

Origins of the Cold War

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ABSTRAKT

Tato práce zkoumá počátky Studené války. Zaměřuje se na události, které konfliktu předcházely, a které negativně ovlivnily vztah Spojených států amerických a Sovětského svazu. Konkrétně se zabývá vědomými činy vrcholných představitelů těchto států, které vedly ke zvýšení napětí mezi nimi. Cílem této práce je zjistit, který ze států je viníkem vzniku tohoto konfliktu. Práce také kriticky hodnotí některé zavedené názory na toto téma, kterým se podrobně věnuje historiografická sekce.

Klíčová slova:

Studená válka, Spojené státy americké, Sovětský svaz, Rusko, druhá světová válka, Roosevelt, Truman, Stalin, Jaltská konference, východní Evropa, atomová bomba

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the origins of the Cold War. It focuses on the events that preceded the conflict and negatively affected the relationship between the United States of America and the Soviet Union. It investigates the willful actions of the leaders of the two countries that led to rising tensions between them. The aim of this thesis is to find out which country should be blamed for the origins of the conflict. The thesis also critically evaluates some of the existing opinions on the topic.

Keywords:

Cold War, United States of America, Soviet Union, Russia, World War II, Roosevelt, Truman, Stalin, Yalta Conference, Eastern Europe, atomic bomb

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INTRODUCTION

In the period between the two World Wars, the film industry was discovered to be an excellent way to spread propaganda. While the first propaganda movies in the United States celebrated heroes of the First World War and had a strong anti-war message, their purpose changed with time. When the United States entered the Second World War, the aim of propaganda movies was to support the war effort. When the Cold War began, the aim shifted to instilling fear of the Soviet Union. Finally, when the Soviet Union detonated its first atomic bomb in 1949, the American government contracted the film industry to make propaganda films targeting America's youth. The well-known "Duck and Cover" animated short was created to show children how to behave in the case of a nuclear attack. Together with regular safety drills conducted in classrooms, this movie imprinted a lasting message into the minds of children about an evil Soviet Union that threatened to destroy America. After all, it was the actions of the Soviet Union during and soon after the Second World War that dragged the United States into the Cold War, and was because of the Soviets that all Americans, including children, had to live in constant fear of nuclear destruction.

Such was the common American point of view on the origins of the Cold War, and it was quickly reinforced by orthodox scholars who considered the Soviets and their communist ideology as the sole culprit of the world's troubles. However, so-called revisionists soon began disputing the orthodox point of view, placing the blame on the United States, which supposedly held too firmly to its own political and ideological interests. Both groups of scholars make some valid points. In fact, there is a distinct possibility that the Cold War originated as a result of the actions of both countries. As the evidence presented in this thesis will suggest, the governments of both countries made decisions which aggravated the tensions between them. Therefore, both countries deserve blame for allowing their children to grow up in fear.

1 RELATIONS BEFORE WORLD WAR II

There are now two great nations in the world, which starting from different points, seem to be advancing toward the same goal: the Russians and the Anglo-Americans. . . . Each seems called by some secret design of Providence one day to hold in its hands the destinies of half the world.¹

Alexis de Tocqueville, 1835

Alexis de Tocqueville, a French traveler, wrote his notoriously well-known and surprisingly accurate prediction “more than a century before the events it foresaw had come to pass.” Yet even de Tocqueville could not have foreseen the clash that came close to ending the world in the middling decades of the 20th century.²

In the 19th century, the United States and Russia were far from where they were at the beginning of the Cold War. In the case of Russia, we cannot even speak about the same country – in de Tocqueville’s time, the Russian Empire was the most prominent example of the monarchical authoritarianism. The Bolshevik Revolution had yet to come. The contact between the two countries was minimal, the differences purely ideological and originating from the differences between the American democracy and tsarist oppression. Truly, it is impossible to look for the origins of Cold War in the 19th century.³

1.1 The Siberian intervention

As the First World War was coming to an end, shocking news came from Russia. After the October Revolution, a government which promised to fight against capitalism came to power. American president Woodrow Wilson was hesitant concerning the situation. The revolution followed after considerable American financial support and pro-war propaganda and it was important for the war in Europe to have a government willing to fight on the side of the Allies. Therefore, President Wilson and Secretary of State Robert Lansing “authorized covert financial support for anti-Bolshevik forces then gathering in southern Russia.”⁴

¹ John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1998), 1.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid., 2-4.

⁴ Ibid., 5; John W. Chambers II, “Russia, U.S. Military Intervention in, 1917–20.” *Encyclopedia - Online Dictionary*. <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O126-RussiSMltryntrvntnn191720.html> (accessed March 5, 2010).

