of this decision were more grave than the Americans understood. By ceding the German capital to Soviet forces, not only was the United States yielding a target of enormous symbolic and political value—a city that, thanks partly to the American abandonment, would be the focal point of Cold War crises and a near occasion of war for the next thirty years—but was also relinquishing hope of gaining leverage over the future of Poland, a factor of which Churchill was well aware.¹⁴⁵

A number of factors appear to lie behind Eisenhower's decision. One was a general American tendency not to become embroiled in "power politics." General Marshal (U.S. Army Chief of Staff) summed up this American attitude when, in response to British urgings that the Western armies take Prague, stated "Personally, and aside from all logistic, tactical, or strategic implications, I would be loath to hazard American lives for purely political purposes."¹⁴⁶ The second factor behind the decision seems to rest in Roosevelt's seeming lack of concern about the final dispositions of Western and Soviet armies on the continent, and it has even been suggested that Roosevelt encouraged Stalin to take the German capital as a reward for the Russian contribution to the Allied victory.¹⁴⁷

"This war is not as in the past," Stalin had remarked to Miloran Djilas in April 1945. "Whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social

¹⁴⁴Ibid., 1274.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., 1276.

¹⁴⁶Cited in Forrest C. Pogue, "The Decision to Halt at the Elbe," in *Command Decisions*, ed. Kent Robert Greensfield (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1959), 375.

¹⁴⁷Robert Nisbet, *Roosevelt and Stalin: The Failed Courtship*, 83-90.

system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise."¹⁴⁸ Such were the harsh rules that were to govern the outcome of World War II. The failure of Roosevelt and his generals to attend to the details of the emerging military situation with the Soviet Union was matched by a parallel refusal by the American administration to address the details of the deteriorating political situation in Poland and Eastern Europe generally. At Yalta, Roosevelt gained Soviet recognition of a "Declaration of Liberated Europe" guaranteeing freedom and self-determination to all liberated peoples, but he refused to support British efforts to insist on specific "machinery" to carry it out. Even at the end of his presidency, when Soviet violations of the Yalta accords were becoming ever more egregious, Roosevelt, in an effort to secure Soviet participation in the United Nations, became even more eager to placate Stalin. In his penultimate cable to Churchill, the day before his death, he wrote that "he would minimize the general Soviet problem as much as possible because these problems in one form or another, seem to arise every day and most of them straighten out."¹⁴⁹

Far from creating the "new world," for which Roosevelt had hoped, the war at its close left the Soviet Union and the United States competing for territory in an almost traditional sense. Stalin clearly grasped this fact, as did Churchill. Roosevelt, still hopeful, still dreaming his Wilsonian dreams, remained oblivious to such contradictions.

Roosevelt and his colleagues expected the United States to emerge from the war as the greatest power on earth, and after the war, unlike the aftermath of

¹⁴⁸Miloran Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1962), 114.

¹⁴⁹Kimball, *Churchill and Roosevelt*, 3:630.

World War I, they were determined to assert American leadership. This time they would create a world order conducive to the interests of the United States, which would allow it to increase its wealth and power and carry its values to every corner of the globe. The United States would provide the leadership necessary to create a liberal international economic order, based on free trade and stable currency—exchange rates providing a level of prosperity the peoples of the world had never known. The United States would provide the leadership necessary to prevent the resurgence of German or Japanese power or the rise of others who might emulate Hitler and the Japanese militarists.

The apotheosis of the American vision emerged from the Bretton Woods Conference of 1944. The representatives of forty-four nations agreed to the outline of a postwar monetary system. American officials perceived the conference and the agreements they sought as the economic basis for the postwar operation of the Grand Alliance. Economic interdependence, a shared stake in the postwar economic order, would bind Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States in peace, as fear of Hitler had brought them together in war. Officials of the Soviet Union participated, but, as a nation committed to state-controlled trade, the Soviets were less interested in the details of the agreements than in demonstrating their great power status and their willingness to work with their allies to eliminate trade and currency issues as causes of international tension.¹⁵⁰ In general, the leaders of the other nations accepted the ideas that the system that was good for America would be good for the world. With the general ratification of the Bretton Woods agreements by December 1945, American leaders had succeeded in launching the world on a new order of their design. The forces of economic

¹⁵⁰Roy F. Harrod, *The Life of John Maynard Keynes* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 510-14 and 525-55.

nationalism had been driven back and much of the trading world committed to a liberal program. The emphasis would be on increasing trade, increasing productivity, and a larger share for everyone, rather than a struggle to redistribute existing wealth. When the deadline for ratification was reached, the Soviet Union held back, although its trading role was minor and its interest in Bretton Woods never more than marginal, its absence was regretted.

Although Roosevelt had left much of the economic planning to lesser figures in his administration, central to his thoughts was the conviction that a combination of the great powers—the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union—was essential to keeping the peace and preventing future acts of aggression. He had few illusions about a future in which the Big Three did not cooperate. Although the British could be difficult, Churchill and Roosevelt had developed a personal friendship based on shared values. Stalin and the Soviet Union were more of an enigma. Soviet and American statesmen were still mistrustful after a generation of enmity, which Hitler had forced them to place in abeyance. The Soviet Union and the United States seemingly had no vital interests in conflict; cooperation would be nearly as urgent after victory, and Roosevelt had remained confident that he and Stalin could find a way to sustain it. He was always reasonably confident of realizing his vision of the great powers working together after victory to maintain a just peace. However, Roosevelt had been in politics too long to believe in sure things. Should the Soviets prove less cooperative than he had hoped, he still had another even more awesome weapon up his sleeve—the atomic bomb. Urged by one of his scientific advisers to deny critical data about the bomb to the British, and on another occasion to share the secret with the Soviets, Roosevelt chose to share the information with his British allies, and either on his own and/or with British insistence withhold it from the

Soviets. The United States would not be without resources should the Soviets revert to being as disagreeable as they had been prior to being invaded by the German Army in 1941.¹⁵¹

We are far less certain, even today, about Stalin's vision of the postwar world. There seems no reason to doubt his indifference toward the liberal international economic order the United States wanted. He saw no place in that system for the Soviet Union, with its centralized economy and state trading organizations. It might have been vaguely threatening, but Stalin gave no indication that he was much troubled by it before 1947. The lessons he drew from the 1920s and 1930s had little to do with exchange rates and tariff barriers. The Soviet Union strove toward economic self-sufficiency as a national policy and would risk economic dependence on no foreign power. The Soviet Union had suffered because the capitalist world, led by Great Britain and the United States, had been implacably hostile and, having failed to prevent the success of the Bolshevik Revolution, had encircled and attempted to destroy its heirs. Ultimately, the enemies of the Soviet Union had unleashed Hitler. Shrewdly, Stalin had bought nearly two years with the Nazi-Soviet pact. Hitler had attacked, nonetheless, and came dangerously close to toppling the Soviet regime. More than twenty million Soviet citizens had lost their lives. Only grudgingly, Stalin believed, the British and the Americans had joined forces with the Russians against Hitler. For two and a half years, he was convinced, Roosevelt and Churchill had rejected his pleas for a second front in France, leaving Soviet troops to engage eighty percent of the German Army. Like Roosevelt, Stalin saw no harm in the

¹⁵¹Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy, 1932-1945*, 389-91. See also Sherwin, *A World Destroyed: The Atomic Bomb and the Grand Alliance*, 90.

