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# The Birth of the Cold War

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## Introduction

The alliance that came to exist during the Second World War between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union emerged because they had a common interest in defeating Hitler and the Axis Powers. However, even before the end of the war, these three countries and their leaders, President Franklin D. Roosevelt of the United States, Prime Minister of Great Britain Winston S. Churchill, and General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Iosif V. Stalin, began to reassert their security interests and adopted policies to influence the postwar system. In the end, these steps to further their own security interests led directly to several conflicts between the wartime allies in the late-war and immediate postwar period. Thus, the Cold War emerged.

The Cold War is often interpreted in terms of a confrontation between good and evil, with the Soviet Union being portrayed as an “evil empire” that challenged the United States, the leader of the Western world. As John Lukacs explained, “Stalin, not Roosevelt, was the principal architect of the iron curtain of the cold war.”<sup>1</sup> Others point to the major ideological-political differences as the central question, and in the end, as the main cause of Cold War confrontation. In a recent study, Jussi Hanhimäki asserted that, “given the ideological differences, material capabilities, security interests and contrasting personalities of those in power, it was no wonder that any possibility of cooperation between Moscow and Washington vanished after the common objective of defeating the Axis powers had been achieved.”<sup>2</sup>

Most of these interpretations of the Cold War fail to take into account the United States’ and the Soviet Union’s misperception of each other’s intentions.

While they attempted to build massive defense systems for their own security, they unintentionally generated suspicion and fear in the eyes of their former allies. A major factor that contributed to the tensions was decisions made by both sides that were guided by misperceptions themselves. These confusions created a security dilemma that set the stage for the emerging bipolar system of the Cold War.<sup>3</sup>

Much of the literature about the Cold War victimizes one side and puts most of the blame for the emergence of tensions on the other; thus, it is no wonder that the general public remains misinformed about the whole affair. Hence, this paper presents an analysis of the events that were crucial to the rise of the Cold War, including the question of control over Poland, the British intervention in Greece, and the incidents that increased tensions between the Allies. It examines why missteps from both sides generated further missteps and, finally, a dangerous confrontation. Finally, this paper concludes with an analysis of the combined impact of these factors. The timeframe for these events is the period from the end of World War II in 1944 to 1945 until the Berlin Blockade, which began on 24 June 1948 (and ended on 12 May 1949). The latter is commonly acknowledged as the “real” manifestation of the Cold War but will not be described in detail here, as it is not my intention to describe the Cold War itself, but rather the events and interactions that caused the conflict.

### **The Sovietization of Poland**

The question that emerged among the Allies toward the end of World War II was how to set up a balanced system that would endure and provide for greater security after the end of the War. Both the Soviet Union and the Anglo-American coalition believed that such security could be achieved by strengthening its own position.

While Roosevelt believed that the key to international security was American-Russian cooperation, he also put his trust in American economic and military might. Roosevelt wanted to retain amicable relations with the Soviets to guarantee their assistance in the war against Japan, but also to achieve postwar stabilization and to ensure that they would not “block an agreement on his pet project, the United Nations.”<sup>4</sup> He did not have as great an interest as Churchill in creating a system based on balanced spheres of influence.<sup>5</sup>

Stalin, partially because of the enormous losses the Soviet Union had suffered during the War, also wanted to retain an alliance with the United States. Nevertheless, he also wanted to construct a security buffer zone along the Soviet Union’s western borders. This approach derived from old Russian military doctrine (in particular, during the time of Imperial Russia under Napoleon and during World War I), since the main threat to Russia emanated from the West. Churchill, on the other hand, preferred a division of the world into spheres of influence. He also wanted to reestablish the great power position of Britain, including its

Mediterranean dominance, and deny the Soviet Union the chance to subjugate Eastern Europe.