This was the most Wilson was willing to do at the time, but Lansing warned him:

The longer they [the Bolsheviks] continue in power, the more authority in Russia will dissipate: the more will the armies disintegrate; and the harder it will become to restore order and military efficiency. ... The hope of a stable Russian government lies for the present [December 1917] in a military dictatorship backed by loyal, disciplined troops.⁵

For Wilson, the idea of supporting a military dictatorship was difficult to accept, but so was the military intervention suggested by Great Britain and Japan. Both ideas were against “his own liberal convictions and the possibility of strong opposition in Congress.” He also feared that the Japanese intervention might have been “met by armed resistance” and Russia would then turn to Germany for help, thus allying with the Central Powers. The situation was complicated and Wilson did not know what to do. He wrote to one of his aides: “I have been sweating blood over the question of what action is right and feasible in Russia.”⁶

Finally, Wilson agreed to send American troops to Russia. Although some troops headed to the port of Archangel in the north, the greater expedition departed for Vladivostok. He had three main objectives – publicly, the aim of the Vladivostok expedition was to aid in “the tasks growing out of the transfer of the Czech military forces.” This Czechoslovakian corps was supposed to be evacuated from Russia so that it could fight on the western front, where the Central powers started another offensive. Secondly, Vladivostok contained major war supplies which the Americans did not want to fall into Bolsheviks’ hands. The third reason for intervention, not made public, was Japan.⁷

Siberia was an area of great importance for the Japanese. Their aim was not only to protect its own citizens who lived in the region, but also to create an independent Siberian state headed by a puppet regime loyal to the Japanese. This would have several advantages for Japan as it would satisfy both their expansionist and economic needs. It would also mean having an ally in the region in case of a future conflict with Russia. This was in conflict with the Americans, whose intentions were, on the other hand, to keep an open

⁵ George C. Guins, “The Siberian Intervention, 1918-1919,” *Russian Review*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (Oct., 1969), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/127162> (accessed March 1st, 2010), 430.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 430-431; Christopher Lasch, “American Intervention in Siberia: A Reinterpretation” *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 77, No. 2 (Jun., 1962). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2145870> (accessed March 1st, 2010), 211.

⁷ Guins, “The Siberian Intervention, 1918-1919,” 433.

door to the region in order to increase the market for U.S. goods in Asia, which would be complicated as the Japanese-controlled state would obviously prefer Japanese products.⁸

The intervention, however, was not aimed against the Bolsheviks. Among the orders for General William S. Graves, who was in charge of the U.S. forces, were instructions to “avoid interfering in Russian internal affairs.” The American expedition was also charged with continually assuring the Russians that the intervention does not intend to intervene in the internal affairs of Russia. General Graves carried out his orders loyally, and although there were conflicts with the Bolshevik forces, they were not provoked by the American side.⁹

When the Central powers were defeated, it was no longer justifiable to both the American public and the Congress to keep the troops in Vladivostok. Therefore, the American forces started to withdraw in June 1919 and completed the operation in April 1920, two years before the Japanese.¹⁰

The true purpose of the intervention remains unclear as the reasons for it were not very convincing by either the Americans or the Japanese. However, concerning the Russians, the orders were clear and the American forces did what they could to stay out of Russian internal affairs. Nevertheless, the invasion “aggravated Bolshevik suspicions of the West and provided Soviet leaders with major themes for anti-American propaganda.” Therefore, it was an unfortunate start of the diplomatic relations between the United States and Communist Russia. Still, this was just a small step towards the Cold War. The larger steps came with the Second World War.¹¹

⁸ Daniel A. Leifheit, “Prelude to Intervention: The Decision of the United States and Japan to Intervene In Siberia, 1917-1918.” *America's Secret War*. http://secretwar.hhsweb.com/prelude_to_intervention.htm (accessed March 5, 2010).

⁹ Guins, “The Siberian Intervention, 1918-1919,” 433.

¹⁰ Chambers II, “Russia, U.S. Military Intervention in, 1917–20.”

¹¹ *Ibid.*

2 THE MOLOTOV-RIBBENTROP PACT

In the period between the end of the Siberian intervention and the Second World War, both the United States and the Soviet Union were too busy with domestic affairs, and the relations between them remained mostly unchanged. There were no willful actions of the two governments that would aggravate the tensions and therefore, these years are unimportant for this study of Cold War origins.

The Soviet Union's greatest contribution to the rising tensions with the United States came in 1939, soon before the start of the World War II, in the form of the infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, a non-aggression treaty between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany.