United Nations Organization, provided the Soviet Union had multiple votes in the General Assembly and a veto in the Security Council to protect its interests. However, Stalin was a realist; he would rely neither on the good will of his newfound friends, nor upon the efficacy of the United Nations to provide for Soviet security.

German power would have to be broken, its wealth used to repair the damage the German military had inflicted on the Soviet Union. Germany would have to be occupied. The so-called Baltic republics would have to be restored to the Russian empire, as would territory the Poles, Finns, and Rumanians had taken. No Eastern European country could be allowed to become a springboard for a new aggression against the Soviet Union. All would have "friendly" governments, responsive to Soviet requirements. Optimally, there would be adjustments to the south, at the expense of Iran, Afghanistan, and pro-German Turkey. When the time came for Soviet forces to participate in the defeat of Japan, Stalin had ideas for buffers and bases in East Asia, not only in what was now the Japanese empire, but in China, where both nationalist and communist contenders for power had displeased him as well. Stalin even had occasional dreams of extending his reach into Africa, and of being awarded some of Italy's former colonies on that continent by his grateful allies.¹⁵²

Curiously, Stalin had found Churchill relatively easy to deal with. In 1944, in a matter of minutes, the two men had achieved an equitable division of influence in Eastern Europe. Roosevelt he had found more elusive, apparently more

¹⁵²Herbert Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 26; 510-11; 550-55. See also Robert Dallek, *Franklin D. Roosevelt and American Foreign Policy*, 389-91, and William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy: From Entente to Detente to Cold War* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1982), 75-82.

sympathetic to Soviet aspirations, even suggesting the possibility of Soviet-American collusion against British imperialism, but unwilling to make firm commitments about giving the Soviet Union a free hand in Eastern Europe, being forever concerned about the need to appease public opinion in the United States and dallying with anti-Soviet Poles. There was also the evidence Soviet intelligence had brought Stalin that the United States was working with the British on a secret weapon, an atomic bomb, about which Roosevelt had said nothing to his loyal Soviet ally. Clearly, satisfactory postwar relations among the victors were by no means assured. It was a time for caution, and Stalin had not survived in the Soviet system of his day without being a very cautious man.

Franklin D. Roosevelt, four-time President of the United States, died in April 1945 on the eve of victory in Europe. Before his death, at Yalta in February 1945 and in the weeks that followed, he tried desperately to secure the enduring peace toward which he had labored so valiantly. At Yalta, discussions with Churchill and Stalin had gone well. He had obtained Stalin's agreement to enter the war against Japan, as well as assurances that the Soviet Union would join the United Nations. The atmosphere was less conducive to an amicable resolution of the differences resurfacing in Poland. Roosevelt wanted Stalin to set aside the puppet government he had established for Poland and respect the principle of self-determination. Stalin would not dismiss the communist dominated "Lublin" government but offered to give more posts to non-communists and presented vague assurances about democracy and free elections in Eastern Europe generally.¹⁵³

¹⁵³*FRUS:1945, The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, V, 155-56; 383-84; 395-400; 505-6; 660-67; 682-86. See also Feis, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin, 501-5.*

In March 1945, Roosevelt blundered. Uncharacteristically insensitive to the ever-present Soviet anxieties, he authorized American intelligence operatives to meet secretly in Switzerland with senior German officers to discuss the German surrender in Italy. Stalin immediately suspected the worst: a deal between the Germans and his Anglo-American allies, which would allow the Germans to concentrate their resistance against the advance of the Red Army. At Munich in 1938, the British and French had tried to redirect Hitler's energies against the Soviet Union, but Stalin had outsmarted them. Very likely they were trying again—this time under the leadership of his self-proclaimed American friend. Stalin protested to Roosevelt who, in turn, was offended by Stalin's accusation, conceivably unable to imagine himself capable of such a betrayal.¹⁵⁴ The incident passed, but not without abrading the thin veneer of trust that might have existed between the two men.

New reports from Poland indicated that Soviet control was being inflicted on that country with far less subtlety than Roosevelt had expected from Stalin. Opposition to the Soviet imposed communist-dominated regime was being suppressed ruthlessly and blatantly. Roosevelt's last days were, thus, preoccupied with the disagreeable task of trying to redefine the concessions he had offered Stalin at Yalta—a redefinition that Stalin could hardly see less than a reversal of American willingness to grant the Soviet Union a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and the assurance of a friendly government in Poland.

¹⁵⁴Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin*, 583-96. See also William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy: From Entente to Detente to Cold War*, 95-96.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRUMAN YEARS: 1945-1948

Beginning with the revisionists of the early 1960s, a number of American historians—following in this, the traditional view of the Soviets themselves—have blamed the Cold War on the shift in policy toward the Soviet Union occasioned by the transfer of power from Franklin Roosevelt to Harry Truman.¹⁵⁵ Revisionists have portrayed the changes under Truman as part of a concerted anti-Soviet policy. Post-revisionists, while accepting the existence of such a shift, have argued that it was less clear-cut and consistent than the revisionists portrayed it to be.¹⁵⁶

However, whether one accepts this shift as the starting point of the Cold War depends upon the answer to a more fundamental question; namely, how the "Cold War" itself is defined. Did the Cold War begin when America began resisting Soviet expansion in Europe? Or did the Cold War begin when the Soviet Union first sought to impose its will on neighboring Central European nations—that is, with the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939, the invasion of the Baltic States in 1940, or later with the Teheran Conference in 1943, when Stalin insisted that Roosevelt and Churchill accept such annexations as the price for Soviet support? Only if one accepts the former definition—in essence, equating "Cold War" simply with American resistance to Soviet expansion as opposed to U.S.

¹⁵⁵Sivachev and Yakovlev, *Russia and the United States: U.S.-Soviet Relations from the Soviet Point of View*, 204-8.

¹⁵⁶John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 204-6.

acquiescence—can any responsibility for the Cold War be laid at the feet of Harry Truman.

Truman had few delusions about his knowledge of world affairs and understood full well how poorly Roosevelt had prepared him for the position.¹⁵⁷ He was appropriately awed and quite reasonably looked to the men who had advised Roosevelt for guidance. Truman was untroubled by any of Roosevelt's goals or commitments, as he understood them. The Bretton Woods Accords for a liberal international economic order were consistent with the programs he had supported as a senator. The most immediate problem, according to his advisors, was smoothing out the kinks which seemed to be developing in Soviet-American relations.¹⁵⁸

As senator and vice-president, Truman had displayed no well-defined attitude toward the Soviet Union. He disliked communism and more particularly, the spread of communism, but had not been rabid on the subject. He took no part in the Red-baiting which occupied some politicians in the 1930s and 1940s. After Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, he gave a reporter an off-the-cuff interview in which he was quoted as having said:

If we see that Germany is winning, we ought to help Russia, and if Russia is winning, we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible, although I don't want to see Hitler victorious under any circumstances. Neither of them thinks anything of their pledged word.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁷Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Penguin Books, 1980), 14-16. See also *FRUS: 1945*, V, 252-55.

¹⁵⁸Gaddis, *The United States and the Origin of the Cold War*, 198-206.

¹⁵⁹*New York Times*, 24 June 1941, 7.