Naturally, such diverse interests were bound to conflict. Such variance first emerged in the Allies' disagreement regarding the control over Poland. On 1 August 1944, 46,000 men from the Polish Home Army, under General Bor-Komorowski, rose up against German occupiers in Warsaw.<sup>6</sup> They proceeded with the uprising without first informing Stalin. Stalin's disgruntlement regarding the Poles' trying to force his hand was clearly exhibited by the fact that even though Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky's 1st Belorussian Front covered an extraordinary 360 miles in the six weeks after Operation Bagration, it stopped six miles short of Warsaw. Alleviation of the Poles' dire situation through aerial resupply ceased to be a viable option when Stalin denied the Anglo-American air forces the use of Soviet airfields, which they would have sorely needed for refueling after dropping supplies over Warsaw. Stalin's answer to why the British and the Americans could not use the airfields was that the Soviet Command "must dissociate itself from the Warsaw adventure, as it cannot take direct or indirect responsibility for the Warsaw action."<sup>7</sup> Stalin's decision derived from the fact that, had Rokossovsky intervened, the Germans would have likely been forced to withdraw and the Home Army would have emerged triumphant. Since the Home Army was under the control of the Polish government-in-exile, Stalin would have had difficulty establishing a government that would be friendly to the Soviet Union and, in effect, under its control.

The Soviet Union suddenly changed tactics on September 9, when it implied in a message to the British government that, if London thought that the parachute drops would make any difference, it was welcome to lend its aid. This altered strategy emerged from the fact that Rokossovsky had renewed his offensive on August 31, and the actions of the rebels usefully complemented his own. Although an airdrop was made to the rebels on September 18, it was too late. After the city had been reduced to rubble and the city had suffered 300,000 casualties, General Bor-Komorowski surrendered to the Germans on October 2.

On October 13, Stanislaw Mikołajczyk, the head of the Polish government-in-exile, pushed by Roosevelt and Churchill, met with Stalin. He was told that the Curzon Line had been accepted at Tehran, even though Stalin had assured him two months earlier that decisions regarding the frontier could be put off until later.<sup>8</sup> As Mikołajczyk refused to accept the Curzon line, which would have made Poland give up Lvov to the Soviets, the frustrated Churchill said to him, "You are not a government, you are an unreasonable people that wants to shipwreck Europe and scuttle agreements among Allies."<sup>9</sup> Stalin also demanded that the members of the Lublin Committee, established and dominated by his Polish communist comrades, have a majority in the new government.<sup>10</sup> Churchill told Stalin that "unless Mikołajczyk had fifty-fifty plus himself the Western World would not be convinced that the transaction was *bona fide* and would not believe that an independent government had been set up." Churchill, in his cable to Roosevelt,

stated, "Stalin at first replied he would consent with fifty-fifty, but rapidly corrected himself to a worse figure."<sup>11</sup>

At the Tehran Conference in 1943, Roosevelt and Churchill accepted the Curzon Line in principal, but they insisted that the city of Lvov remain under Polish control. By the time they met at the Yalta Conference in February 1945, they were prepared to sacrifice Lvov, but they hoped that Stalin would concede it as a benevolent gesture toward the West. However, Stalin wanted the post-World War II Polish-German border to be based on the more westerly of the Neisse Rivers and on the River Oder. In Churchill's opinion, this was too much. He declared, "It would be a great pity to stuff the Polish goose so full of German food that it died of indigestion."<sup>12</sup>

Stalin's opinion on the Lublin Committee was that it was "as democratic as de Gaulle" and that "it was vital for the Red Army to have safe rear areas, and as a military man he would only support the government which could guarantee to provide them."<sup>13</sup> Roosevelt wrote to Stalin and suggested that various eminent Poles be invited to Yalta so they could work out an agreement with the Allies and two members of the Lublin Committee. It was quite clear that because the Red Army had already occupied Poland, the most that could be achieved was to broaden the base of the Lublin Committee. Stalin responded to Roosevelt's proposal by having Molotov produce a draft resolution. Under the terms of this draft resolution, "it was considered desirable to add to the provisional Polish government some democratic leaders from Polish émigré circles." This government "should as soon as possible call the population of Poland to the polls for the establishment by general vote of permanent organs of the Polish government."<sup>14</sup> What followed was a Western proposal for a resolution: "A fully representative provisional Polish government should be established based upon all the democratic, and anti-Fascist forces in Poland and including democratic leaders from abroad to hold free and unfettered elections on the basis of universal suffrage and a secret ballot. All democratic parties should have the right to participate and run candidates."<sup>15</sup> Ultimately, the agreement read, "The present provisional government of Poland should be reorganized on a wider democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from those living abroad."<sup>16</sup>

Thus, Stalin achieved his aim to have the Lublin group form the core of the new Polish government; he then opposed the inclusion of the men proposed by the Western Allies. In a cable to Roosevelt regarding the establishment of the Polish government, Churchill wrote, "We are in the presence of a great failure and an utter breakdown of what was settled at Yalta."<sup>17</sup> Roosevelt then wrote to Stalin that any "solution which would result in a thinly disguised continuance of the present Warsaw regime would be unacceptable and would cause the people of the United States to regard the Yalta agreement as having failed."<sup>18</sup> Stalin's response was that he would not object to Mikołajczyk's participation in the Moscow talks, but only if Mikołajczyk approved the Yalta decisions and

made a public statement that favored friendly relations between Poland and the Soviet Union.

On 12 April 1945, Roosevelt died and the Vice President, Harry S. Truman, succeeded him. Even though Truman despised totalitarian systems as much as Roosevelt, what really emboldened him to be “tougher” with the Soviet Union was the fact that the United States was very close to completing the atomic bomb when he became President.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Stalin acted fast to eliminate the Polish Home Army and its key leaders. In the last phase of the liberation of Poland, the Soviets invited the Home Army’s commanders to a meeting in a Warsaw suburb to coordinate actions against the Germans. Despite assurances of “friendly” talks, the Polish resistance leaders were arrested and taken to Moscow, where thirteen of them were sentenced to prison on June 2 on charges of anti-Soviet activities.

Soon after Roosevelt’s death, Truman began making attempts to resolve the Polish situation. Churchill persuaded Mikołajczyk to make a statement in favor of friendly relations with the Soviet Union and to accept the Yalta decisions. The Soviet Union was, at the time, crucial to the war against Japan, so Truman wanted to retain good relations, but he nevertheless stated to Molotov that the Americans had come to regard the Polish question as “the symbol of the future development of our international relations.”<sup>20</sup>

On June 7, the involved parties reached an agreement regarding the Polish government. After the US cut Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union, Harry Hopkins, the Secretary of Commerce, reopened relations with Stalin, but also emphasized the importance of Poland for its direct connection with the future of international relations.<sup>21</sup> Stalin responded with a long speech, in which he promised that he had no intention to “sovietize” the country. He said that “even the Polish leaders, some of whom were communists, were against it” and that they were right, “since the Soviet system was not exportable.”<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Stalin offered four ministerial posts in the Warsaw government to the men selected from the list composed by the United States and Britain. Therefore, on June 21, Mikołajczyk became Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Agriculture. After this, it did not seem at unreasonable to believe that “there was a ‘fair chance’ that Poland might end up as a relatively free country. . . . Things, it seemed, could go either way.”<sup>23</sup> However, eighteen months later, Mikołajczyk was back in exile and Poland was under Communist control.

At the second session of the Potsdam Conference, Stalin demanded that the funds of the government-in-exile and the troops loyal to it be turned over the new government. Churchill delayed, and the problem was referred to the foreign ministers. On July 21, they discussed the western border of Poland. The Soviets demanded that it must follow the River Oder and the western branch of the Neisse River from Stettin to the Czechoslovakian border. The Western Allies wanted the border to be situated on the eastern branch of the Neisse, which would move Poland’s border about 125 miles eastward. A decision had already been made, as the Soviet government had given the Polish government jurisdiction

over the territories that the Soviets wanted Poland to have, and about two million Germans who lived there were expelled or fled.

The sovietization of Poland, the numerous discussions and disagreements over the borders of Poland, and the composure of its government were the first steps toward tightened tensions and, subsequently, the beginning of the Cold War. Stalin considered a “friendly Poland” as paramount to Soviet security. His attempt to build a large buffer zone did not differ much from Churchill’s effort to establish a British sphere of influence in Greece and the Mediterranean area.

The communist-led five-party coalition in Poland was only a mask for an actual communist takeover. Yet, this was the exception rather than the rule that time, as Stalin generally complied with the framework to which he had agreed. Thus, when Marshal Josip Broz Tito wanted to impose the Soviet system in Yugoslavia, Stalin opposed him, as he did not want to provoke his allies with such an action. In some countries, Stalin even provided for the reestablishment of other political parties. Consequently, in most East and Central European countries, genuine party coalitions emerged. Yet, Stalin feared Western intervention, so he began to prepare for possible later domination of these countries. Therefore, in some countries, communists assumed control of key organizations, such as the secret police and ministries.