This attitude may have been cynical but was widely held at the time. Like most Americans, Truman was inclined to measure Soviet cooperation by the degree of deference the Soviets accorded the U.S. But in 1945, Truman evidenced no hostility toward the Soviet Union, perceiving that nation as a loyal ally and he accepted, without apparent reservation, Roosevelt's conviction that Soviet-American cooperation was essential to the vision of a just and peaceful postwar world.¹⁶⁰

Immediately after he became President, Truman was apprised of the disagreement that had arisen between Roosevelt and Stalin over Soviet behavior in Eastern Europe. The issue was not whether to continue cooperation, but how best to achieve it without sacrificing American ideals and interests. Several of Roosevelt's advisers, most notably his White House Chief of Staff, Admiral William Leahy, and W. Averell Harriman, ambassador to the Soviet Union, argued that difficulties had emerged because Roosevelt had been too generous with the Soviets, and that he had encouraged them to be demanding and to take American support for granted, while offering little or nothing in return. They argued that the Soviets, rather than the Americans, were reneging on the Yalta agreement regarding Poland. Harriman, in particular, pressed for a policy shift—for tougher bargaining by the American side, for a carrot-and-stick approach—a *quid pro quo* approach.¹⁶¹

Harriman was well disposed toward the Soviets and had hoped for a fruitful relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States after the war. By February 1944, he began to feel frustrated by Soviet secrecy and Soviet obdurateness over Lend-Lease negotiations and joint military planning. He became

¹⁶⁰Ferrell, 31,35.

¹⁶¹William D. Leahy, *I Was There: The Personal Story of the Chief of Staff and Presidents Roosevelt and Truman Based on His Notes and Diaries Made at the Time* (New York: Arno Press, 1950), 242, 349, 497-98.

annoyed by the difficulties the Soviets placed in the way of conducting routine diplomatic affairs in Moscow. The real assault upon his hope for Soviet-American cooperation, however, came in the form of signs that Stalin would not tolerate Polish independence.¹⁶²

During 1944 Harriman warned Washington that the Soviet Union coveted a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Without abandoning the goal of Soviet-American friendship, he urged that postwar American financial assistance be extended to the Soviets only if they would work cooperatively with the United States on international problems in accordance with American standards and always on a *quid pro quo* basis. In Harriman's opinion, the Soviets did not wish to break relations with the United States, since they would need American help to rebuild after the war. Thus, the United States had nothing to lose in standing firm on important issues. If the Soviets wanted something, economic aid, for example, or help from the United States in financing postwar reconstruction, the Soviets in return could ease their control over Eastern Europe, allow free elections, and refrain from incorporating Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria into a Soviet-controlled political and economic bloc. Again, the idea was not to give up on collaboration, not to be unfriendly, but to find a course more likely to lead to a mutually satisfying Soviet-American relationship, one consistent with the preeminent position of the United States.¹⁶³ Roosevelt, always ready to placate the Soviets for what he envisioned as the greater good, had set these opinions in abeyance; they now found more receptive ears in Harry Truman.

¹⁶²Harriman and Abel, 317.

¹⁶³Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, 200-205. See also Harriman and Abel, 441-46.

In addition to the advice of his foreign advisors, Truman was receiving information from the State Department to the effect that Stalin seemed oblivious to the concessions he had made at Yalta. At a cabinet meeting on April 23, 1945, the President expressed his exasperation with the Soviets.¹⁶⁴

Truman accepted the advice to be less gentle with the Soviets and gave Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov an undiplomatic rebuke at their first meeting. Molotov protested against Truman's tone, but he had little difficulty understanding the message: American policy had changed. What he could not discern was whether American objectives had changed. Molotov readily assumed that Roosevelt's death had resulted in a seizure of power by recently dominant anti-Soviet forces in the United States. Truman's language showed little respect for Molotov and the country he represented.¹⁶⁵ With victory in reach, the Soviets believed, the Americans had apparently concluded that they had no further need to cooperate with the Soviet Union. Were the Americans now unwilling to concede that the Soviet Union had contributed mightily to the Allied cause and was entitled to the perquisites of their enhanced status? These questions now concerned the Soviet leaders, and they became increasingly wary in the months ahead.

Still, that there was a change in policy, however halting or uneven, seems clear. Nonetheless, Truman came away from the meeting with Churchill and Stalin at Potsdam favorably impressed. He believed from what he had seen of Stalin that the Soviet leader was a man with whom one could do business. Problems continued to persist, however. The new Polish-German border, reparations, a

¹⁶⁴*FRUS: 1918, Russia, I, 252-55.*

¹⁶⁵Harriman and Abel, *Special Envoy*, 454. See also Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, 204.

proposed North African trusteeship for the Soviets (an entity whose expansionist overtones aroused new American suspicions) and the increasing Soviet grip on Eastern Europe and Poland. All challenged the new administration. Truman did not shift course immediately in reaction to Potsdam. On the contrary, he proceeded to try to live with the results. If they were disturbing in some respects, he had not given up hope of eventual accommodation with the Soviets. Ideological differences seemed irrelevant. Fundamental security issues between the United States and the Soviet Union did not appear to exist. The disagreement over Poland persisted, but Truman recognized that Poland constituted a vital Soviet interest and was, at most, a secondary concern of the United States. He and his advisers were confident that he and Stalin could work things out. Truman set sail for home, ordered the atom bomb dropped, and soon World War II ended.¹⁶⁶

The United States and the Soviet Union emerged from the war as the world's two dominant powers. Sometimes unilaterally, sometimes together, they groped toward some means of creating order and providing for their security and that of their friends. The Soviet experience had not provided that nation with a basis for trust in the outside forces that had tried to isolate and destroy the regime throughout its history. American repugnance toward the terror Stalin had inflicted on his own people, toward the totalitarian dictatorship he had consolidated at home and now extended into Eastern Europe, hampered cooperation after Hitler's defeat. What was extraordinary was the effort of each side, however warily, to ease the apprehensions of the other, and to overcome the legacy of mistrust. The discussions between the nations thus continued despite the fact that Stalin remained

¹⁶⁶Robert J. Donovan, *The Presidency of Harry S. Truman, 1945-1948: Conflict and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 80-89.

suspiciously distrustful of the overwhelming power of the United States, and Truman still believed that he and Stalin could resolve any differences that emerged.

There remained a number of trouble spots in the Soviet American relationship during the months immediately following the war. The Soviets, like the British, needed reconstruction funds and wanted low-interest loans from the United States—which neither Congress nor the public were eager to provide. There were disagreements about the amount and disposition of German reparations. The Soviets were displeased with the imperious manner in which the United States monopolized the administration of the occupation of Japan.¹⁶⁷

Soviet suspicions angered Americans; American arrogance, bordering on contempt, infuriated the Soviets. Americans could not understand why the Soviets did not accept the benign preeminence of the United States. The Soviets could not understand why the Americans refused to treat them as equals. Cultural differences aggravated the mutual irritation. The loss of the common enemy left both sides free to remember past differences and to recall earlier ideologically-tainted perceptions. A deep undercurrent of anticommunism in the United States survived wartime cooperation, as did Soviet apprehension about British and American intentions. Certainly, the Soviets could never feel secure so long as the United States retained its monopoly of nuclear weapons. In the absence of a common enemy, of shared values, peacetime cooperation would not be easy.