### **British Intervention in Greece**

Churchill’s goal in Europe was rapid advancement that would allow Britain to liberate and occupy at least some of the countries that Stalin wanted to control. However, in mid-1944, Churchill realized that Anglo-American forces would not be able to reach those countries before the Soviets did. Therefore, the optimal solution for Churchill was a division of the world into spheres of influence. He was afraid that the Red Army would do as it pleased, because the next Big Three meeting would not take place until after the American presidential elections.<sup>24</sup> With this in mind, Churchill cabled Stalin on September 27 and suggested a meeting in Moscow and also proposed that the Big Three meet again after the American presidential elections.

The 1944 Fourth Moscow Conference, also known as the TOLSTOY conversations (this was the British codename for the Conference), began on October 9 and was concluded on October 17. As Warren F. Kimball comments, this was “the only time undisguised power politics predominated at a major wartime conference.”<sup>25</sup> The United States was represented by Ambassador Averell Harriman, who was more of an observer than a participant. Thus, Churchill and Stalin felt like the matter of Eastern Europe was theirs to decide. On the first evening, when Harriman was not present, Churchill recalled about his conversation with Stalin,

The moment was apt for business, so I said, “Let us settle about our affairs in the Balkans. . . . So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety percent predominance in Romania,

for us to have ninety percent of the say in Greece, and so fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia?" While this was being translated, I wrote out on a half-sheet of paper:

Rumania	
Russia	90%
The others	10%
Greece	
Great Britain (in accord with U.S.A.)	90%
Russia	10%
Yugoslavia	50–50%
Hungary	50–50%
Bulgaria	
Russia	75%
The others	25%

I pushed this across to Stalin, who had by then heard the translation. There was a light pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us. It was all settled in no more time than it took us to sit down.<sup>26</sup>

There was some discord regarding the percentages for Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia, but an agreement was eventually reached. The Soviets got 80 percent in Hungary and Bulgaria and 60 percent in Yugoslavia. Furthermore, it was decided that until the surrender of Germany, the Soviets would direct "Allied control" in Romania and Bulgaria. After Germany's surrender, American and British representatives would be included in the occupation control. After Stalin gained a free hand in Bucharest, he desired to do the same in Sofia, as it was the area that was nearest to the Straits. Thus, it is no wonder that some Soviet troops were redirected southward before resuming the march on Warsaw and Berlin.

In the end, the TOLSTOY conversations were a success for Churchill, as he thought that he had succeeded in saving the most important British interests, which concurred with his insistence that Britain must be the leading Mediterranean power. However, the conversations were an even greater success for Stalin, whose interests in the neighboring areas of Europe had been accepted by the Western Allies. On the other hand, Roosevelt was very satisfied with his position, as he was uncommitted and could side with either Britain or the Soviet Union in these matters. The problem was that Stalin saw the conversations as a serious, if not definite, agreement on the postwar share of countries. Roosevelt's view was much different, as he regarded the conclusions as preparatory and temporary, and certainly not definite. For Churchill, this was the signal to proceed with the enforcement of British interests in Greece.



The success achieved in Greece was similar to that in Albania and Yugoslavia, where the bitter struggle for liberty from German occupation quickly transformed into brutal civil wars, in which communists assumed control and formed governments. In Greece, however, the partisans already controlled much of the government. In April 1942, the People's Liberation Army (ELAS), which was basically Communist Party militia, formed from the scattered military units of the Greek National Liberation Front (EAM). The conflict that emerged between ELAS and the weaker, British-supported royalist partisans culminated in a civil war. By October 1944, ELAS had established control over most of Greece, prompting British intervention. The British were ready, as his cable to Roosevelt on 17 August 1944 suggests; he stated, "I . . . think we should make preparations through the Allied Staff in the Mediterranean to have in readiness a British force, not exceeding 10,000 men, which could be sent by the most expeditious means into the capital when the time is ripe."<sup>27</sup> Roosevelt did not object to Churchill's intentions, making this clear in an August 26 response to Churchill's cable: "I have no objections to your making preparations to have in readiness a British force sufficient to preserve order in Greece when the German Forces evacuate that country. There is also no objection to the use by General Wilson of American transport airplanes that are available to him at that time and that can be spared from his other operations."<sup>28</sup>