American officials in the Truman administration were extremely slow to come to terms with the existence of a fundamental enmity between the Soviet Union and the United States. Soviet brutality in Eastern Europe and Moscow's conspicuous lack of cooperation with Washington on a peace settlement following

¹⁶⁷Sivachev and Yakovlev, *Russian and the United States: U.S.-Soviet Relations from the Soviet Union Point of View*, 207-9.

the war brought mounting frustration and doubt. Yet, American officials remained reluctant to complain openly of Soviet behavior, fearful both of a breakdown of the wartime alliance and a backlash from an American public believed to be pro-Soviet and wedded to Wilsonian, or Rooseveltian, hopes for the future.

In 1946, however, attitudes in Washington shifted significantly. Soviet actions throughout 1946 forced Truman and his advisers to reevaluate Soviet intentions and to reconsider their assumptions about the possibility of Soviet American cooperation. On February 9, 1946, Stalin's "Election Speech" hinted at the possibility of a future war with the capitalist world and openly revived the hostile anti-Western Soviet rhetoric of the 1930s, raising alarms in the United States.¹⁶⁸ In the speech, he stressed the need for ideological purity, a new five-year plan, and new sacrifices in a world in which communism struggled for survival while the contradictions among capitalists threatened the peace.¹⁶⁹ Those Americans who feared the Soviet Union and the ideology for which it stood deemed Stalin's speech hostile, almost a declaration of war.

The serious differences developing between Moscow and Washington were becoming obvious. American behavior in Germany troubled, perhaps even frightened, the Soviets. In January 1946, Christian Democrats, unfriendly to the Soviet Union, won elections in the American zone of Germany—and subsequently in the British and French zones. A few months later, the American proconsul in Germany, General Lucius Clay, decided to withhold further reparations from the American zone. In July, 1946, the Americans began a program of amnesty for ex-

¹⁶⁸*New York Times*, 10 February 1946, 1(A). (For U.S. reaction, see *Time*, 18 February 1946, 29-30; *New York Times*, 11 February 1946, 216-17.)

¹⁶⁹*New York Times*, 10 February 1946.

Nazis. On September 6, 1945, James Byrnes, the American Secretary of State, announced in Stuttgart a new, more lenient American policy toward Germany, intended to win the allegiance of the German people. To the Soviets this suggested that Washington was more concerned about the well-being of its erstwhile German enemies than about Soviet needs.¹⁷⁰ Finally, in December, 1946, a meeting of foreign ministers was held in Moscow to draft a German peace treaty. After discussions had reached a dead end, George C. Marshall informed Truman that he had concluded that there was no desire on the Soviets' part for a resolution of the German problem.¹⁷¹ The Americans and their British friends soon merged their occupation zones, and in due course, the French joined them. The Soviets could hardly be expected to surrender that fragment of Germany they could still exploit, any more than they could consider as serious Secretary of State James Byrnes's April 1946 offer to demilitarize Germany. Twice in Stalin's lifetime the Germans had wrought enormous suffering on Mother Russia. Preventing a resurgence of German power was the highest priority of Soviet policy. American moves to rebuild Germany, to exonerate fascists, to encourage German nationalism frightened the Soviets.

Truman and his advisers seemed oblivious to Soviet concerns and worried instead about Stalin's intentions in the Middle East—in Iran, Turkey, and Greece. During the war, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union had joined in a preemptive occupation of Iran, to deny its oil to the Germans and to provide a route for lend-lease aid from the Americans to their Soviet allies. At the Teheran Conference in 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin had signed a declaration

¹⁷⁰Donovan, 250-51.

¹⁷¹*FRUS: 1947, II*, 377.

reaffirming the territorial integrity of Iran and agreed to withdraw their forces six months after the War. The Americans and the British had withdrawn. However, in February 1946, the Soviets, having orchestrated a coup in Iranian Azerbaijan, were refusing to withdraw troops as promised. The Soviets were clearly scheming to separate an oil-rich province from the rest of Iran and to join it and its residents to their ethnic compatriots in the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan. Truman's reaction to what he rightly supposed to be Stalin's adventurism in Iran, was one of outrage. "I do not think we should play compromise any longer. I'm tired of babying the Soviets," he is quoted as saying. "There isn't a doubt in my mind that Russia intends an invasion of Turkey and the seizure of the Black Sea Straits to the Mediterranean."¹⁷² When the Security Council of the United Nations met, the United States denounced the Soviet presence in Iran and issued a series of sharp diplomatic warnings (Truman later remembered them as an "ultimatum"). The Soviets eventually withdrew. It was now apparent to all that the American-Soviet alliance was unraveling.

These actions and the perceptions generated by them created a situation whereby an increase in one state's security was automatically perceived as a decrease in the security of the other. On the basis of their historic experience of Western hostility and confronted by superior American power, the benign use of which could not be assured, Soviet leaders took a series of actions designed to enhance their national security. However, each step they took to add to their security was viewed by American leaders as detracting from the security of the United States. Eventually, the United States responded with policies to enhance its

¹⁷²Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs, Year of Decisions* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1955), 551-52.

security—which the Soviets saw imperiling their own. Each nation defined its own policies as defensive but saw those of the other as threatening.

Roosevelt, Truman, and most of their principal advisers were realistically prepared to accede to a Soviet sphere of interest in Eastern Europe, even to Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe, but not in Iran, Greece, Turkey, or in the Middle East. Even as Truman contemplated projecting American power, more than five thousand miles from the United States, substituting it for declining British power, he perceived Soviet behavior in the area as threatening, American actions as defensive.

The matter of international control of atomic energy, of nuclear weapons, also served to undermine the ability of the two nations to cooperate. The history of arms control has been repeatedly written as a series of missed opportunities or "lost chances." Roosevelt's failure to take Danish physicist Niels Bohr's advice and reveal the bomb's existence to Stalin, and Truman's hesitancy when faced with presidential advisor Henry L. Stimson and scientist J. Robert Oppenheimer's suggestion to approach the Soviets immediately on "international control" have been taken as critical turning points in the arms competition between the United States and the Soviet Union.

In March 1946, the Truman administration was still far from articulating a clear foreign policy to shape a public mandate for a firmer stance against the Soviets. The policy of "containment" was still in the future. Truman and his aides knew that the Soviet Union would eventually develop nuclear power. Some thought it wisest to share the secret of the bomb as a demonstration of goodwill and win Soviet confidence in American intentions. Others thought that the international control of weapons and the international oversight of the uses of nuclear power were feasible and could be managed without risk to the security of

the United States. A number of proposals surfaced within the administration—most notably the Acheson-Lilienthal Report.

This report was prepared under the shadow of the recently disclosed Ottawa spy ring. The aim of this network of underground agents organized in Canada by the staff of the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, under direct instructions from Moscow, was to get secret information about the atomic bomb, uranium, radar, electronic shells used by the United States Navy, and the disposition of American and Canadian troops. A number of Canadians were arrested, some of them employed by Canada's atomic energy agency. Shortly afterward, Dr. Alan May, a British scientist, who had worked on the atomic project in Montreal, was convicted of giving secret information and uranium samples to a Soviet agent who had forwarded the material to Moscow.¹⁷³ There was, accordingly, known hostility in Congress to premature disclosure of American atomic secrets.

The Acheson-Lilienthal Report proposed international control and one that minimized international inspection and did not depend upon sanctions or punishment for violation. The plan would have required disclosure of certain Soviet secrets and would have barred the Soviets from working on a bomb. Before the United Nations had an opportunity to consider the plan and the United States to gauge Stalin's response, it was modified by presidential adviser, Bernard Baruch, to include sanctions not subject to the veto. This was perceived by Moscow as placing the security of the Soviet Union at the mercy of a United Nations dominated by the United States. Not surprisingly, the Soviets, who were at the time developing their own bomb, rejected the "Baruch Plan" when it was introduced in June 1946. To Americans, the United States was offering to give up

¹⁷³Donovan, 198-207.

its atomic bombs and reveal its nuclear technology upon adoption of international controls. To most Americans, including their president, this had seemed a noble and plausible way to avert a nuclear war.

Deteriorating United States-Soviet relations prompted the call in the Truman Administration for a new framework other than Wilsonianism, to guide U.S. foreign policy. Pronouncements in February and March 1946, one classified, the other public, would contribute decisively to the establishment of a new approach. The first was the famous "Long Telegram" of February 22 from George F. Kennan, Chargé d'Affaires of the U.S. Moscow Embassy. It revealed the Soviet Union less as a recalcitrant partner to be cajoled into cooperation than as a force regarding itself as fundamentally hostile to the United States.

The second milestone was Winston Churchill's famous "Iron Curtain" address on March 5, 1946.¹⁷⁴ The description of Eastern Europe under Soviet domination was little more than a recapitulation of analyses that the British prime minister had been urgently conveying to American officials for a year. Yet, to the American public, Churchill's depiction of Eastern European realities was news. Although senior Truman Administration officials had privately seen and remarked approvingly on advance copies of Churchill's speech, the President immediately sought to distance himself publicly from the British leader's controversial pronouncement.¹⁷⁵ This appeared to be still another sign of continuing uncertainty in U.S. policy and of the administration's fear of public "disillusionment."¹⁷⁶ Stalin, in an interview in *Pravda* March 13, called the speech "a dangerous act calculated

¹⁷⁴*Vital Speeches of the Day* 12 (March 15, 1946): 329-32.

¹⁷⁵Gilbert, *Winston S. Churchill, Road to Victory, 1941-1945*, 195-96.

¹⁷⁶Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis*, 190-93.

to sow the seeds of discord among Allied governments . . . Mr. Churchill is now in the position of a firebrand of war."¹⁷⁷ Truman declined to comment on Stalin's charges, saying he did not think the situation as dangerous as some believed.

Nonetheless, Churchill's speech changed minds. Under the influence of Kennan's "Long Telegram" and Churchill's address, American officials were, for the first time, privately acknowledging that the Soviets probably did not intend to cooperate with the United States in the postwar world.

George Kennan and the policy of "containment" has been discussed in great detail in a previous section. It merely behooves us to summarize his impressions at this time. He described the Soviet leaders as "driven" by the needs of a political system they had created and by their own insecurities to expand their influence and power as far as other nations would permit. He warned that Stalin and his associates would interpret generosity and bluster as weakness and would respond only to firmness, to clear signs that their actions would not be tolerated. The United States had to draw the line, stand firmly and patiently behind it, and wait until the Soviet system collapsed of its own weight and its inability to expand. His opinions were welcomed by a number of American leaders who were in the process of formulating similar analyses of Soviet behavior and the appropriate American response.

Kennan sought to accomplish this goal in two ways. The first was to build countervailing centers of power along the periphery of the Soviet Union. If one could develop strong, self-confident societies in vulnerable areas, capable of resisting intimidation from Moscow, whether in military, ideological or psychological forms, then the Soviet Union's sphere of influence could hardly

¹⁷⁷Cited in Donovan, 192.

expand. This was the assumption that lay behind the Marshall Plan, together with simultaneous decisions to end the punitive occupation policies and to seek the economic revival of Germany and Japan. The second part of Kennan's strategy was (in addition to containing Soviet influence within its existing sphere) to roll it back by encouraging the emergence of nationalism among Moscow's satellites.

If these two things could be made to happen—if the Soviet Union could be prevented from expanding its influence beyond its present sphere of influence, and if Moscow's control over its own satellites could be eroded—then in time, Kennan thought, this succession of failures would compel the Kremlin leaders to moderate their internally driven suspicion of the outside world, change the Soviet Union's internal structure, and join in peaceful and friendly association with other peoples and not in attempts to subjugate and dominate those people.¹⁷⁸

Throughout the remainder of 1946 and continuing into early 1947, events continued to bode ill for the administration of Harry Truman. In the spring of 1946, the Soviets rejected American terms for a loan and membership in the International Monetary Fund or the World Bank. In April 1946, the Soviets rejected America's proposals regarding Germany. Under Secretary of State Dean Acheson, who had consistently been able to understand how the Soviets might view things from their perspective, and who had always been willing to concede to Soviet security requirements, concluded that Soviet demands in the Middle East were unreasonable and would have to be resisted.¹⁷⁹ It was time for adjustments in

¹⁷⁸Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947*, 18-46.

¹⁷⁹Acheson, *Present at the Creation: My Years in the State Department*, 225.

American foreign economic policy. Perhaps the hopes for a liberal international economic order were of less importance than of rewarding friends and punishing antagonists.

In September 1946, Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace, the last major American figure to hold out hope of continued cooperation with the Soviets, publicly criticized the direction in which he believed American policy was drifting and insisted the United States was needlessly alienating the Soviets. He went so far as to question the United States' resistance to the Soviet Union's attempts to obtain warm water ports. He further charged that certain unnamed members of the U.S. military command advocated a "preventive war" before Russia had time to develop an atomic bomb.¹⁸⁰ Before the month was out, Truman was compelled to fire him.

He [Wallace] wants us to disband our armed forces, give Russia our atomic secrets and trust a bunch of adventurers in the Kremlin Politbureau. I do not understand a "dreamer" like that . . . The Reds, phonies and "parlor pinks" seem to be banded together and are becoming a national danger. I am afraid they are a sabotage front for Uncle Joe Stalin. They can see no wrong in Russia's four and one-half million armed force, in Russia's loot of Poland, Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Manchuria. They can see no wrong in Russia's living off the occupied countries to support the military occupation.¹⁸¹

Secretary of State Byrnes, who had resisted both the change from Roosevelt's policy of placating the Soviets and the Kennan-Harriman analyses,

¹⁸⁰Henry Wallace, *Are We Only Paying Lip Service to Peace?* (excerpted from a letter from Wallace to Truman, July 23, 1946), cited in *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America*, eds. William H. Chafe and Harvard Sitkoff (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 47-52.

¹⁸¹William Hullman, ed., *Mr. President: The First Publication from the Personal Diaries, Private Letters, Papers, and a Revealing Interview of Harry S. Truman* (New York: Farrar Straus, and Young, 1952), 128.

began to question his own negotiating skills. In January 1947, George Marshall replaced Byrnes as secretary of State.

Harry Truman was being beset by domestic problems no less pressing than the foreign ones. He did not need and did not want an adversarial relationship with the Soviets. Mostly, he wanted them to behave civilly, carry out their obligations, defer to American plans for a peaceful and prosperous world, and leave him alone to cope with the labor unrest, inflation, and the resurgence of the Republican Party. Republicans had won control of Congress for the first time since 1930 and Truman was being held responsible for this turnabout.