While the Greek communists sought to exploit their advantage, which was mainly the popularity that they had achieved through martyrdom, General Scobie, Commander-in-Chief of the British Expeditionary Corps, ordered the guerrillas to disarm. On 3 December 1944, which came to be known as "Bloody Sunday," the extreme left organized a protest in Athens. While it is unclear if the royalist police or the demonstrators fired the first shot, the protest led to a 33-day battle. Churchill was determined to win, which he made clear to General Scobie in a cable sent on 5 December 1944: "We have to hold and dominate Athens. It would be a great thing for you to succeed in this without bloodshed if possible, but also with bloodshed if necessary. . . . Do not hesitate to act as if you were in a conquered city where a local rebellion is in progress."<sup>29</sup> Churchill himself ensured the defeat of the ELAS uprising when he arrived in Athens on Christmas. On that day, ELAS was to blow up the Hotel Great Britain, which was the seat of the Anglo-Greek military staff. However, due to Churchill's presence and the fact that he agreed to confer with representatives of ELAS, this plan was not carried out.

Ultimately, Archbishop Damaskinos Papandreou was appointed Regent until the king returned from exile, and he appointed General Nikolaos Plastiras, a life-long republican, as Premier. Military success followed, and on January 6, ELAS ordered a general retreat. On 13 January 1945, the British negotiated a cease-fire, and an agreement was reached a month later. The success the British achieved in Greece was questionable in terms of morality, as they had eliminated

an anti-fascist ally; further, it meant that the British abandoned the rest of the Balkans to Soviet control.

There are many similarities between the Polish and Greek scenarios. To secure their interests, both the Soviet Union and Britain exported civil war into Poland and Greece, respectively. Countries that had suffered much German occupation became great power politics proxies. Furthermore, after the liberation of their countries, communist and royalist partisan movements that had fought together against the Germans became engaged in struggles against each other. Unfortunately, the emerging world of the Cold War—the world of great power politics—recognized only winners and losers. To be a winner, one sometimes had to disregard morality to ensure success.

### **Alliance Declining**

A comparison between what happened in Poland, Romania and Bulgaria shows a clear and distinctive pattern. Even though Stalin did not attempt to straightforwardly sovietize Romania and Bulgaria after the “percentage agreement” that he made with Churchill in October 1944 in Moscow, he had no intention of letting genuine conditions in these two countries last. Therefore, he replaced political parties or individuals that did not want to cooperate by those who did.

The transition in Romania occurred most directly. In the period between August 1944 and March 1945, conditions in Romania deteriorated as bloody political and ethnic confrontations emerged. The crisis in Romania reached its climax at the end of February 1945. At this point, Stalin was no longer hesitant to act; thus, the Soviet troops that were present in the country disarmed the Romanian troops, occupied the Bucharest headquarters of the Romanian Army and sent an ultimatum to the Romanian king to appoint Petru Groza, a pro-Communist, as Premier. After this event, a “bogus” coalition of political parties was formed. Roosevelt strongly disapproved of these acts, which he made clear to Stalin. Churchill, on the other hand, was reluctant to criticize the Soviets’ actions in Romania; he feared that Stalin would repeat this lack of adhesion to the Yalta Declaration in the context of British intervention in Greece.<sup>30</sup>

In Bulgaria, elections were held in November 1945 and, unsurprisingly, the communist-led “bogus” coalition won. Hence, Stalin realized his agreement with Churchill. The most dramatic turn of events occurred in the years of 1947 and 1948, when the wartime alliance and cooperation were replaced with open confrontation and animosity among the former allies. Due to the Tehran and Yalta debates, the decision regarding Poland, and his pact with Churchill, Stalin believed that Western Allies accepted his interest and dominance in neighboring countries. Furthermore, he believed that if he left Western Europe to his Western partners, Eastern Europe would be under his control. Thus, when Churchill asked Stalin to help prevent a communist government in Italy from emerging, Stalin complied. What also influenced Stalin’s ambitions in Central and Eastern Europe was the fact that his allies wanted his help in the war against Japan.