The President's foreign affairs advisers, however, continually distracted him from his domestic problems. There were two grave and immediate concerns: first, the unexpected difficulty Western Europe was having with postwar recovery; second, the collapse of European power, especially British power, around the world, and the need for the United States to act promptly and convincingly to fill the vacuum. The British were rationing bread at home, giving up India and Burma, and were unable to maintain their support of Greece. Meanwhile, they were under attack by Zionist terrorists in Palestine. In France, the communists won a plurality of seats in the French Parliament forcing Charles de Gaulle to resign as President. In Italy too, a weak government was perceived in Washington as threatened by a strong communist minority. Uncertainty persisted about the direction in which the Germans would move, whether they might ultimately choose to align themselves with the Soviet Union.

None of Truman's advisers imagined a Soviet military attack on the United States or Western Europe. The Kennan-Harriman clique was arguing for the existence of a *political* threat. Although most of the others remained contemptuous of existing Soviet power and secure in America's nuclear monopoly,

all recognized the importance of Western Europe to the United States. Its participation was critical to the liberal economic order American leaders believed essential to the world's peace and prosperity. American leaders considered friendly control of Western Europe absolutely vital to the security of the United States. Conceivably, the Soviet Union could control the Eurasian landmass, not with the bayonets of the Red Army, but by the collapse of existing Western European societies unable to recover from war damage unaided, and subverted by the activities of local communists. The danger was real and acute. No country facing such a choice could risk inaction.

Truman and his advisers understood the immensity of the danger and were prepared to act. They knew full well that the scale of aid required by the Europeans was enormous and that the range of activities required by the United States would exceed anything it had ever attempted in peacetime; moreover, the cost would be astronomical.

In the beginning of 1947, George Marshall with Dean Acheson as his undersecretary had brought Kennan back from Moscow to head a newly created policy planning staff.¹⁸² The policies developed constituted a sound, measured, and manageable set of steps toward preserving the interests of the United States and those who shared its economic and political values. They provided, furthermore, for a high level of material prosperity for all who accepted American hegemony for the next two decades.

Marshall, Acheson, and Kennan accepted the premise that the United States had to assume Britain's historic role of containing the expansion of Russian power and influence in the Eastern Mediterranean. Kennan had been eager to contain the

¹⁸²Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 440-43.

Soviets everywhere in Europe, and Acheson had been particularly troubled by Soviet pressures on Turkey. In February 1947, the British officially informed the United States they lacked the resources, and as some U.S. officials postulated—the will, to support the Greek government. This crisis provided the opportunity to apply and explain what came to be known as the "containment" policy.

The policy planning staff knew that the Greek government they intended to support was unworthy, corrupt, repressive, and inept. They knew also that there was little indication of direct Soviet involvement in the Greek civil war, although they assumed the Soviets would benefit by a communist victory in Greece.¹⁸³ Their ultimate concern was not Greece but, rather, the assertion of American power in the Middle East. The region was of enormous strategic importance in the event of war with the Soviet Union, and its oil reserves could not be allowed to fall into unfriendly hands. They intended to signal the succession of the United States to Britain's role as the dominant power in the area.

Stalin found himself in an awkward situation. He had already conceded Greece to the West, but Turkey and Iran continued to interest him. He did not want to provoke a confrontation with the United States over Greece nor alienate his ally Tito who was eagerly supporting the Greek communists. Not until the Americans acted was Tito persuaded to lessen his role in Greece.¹⁸⁴

For many years now, critics have questioned the wisdom of describing the Soviet threat in apocalyptic terms. As the historian Melvyn Leffler subsequently argued, Soviet actions "hardly justified the inflammatory rhetoric Acheson and

¹⁸³Deborah Welch Larson, *Origins of Containment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 302-23.

¹⁸⁴Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy*, 150-51.

Truman used."¹⁸⁵ Clearly, American leaders did not consider a Soviet military attack anywhere to be imminent. American forces were not being readied for war. On the other hand, Marshall, Acheson, and Kennan were convinced that the Soviet Union was expansionist, that it would extend its influence beyond its security means into any unguarded area in the world, and that both the Middle East via Greece and Western Europe were in imminent danger of being subverted by indigenous communist forces. Only the United States had the power to stop them.

The rhetoric Kennan used in his dispatches was designed to gain attention, to shock readers into recognition of the existence of a serious problem.¹⁸⁶ Acheson and others of Truman's aides shared a similar belief in the need to shock Congress and the American public into recognition of an external threat worthy of their attention and their money.¹⁸⁷

The Republicans had returned to Washington determined to undo Roosevelt's legacy and Truman's efforts to maintain New Deal programs. When Marshall explained the situation in Greece and Turkey to Congressional leaders, indicating the inability of the British to play their historic role, they rejected the idea of spending taxpayers' dollars to feed hungry Greeks or to solve Great Britain's problems.

Acheson, however, knew which chords to sound. These congressmen were outspoken opponents of Soviet expansion, of Communism. He warned them that the Soviets were on the march; they were engaged in a bold maneuver to gain

¹⁸⁵Leffler, "The American Conception of National Security and the Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-1948," *American Historical Review*, 89 (April 1984): 368.

¹⁸⁶Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950*, 293.

¹⁸⁷Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 217-19.

access to three continents. If Greece fell into their hands, Turkey, Iran, and Asia Minor would follow. Nothing would stand in the way of the Russians moving on into Africa, penetrating Europe through Italy and France. The stakes were high, the danger was imminent, and with the collapse of British power, only the United States could stop the Soviets.¹⁸⁸

Thus, Truman's message to Congress on March 12, 1947, requesting \$400 million in aid for Greece and Turkey was replete with phrases guaranteed to threaten and induce fear. These monies were to help "free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes . . . it must be the policy of the United States to support minorities or by outside pressures."¹⁸⁹ Grudgingly, Congress appropriated the funds for what came to be known as the Truman Doctrine.

The tactics applied by the Truman Administration in 1947 were designed to create an atmosphere, in Washington at least, and in the country as a whole if necessary, that would enable the executive to dominate the legislative agenda much as it would in time of war. If misleading Congress and the people about the nature and immediacy of the Soviet threat to American interests was necessary to gain congressional and public support, it seemed a small price to pay. Conceivably, there was no alternative means of obtaining funds from the Eightieth Congress.¹⁹⁰

Kennan quickly perceived that the approach taken with the Truman Doctrine posed serious problems. Although Truman's words were designed primarily for

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 219.

¹⁸⁹Congress, Senate, President Harry S. Truman.

¹⁹⁰Acheson, *Present at the Creation*, 489.

domestic consumption, they could be read by Moscow. The words could be viewed by Stalin as provocation, as a threat to the Soviet Union. Moreover, Truman's words implied the United States was prepared to aid any country anywhere in the world that was threatened by communist subversion, without calculation of American interests in the area. As has been discussed previously, this new wording implied a universal crusade; certainly not the approach that had been suggested to the President by Kennan. It was a crusade which the United States could not afford and which, in any event, made little sense. Acheson had little patience with such subtleties. His was an exercise in politics, designed for those who responded to bluntness.