Nevertheless, the fact that Stalin was building a security buffer zone frightened his former Western Allies, as they perceived it as a sign of planned aggression against the West. His fear of a possible American attack influenced his perceptions and calculations, and the security measures of the Western Allies seemed to him as having an aggressive intent. Henry Wallace, former Vice President under Roosevelt and member of the Truman cabinet, pointed out in a letter to Truman that: "to develop a security zone in Eastern Europe . . . [is] small change from the point of view of military power as compared with our air bases in Greenland, Okinawa and many other places thousands of miles from our shores." Wallace's understanding of the Soviet attitude is illustrated by his comment that "to the Russians all of the defense and security measures of the Western powers seem to have an aggressive intent . . . going far beyond the requirements of defense." He also recognized the reasons the Soviet Union had for suspicion: "Our interest in establishing democracy in Eastern Europe, where democracy by and large has never existed, seems to her an attempt to re-establish the encirclement of unfriendly neighbors which was created after the last war and which might serve as a springboard of still another effort to destroy her."<sup>31</sup> When Stalin found out about the secret Anglo-American-German meeting in Bern regarding a German surrender, he only became more convinced that he could not trust his allies and began to paint a picture of the Germans joining forces with the British and Americans and then acting together against the Soviet Union.

The death of President Roosevelt, whom Stalin trusted, also undermined the latter's trust in his Western allies. Roosevelt's successor, Harry S. Truman, was not afraid to stand up to the Soviet Union. The American policy of cooperation was gone, replaced by Truman's idea that the US must show the Soviet Union that it was not afraid. In a meeting with Molotov on 23 April 1945, Truman warned Molotov of a "seriously shaken confidence." Molotov was surprised at this and answered, "I have never been talked to like that in my life," to which Truman replied, "Carry out your agreements and you will not be talked to like that."<sup>32</sup> As Andre Fontaine wrote, "The Cold War did not yet exist, but here was its language. And it was not the language of Roosevelt."<sup>33</sup>

The improved strategic position of the Western Allies after the amphibious landing in Normandy as part of Operation Overlord, and the subsequent rapid advance toward Germany, prompted Roosevelt to get tougher with the Soviets. Truman had an even better reason to be uncompromising after the successful testing of the first atomic bomb on 16 July 1945. Churchill was handed the report of the successful test of the atomic bomb during the Potsdam Summit. After reading it, he remarked that the bomb "would redress the balance with the Russians." Henry Stimson, the Secretary of War under Roosevelt and Truman, stated that Churchill told him "that he had noticed at the meeting of the Three yesterday that Truman was evidently much fortified by something that had happened and that he stood up to the Russians in a most emphatic and decisive manner. . . . Now I know what happened to Truman yesterday. When he got to

the meeting after having read this report he was a changed man.”<sup>34</sup> Truman’s attitude and position only intensified in the following months. As historian Ivan T. Berend wrote, “The monopoly of the atom bomb changed not only the style and manner of the American president but American policy as well, which suddenly shifted from wartime collaboration to confrontation with the USSR.”<sup>35</sup>

The dropping of the atomic bomb was the first major operation of the Cold War, but in fact, the process of deterioration of relations between the Allies began much earlier. Stalin’s actions regarding Poland in 1944, Churchill’s intervention in Greece, and Truman’s stand against the Soviets gradually led to the confrontation of interests, misunderstandings and, lastly, to the Cold War. The atomic bomb quickly became Stalin’s most important issue. The decision to keep it secret was not Truman’s, but Roosevelt’s and Churchill’s; during their meeting in Hyde Park, New York, they agreed to “full cooperation . . . in developing TUBE ALLOYS for military and commercial purposes” and also “that atomic energy should not come under international control and that the project should remain secret.”<sup>36</sup> The Chicago scientists who worked on the preparation of the bomb suggested, “Russia . . . may be deeply shocked by our using the Bomb. If an international agreement is not concluded immediately . . . this will mean a flying start toward an unlimited armaments race.”<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately, this is exactly what happened, and it shaped the Cold War. Stimson, in his memorandum to Truman on 11 September 1945, stated that he considered “the problem of our satisfactory relations with Russia as not merely connected but as virtually dominated by the problem of the atomic bomb.” He suggested an agreement and proposed giving the Soviets an invitation “into a partnership upon a basis of cooperation and trust . . . a satisfactory international arrangement respecting the control of this new force. . . . For if we fail to approach them now . . . having this weapon . . . their suspicions and their distrust of our purposes and motives will increase.”<sup>38</sup> All suggestions of cooperation and technological collaboration were strongly rejected. Therefore, “one year after the end of World War II, in the atmosphere of increasing mutual distrust and suspicion, American foreign policy based on Roosevelt’s cooperation with Russia and the fight against Germany was turned upside down.”<sup>39</sup>

Regarding Germany, Roosevelt argued for its complete disarmament and de-industrialization. He asked Henry Morgenthau, Jr., the Secretary of the Treasury, to produce a plan to destroy Germany’s industrial economy, in order to “push Germany back to its primeval agrarian origins.” At first, Churchill did not like this idea, as it was, in his opinion, “unnatural, unchristian and unnecessary,” but he later nevertheless accepted the plan.<sup>40</sup> However, two years later, this proposal fell away, as the allies helped Germany and antagonized the Soviet Union.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

A self-generating Cold War rapidly emerged as fear and aggressiveness perpetuated and grew. Churchill’s Fulton speech, which he delivered on 5 March 1946,

did not mark the start of the Cold War, but the speech made it manifest. A day after Churchill's speech, the United States sent a warning to the Soviet Union that urged it to withdraw its troops from Iran. Even though the Soviet troops had started to move toward Tehran, the United States did not budge, and Stalin promised a retreat in two months.

In August 1946 Soviet troop movements were reported along the Turkish border. Stalin wanted to establish a permanent Soviet base in the Dardanelles, but the United States sent the battleship USS Missouri, the aircraft carrier USS Franklin Roosevelt, four cruisers and a destroyer flotilla to the area as a show of strength. The Soviet demand was rejected, and Stalin accepted this.

After these incidents, the Greek Civil War began anew in 1947. The British informed the United States that they planned to withdraw their troops from Greece, as keeping them there was too costly. Truman made a statement to Congress regarding this matter on 11 March 1947, in which he declared,

I believe, that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way. I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political process. . . . The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life has died. We must keep that hope alive.<sup>42</sup>

What Truman asked of Congress was to grant financial aid to Greece and Turkey. This speech became known as the Truman Doctrine, which served as a declaration of the United States' crusade against communism.

With the escalation of tensions, the world on both sides of the Iron Curtain began to prepare for a third world war, which was deemed inevitable. Open confrontation became common, and the threat of nuclear warfare emerged. Secretary of State George Marshall formulated a plan to help reestablish the economy of the United States' West European allies, with the United States offering \$13 billion for this aim. Even though the US also offered this aid to the East, the Soviet Union refused it and the East-Central European countries and Finland were forced to act in accordance. In December 1947, the ministers of foreign affairs ended their meeting without having achieved their agenda and without having set a date for their next meeting. The Soviet Union, the United States, and Britain could not agree on the solution of the peace treaty with Germany. When a new currency was introduced in the zone of the Western powers on 23 June 1948, signaling the decision to establish a West German state, the Soviet Army closed the routes from the Western occupation zones to the Western zone of Berlin.

Stalin sped up the sovietization of neighboring East-Central Europe and, as a result, monolithic, Soviet-type regimes were introduced all over the region. In early 1947, the Soviets directly intervened in Hungary and arrested Béla Kovács, the General Secretary of the Smallholders' Party and forced him to leave the country.<sup>43</sup> Shortly afterwards, other leaders of the Smallholders' Party slipped out of the country, one by one. Using the so-called "salami tactics," the Soviets thus effectively annihilated the major opposition and coalition partners.<sup>44</sup> One year later, the Soviets successfully replaced the democratic state in Czechoslovakia with a Communist police state. In this case, they used mostly political blackmail in order to provoke the February 1948 "police revolution."<sup>45</sup> What actually happened, as described by Ivan Berend, was that "the sovietization of the unfortunate region was both a cause and a consequence of the collapse of wartime alliance and its replacement with mutual suspicion, distrust, misunderstanding and hostility."<sup>46</sup> Rarely does an alliance survive its victory.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> John Lukacs, *A History of the Cold War* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1961), 65.

<sup>2</sup> Jussi M. Hanhimäki, "Europe's Cold War," in *Postwar European History*, ed. Dan Stone (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 283.

<sup>3</sup> For a similar view advocating revisionism, see Marc Trachtenberg, *The Cold War and After* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 69–109.

<sup>4</sup> William I. Hitchcock, *The Struggle for Europe* (New York: Anchor Books, 2004), 23.

<sup>5</sup> As it later turned out, the Soviet Union's assistance was not needed for winning the war against Japan because Japan capitulated shortly after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

<sup>6</sup> The Home Army, or the Armija Krajowa, was the dominant resistance movement in German-occupied Poland. It was controlled by the Polish government-in-exile, which was hostile to the Soviet Union.

<sup>7</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Volume Six: Triumph and Tragedy* (London: The Reprint Society, 1956), 120.