The more critical problem was Western Europe. The economic situation in Britain, France, Italy, and Germany was desperate. Productivity had barely reached prewar levels. It was essential to keep Western Europe out of Stalin's orbit, partly because of the area's enormous importance to America's trade and defense, as well as the importance it played in America's sense of security. The result was a brilliantly devised approach for providing economic aid to Europe—the Marshall Plan.

The United States would invite European governments to take the lead in developing an integrated plan for the recovery of Europe, rather than imposing one made in Washington. It also provided for a politically acceptable way to rebuild Germany and integrate Western Germany into a revitalized European economy. The Americans who worked on the plan were again intent on creating the liberal international economic order envisaged at Bretton Woods, stressing free trade and currency convertibility, emphasizing increased production, rather than class conflict and redistribution of wealth. Postwar chaos had delayed implementation of the Bretton Woods system. The Marshall Plan would provide the funds to realize it.

The system would serve the economic needs of the United States. It would be good for Europe. It would be good for the world. The European planners had ideas of their own, some less responsive to American economic needs, and they shaped the plan to suit themselves.¹⁹¹ Truman and Marshall saw the plan as a means of defending American interests in Europe against Soviet encroachment, shoring up Western European economies so that the region would not be susceptible to Moscow-directed subversion.

Stalin, once again, was not interested in integrating his economy, or that of any country he controlled, in an American-dominated economic order. As Kennan anticipated, the Soviets took upon themselves the onus for dividing Europe into those who accepted Marshall Plan aid and those who did not.

Throughout 1946 and 1947, there were increasing indications that Stalin's strategy had changed, and there was less ambiguity in Soviet actions. Marshal Georgii Zhukov, viewed in some quarters as friendly to the United States, was replaced as Commander in Chief of Soviet Armed Forces. Moscow created the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau), an organization designed to coordinate communist activities around the world. Soviet control over Eastern Europe increased. The Marshall Plan, especially the indications of American intent to rebuild Germany and incorporate it into an anti-Soviet bloc set off alarms in Moscow. It was another classic illustration of the security dilemma at work. The Americans and their Western European friends were preparing what they perceived as defensive action to preserve their security against a potential threat from the Soviet Union. The Soviets responded quickly to the threat from the West, tightening their grip on what they had, but every step they took was perceived by

¹⁹¹Hogan, *The Marshall Plan*, 427-45.

the United States as threatening its security and that of its friends. As the United States and the Soviet Union moved along the spectrum from allies to adversaries, each lessened the security of the other by seeking to enhance its own.

Tension increased significantly in 1948. On February 25, 1948, the Czech communists staged a coup, assuring the Soviets complete control over the country. Funding of the Marshall Plan had been in doubt up to this time. Now, despite intelligence reports that no Soviet move to war was in the offing, the American military and Truman deliberately heightened anxieties in effort to extort an increase in congressional appropriations.¹⁹² Ignoring Marshall's advice to the contrary, on March 16, 1948, Truman used the war scare to ask Congress to fund the Marshall Plan. In the same message he asked for restoration of the draft, additional funds for defense spending, and for universal military training, stressing the threat posed by Soviet ruthlessness in Czechoslovakia. Congress gave him much of what he wanted.¹⁹³ Stalin's "defensive" actions had facilitated passage of the program he dreaded. American economic power would unite the West against him--and this time the West included most of Germany.

The Russians were now unquestionably troubled by conditions in Germany—unification of the Western zones, the end of de-Nazification, and the decisions to rebuild German industrial power, creating a strong West German state, and integrating it with Western Europe. Although the Soviets had provoked many of these developments, they had every reason to fear them and attempt to reverse the process whereby a powerful Germany might rise to threaten them again. On

¹⁹²Frank Kofsky, *Harry S. Truman and the War Scare of 1948: A Successful Campaign to Deceive the Nation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 92-100.

¹⁹³*Ibid.*, 124-28.

June 24, 1948, the Soviets stopped all traffic to West Berlin. The Commander in Chief of U.S. forces in Europe, General Lucius Clay, called for action to force the blockade, for an ultimatum and an armed convoy to call the Soviet bluff. War seemed possible.

In Washington, Truman and his advisers, including the Joint Chiefs of Staff, rejected Clay's recommendation. They did not want to start a war. The military was not ready to fight one. But they could not acquiesce in the Soviet effort to deny them access to Berlin.¹⁹⁴ Eventually, the United States responded with the Berlin airlift. Soviet planes occasionally harried the transport planes but never threatened them. Stalin was no more ready for war than Truman.

Stalin had tried to prevent the creation of a potentially powerful and threatening German state—the most threatening step the United States had taken since the end of the war. He failed, but the confrontation over Berlin changed the nature of the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. American reproaches over Eastern European, especially Polish, affairs had been irritating. Truman's endless concern over Greece was also bothersome, but it was Tito, not Stalin, who was engaged there. Unfriendly American gestures regarding Soviet interests in Iran and Turkey rankled more, but it was felt that in due course, as Soviet power relative to the United States increased, there would be opportunity to bring about more satisfactory results.¹⁹⁵ The rebuilding of Germany, however, the integrating of a German state in an American-led coalition against the Soviet Union was frightening. The Germans had defeated Russia in World War I. They had wreaked havoc on the Soviet Union, coming close to defeating her in World

¹⁹⁴Ferrell, *Off the Record*, 145-250.

¹⁹⁵Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy*, 149-52.

War II. With the Americans behind them, vengeful Germans could erase all of Stalin's gains since 1945 and once again bring misery to the Soviet people. American actions had to be perceived as hostile, and the Soviet Union responded accordingly, using all means short of war to persuade the Americans to back off.¹⁹⁶ The Soviets would eventually admit defeat in Berlin, and the blockade would be lifted. Unwilling to contest American power in Germany, the Soviet Union was forced to accept the division of Germany and of Europe on American terms.

The perception from Washington was quite different. The United States had no hostile intent toward the Soviet Union. It indicated its willingness to recognize the requirements of Soviet security, to accept a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe and in Manchuria. It offered the Soviets a role in the international economic order planned at Bretton Woods. The Soviets had behaved brutally in Eastern Europe and rejected the Bretton Woods agreements. They had threatened Iran, Turkey, and Greece and were using communist parties in Western Europe to disrupt efforts toward reconstruction and recovery. They destroyed all semblance of independence in once democratic Czechoslovakia. Finally, they challenged Western rights in Berlin. Truman's advisers suspected the Soviet Union of seeking to dominate the Eurasian landmass. The Soviet Union threatened America's friends and America's interests abroad. Unless it was stopped, it would soon threaten the security of the United States.

By the end of 1948, the United States and the Soviet Union were adversaries. Both nations had ended their processes of demobilization and had begun military preparedness programs, including planning for war against each other. The division of Germany, which both Moscow and Washington considered essential, had been achieved. The world reflected an uneasy balance, superficially

¹⁹⁶Ibid., 153-55.

bipolar, in which preponderant American power, including sole possession of nuclear weapons, assured the security of the United States and its friends. The United States might have used its power to roll back Soviet gains. It was unwilling to pay the price, and there is little to indicate that Stalin apprehended an American attack. With Europe divided, without any vital interests in conflict, the two greatest powers might have focused their energies on their considerable domestic problems; they did not.