<sup>8</sup> The Curzon Line was a demarcation line that had been established between the Second Polish Republic and Bolshevik Russia after the First World War.

<sup>9</sup> Cited in André Fontaine, *History of the Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Korean War, 1917–1950* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), 213.

<sup>10</sup> The Lublin Committee was a provisional government of Poland that under the control of the Soviet Union and thus opposed to the Polish government-in-exile.

<sup>11</sup> Churchill, *The Second World War*, 205.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 307–308. Finally, at the Potsdam Conference, held from 17 July to 2 August 1945, the involved parties reached an agreement that the western border of Poland would be the Oder-Niesse line, but that Poland would be compensated by German territories East of this line.

<sup>13</sup> Churchill, *The Second World War*, 305. Stalin's military thinking about foreign policy is best characterized by his famous statement to Yugoslav partisan leader Milovan Djilas: "Whoever occupies a territory also imposes on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise." See Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1962), 114.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 307.

<sup>15</sup> Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., *Roosevelt and the Russians* (New York: Doubleday, 1949), 211–212.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 234.



<sup>17</sup> Churchill, *The Second World War*, 349.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 581.

<sup>19</sup> Despite their ideological differences, Truman liked doing business with Stalin and even stated that he in fact “liked the little son of a bitch” in a draft letter to Acheson; see Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 37.

<sup>20</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Volume I* (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1955), 76.

<sup>21</sup> Lend-Lease was the program under which the United States of America supplied the United Kingdom, the Soviet Union, China, Free France, and other Allied nations with materiel between 1941 and 1945.

<sup>22</sup> Fontaine, *History of the Cold War*, 248.

<sup>23</sup> Trachtenberg, *The Cold War and After*, 78–79.

<sup>24</sup> The “Big Three” leaders—Stalin from the Soviet Union, Roosevelt from the United States, and Churchill from the United Kingdom—had originally become allies during World War II to oppose the Axis Powers and to halt German, Italian, and Japanese advancement.

<sup>25</sup> Warren F. Kimball, ed., *Churchill & Roosevelt: The Complete Correspondence: III. Alliance Declining: February 1944–April 1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 348.

<sup>26</sup> Churchill, *The Second World War*, 194.

<sup>27</sup> Kimball, ed., *Churchill & Roosevelt*, 279.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

<sup>29</sup> Churchill, *The Second World War*, 241.

<sup>30</sup> The Yalta Conference, which took place from 4–11 February 1945, was a meeting between the governmental leaders from the United States, the United Kingdom, and the Soviet Union (Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin) to address Europe’s reorganization and national restoration after World War II.

<sup>31</sup> Barton J. Bernstein and Allen J. Matusow, eds., *The Truman Administration: A Documentary History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 240–242.

<sup>32</sup> Truman, *Memoirs: Volume I*, 82.

<sup>33</sup> Fontaine, *History of the Cold War*, 242.

<sup>34</sup> Bernstein and Matusow, eds., *The Truman Administration*, 24–25.

<sup>35</sup> Ivan T. Berend, “The Cradle of the Cold War Revisited,” in *A Special Brew: Essays in Honour of Kristof Glamann*. ed. Thomas Riis (Odense: Odense University Press, 1993), 46.

<sup>36</sup> Kimball, ed., *Churchill & Roosevelt*, 318. TUBE ALLOYS was the British codeword for the nuclear weapons development program.

<sup>37</sup> Cited in Berend, “The Cradle of the Cold War Revisited,” 48.

<sup>38</sup> Bernstein and Matusow, ed., *The Truman Administration*, 221–223.

<sup>39</sup> Berend, “The Cradle of the Cold War Revisited,” 49.

<sup>40</sup> Kimball, ed., *Churchill & Roosevelt*, 317.

<sup>41</sup> For more about the shift in US policy, see Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 41–54.

<sup>42</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs: Volume II* (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1955), 106.

<sup>43</sup> The Smallholders’ Party was the main threat to the Hungarian Communist Party, since it received a majority of the votes in the 1945 elections. The communists received 16.9 percent of the vote, but the Smallholders Party received an enormous 57 percent. See Anne Applebaum, *Iron Curtain: The Crushing of Eastern Europe 1944–1956* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), 221.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>45</sup> Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace*, 79.

<sup>46</sup> Berend, “The Cradle of the Cold War Revisited,” 56.