CHAPTER IX

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The structure of the international system that emerged after the defeat of Germany and Japan contained two major powers, the United States and the Soviet Union, each with the opportunity to expand its influence. Historically, when such opportunities have existed, nations have seized them. The United States and the Soviet Union acted predictably. Equally predictable was the likelihood of friction between them as they competed for dominance over some of the areas between them.

The competition that began after World War II would have existed no matter which two countries had emerged triumphant. The nature of the competition that occurred, the hostility, the "Cold War," derived from the fact that one of the competitors was a brutal dictatorship that brought intolerable misery to the peoples who came under its control, a totalitarian state whose methods engendered fear everywhere, a closed society whose secretiveness allowed no means for verifying agreements. Moreover, the Soviet Union had rejected customary diplomatic practice in the two decades following the Russian Revolution. Communication between Moscow and Washington was always difficult, suspicion quick to develop, and mutual understanding and trust non-existent.

International relations are not just a matter of what nations *plan*; they involve as well what nations *perceive*. Soviet leaders over the years apparently *perceived* an intention on the part of the West to overthrow their regime, even though that intention—at least in the case of the United States—was not, in fact, there. It was the administration of Woodrow Wilson that came closest to seeking

the overthrow of the Soviet government as a deliberate objective. However, the fact that Wilson considered the new Soviet government illegitimate and saw the United States as having no interests in common with it does not mean that he was prepared to regard that government's elimination an overriding priority.

Intervention took place, it is important to remember, within the much larger context of a world war. What Wilson really wanted was a "nonpartisan" intervention. He hoped to keep German troops tied down in the East while, at the same time, creating a political arena in which the various forces in Russian society—Reds, as well as Whites—could compete democratically for the favor of the Russian people.¹⁹⁷ Admittedly, this now seems to have been a naive approach. Certainly, it reflected little sense of Russian historical realities, or of the conditions that existed inside the country at the time. The Bolsheviks themselves regarded it as a scheme aimed at their destruction, and with good reason. They had, on their own, dissolved the freely elected Constituent Assembly, were incapable of winning popular support, and had no intention of trying to do so.¹⁹⁸

After 1933, the United States government at no point overtly or systematically challenged the legitimacy of the Soviet government. Although the United States did, after 1945, take the lead in containing the expansion of Moscow's influence in the postwar world, it did not seek nor was it prepared for any effort to remove the Soviet government from its position of authority. Nor did Washington ever claim that postwar global stability required the elimination of the Soviet regime; instead the intention was always to incorporate that regime in some

¹⁹⁷Arthur S. Link, *Woodrow Wilson: Revolution, War, and Peace* (Arlington Heights, Ill.: Harlan-Davidson, 1979), 96-97.

¹⁹⁸Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1990), 545-58.

way *within* the framework of stability. The fact that Soviet fears were exaggerated does not make them any less significant, nor did it lessen the Soviet government's deep and persistent preoccupation with the question of its own legitimacy. Soviet determination to control Eastern Europe had been apparent throughout the war. The reemergence of the traditional Russian goal of dominating Iran and Turkey should not have been surprising. That the United States, long abstaining from influence in the Eastern Hemisphere, content to dominate much of the Western Hemisphere, should under Truman adopt the British mantle and assert itself, not only in East Asia, but in the Middle East, Western and Central Europe as well, would probably have surprised Roosevelt as much as it apparently did Stalin. In the ensuing struggle for influence, wealth, and power, the economic and technological strength of the United States provided it with a huge advantage if, as Kennan had warned, it did not overreach itself.

As for Roosevelt himself, his postwar goal and policies appear to have been reasonably clear. His war aims had been to fight and defeat the totalitarian Axis nations, with as little loss of American lives as possible. In this, he and the Alliance he forged and sometimes led, succeeded. His vision for a postwar world was idealistic, Wilsonian, and at odds with reality. He would help create a new international order, presided over in an equal partnership by the two emerging super powers—the United States and the Soviet Union—and buttressed by the newly created world organization, the United Nations. Roosevelt was not prepared to play power politics, to participate in spheres of influence, or act out the policy of the Four Policemen—a division of the world into spheres of influence under the hegemony of the four great powers, which would make all the more important decisions and wield police powers. Partitions of the world meant the pursuit of "imperial" policies. F.D.R. may have been willing to preside over reconciling

nations' conflicts, but not to policing the world, and certainly not Europe. Roosevelt fell back on a policy of personal diplomacy and appeasement of the Soviet Union and turned his back on his old ally, Winston Churchill. The President's postwar policy amounted to appeasing the Soviets and keeping Great Britain at arm's length.¹⁹⁹

Stalin remained ruthlessly pragmatic, consistent and steadfast in his goals throughout the course of the war. He meant to gain as much territory as he could for his nation, certainly the land he had secured in the Nazi-Soviet Pact. He had no intentions whatsoever of becoming a partner to America, or anyone else, after the war. He was shrewd enough, however, to understand Roosevelt's weaknesses and to play on them.

If the Soviet state was, in fact, a closed society, then the very attributes of the American political system exacerbated still further the problem of misunderstanding. The leaders of the world's most powerful nation were constantly constrained by domestic interest groups and the reins given to Congress by the Constitution. Truman and his advisers concluded that overcoming public and congressional lassitude required magnification of the Soviet threat.

The United States had perceived itself as the "great liberator," and if its leaders were prepared to be generous, they expected deference and the acceptance of American principles for the reorganization of the world. They had little respect for the Soviet Union and were appalled by its political culture and the ruthlessness with which it was extended to other peoples. They were angered by Soviet

¹⁹⁹Amos Perlmutter, *F.D.R. and Stalin: A Not So Grand Alliance, 1943-1945* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 208-17.

mistrust of the United States and by Soviet unwillingness to accept a subordinate role in Pax Americana.

In the end the Cold War was inevitable. It is this writer's contention that there existed a mutual lack of understanding which, in the historical setting of diverse competitive political systems, led inexorably to confrontation. Ernest May was quite correct when in 1948 he wrote: "The United States and the Soviet Union were doomed to be antagonists. There probably was never any real possibility that the post-1945 relationships could be anything but hostility verging on conflict."²⁰⁰ Whether one assumes the presence of a "huge cultural gap" separating competing nations, as does Levering, with one an open pluralistic society with traditions of individual freedom and the other a closed totalitarian society with vastly different attitudes and institutions, it was the *perceptions* of each other's intents that initiated the Cold War. It was inevitable that this clashing of values and social systems would, in the end, result in a tendency on the part of each nation to move toward rigidity and self-righteousness. Despite the Soviet Union's economic weakness at the close of World War II, the Truman Administration, Congress, and a majority of the American people equated Communism with Soviet imperialism and perceived this totalitarian amalgam to be bent on world domination. Even though Stalin was a consummate pragmatist who did not want war with the West, and even though the regime's aggressiveness in Eastern Europe and its repressiveness at home were as much products of domestic consideration as of other factors, America's perception of Soviet intentions was not altered. The Truman Doctrine, the

²⁰⁰Cited in Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), 777.

Marshall Plan, and the Berlin Airlift were all measured responses designed to contain communist expansion without provoking full-scale military conflict.

The outcome was that, at the end of 1948, the leaders of the United States and the Soviet Union found themselves glowering at each other, their military bristling with weapons, yet each lacking the incentive to fight. The "Cold War" had come.

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