2.1 Signing of the pact

Although the pact is well-known under a name derived from the names of Foreign Minister of Germany, Joachim von Ribbentrop, and People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs, Vyacheslav Molotov, it was Stalin himself who devised the plan to ally the Soviet Union with Germany. According to historian Carl O. Nordling, "[Stalin] had actually induced Hitler to make the proposal and he had probably written the text of the Pact himself." The roots of the pact started as early as 1936, when Stalin ordered the Soviet spies in Germany to cease operations and "David Kandelaki, who officially held the post of commercial attaché to Berlin, began secret negotiations."¹²

Until 1939, the position of Soviet foreign minister was occupied by Maksim Litvinov, a passionate anti-fascist "who in the 1930s had personified the Soviet perspective of an international antifascist struggle." Because his attitude no longer fit the course of Stalin's favored foreign policy, he was removed from his position in May 1939 and was "replaced

¹² Carl O. Nordling, "Did Stalin Deliver His Alleged Speech of 19 August 1939?" *Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 19, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=4&hid=5&sid=89814159-9892-42ec-9d2e-96e3686a1f86%40sessionmgr14&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbG12ZQ%3d%3d#db=a9h&AN=20809423> (accessed October 9, 2009), 94; Tamara Eidelman, "Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact Signed," *Russian Life* 52, no. 4, <http://web.ebscohost.com/ehost/detail?vid=4&hid=9&sid=80399efb-f8b6-4de3-a2ac-00dd5f81e297%40sessionmgr110&bdata=JnNpdGU9ZWwhvc3QtbG12ZQ%3d%3d#db=a9h&AN=42846167> (accessed October 9, 2009), 20.

with the pro-German Molotov.” It happened just before the arrival of an Anglo-French diplomatic mission. Negotiations with these western diplomats obviously failed.¹³

Meanwhile, negotiations with Germany were fruitful and “on August 23, 1939, the entire world was stunned by startling news. An envoy of Nazi Germany had arrived in the Soviet Union.” The final deal was worked out by Molotov and Ribbentrop, and it took them very little time to agree on the pact as the most important points had already been negotiated. To celebrate the occasion, Stalin organized a banquet in the Kremlin where he raised a toast to both Hitler and Himmler, the head of the Gestapo, whom he called “the man who ensures the security of the German state.” Ribbentrop was thrilled with the reception he was being given and said that at the Kremlin he felt like he was “among his party comrades.” Thus the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact was finally signed “with its secret protocols stipulating how the parties would divvy up spheres of influence in Europe and set the boundaries of their future conquests.” Neither party intended to honor them.¹⁴

2.2 The intentions

Hitler had not waited long before he showed his true intentions. For Germany, “the Non-Aggression Treaty with the Soviet Union was only a screen under the cover of which German militarists prepared their greatest adventure – the attack on the Soviet Union.” It came as a surprise to the Russians in June 1941, although it may not have been so had Stalin heeded the warnings his spies gave him. Stalin, however, did not want to provoke Hitler unnecessarily by starting military operations to prepare for eventual invasion. According to Uldricks, “Stalin deluded himself that Hitler could be appeased until Soviet forces have grown strong enough to meet Nazi assault. Soviet shipments of petroleum products, various raw materials, and foodstuffs were critically important to the German war machine and, thus, the key element in Stalin’s strategy of appeasing Hitler.” This strategy also included a change in domestic propaganda – after signing the Pact, “Moscow stopped

¹³ Geoffrey Roberts, “Litvinov’s Lost Peace,” Harvard University | Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS). <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~hpcws/4.2roberts.pdf> (accessed November 14, 2009); Eidelman, “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact Signed,” 20.

¹⁴ Eidelman, “Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact Signed,” 20-21.

denouncing the menace of Nazi aggression and began condemning Britain and France as warmongers.”¹⁵

The question is – why was Stalin holding on to friendly relations with Germany so desperately that he neglected even the defense of his own country? According to Viktor Suvarov, “a former Soviet intelligence operative . . . who defected to the West,” it was Stalin who intended to break the Pact first and Hitler attacked him only when he found out about the Soviet preparations to invade Western Europe. This, however, seems highly improbable if another piece of evidence is taken into consideration - a speech that Stalin allegedly made in August 1939.¹⁶

2.2.1 Stalin’s speech of August 1939

Stalin’s intentions concerning the non-aggression pact with Germany are all but clear. However, a plausible explanation is offered in form of the speech Stalin allegedly made in front of the Politburo on 19 August 1939, only a few days before signing the pact. It should be noted that the speech is not universally accepted as valid with some historians calling it a fraud. However, the genuineness of the speech has been supported by strong arguments in Carl O. Nordling’s article and when taken into the context of the previous paragraphs, the plausibility of the speech is difficult to question.

The speech is a general overview of the goals Stalin wanted to achieve by an alliance with Hitler. His primary concern was the strength of the western powers – Germany, France and Great Britain. Stalin’s actions were therefore aimed at weakening the three countries by indirectly supporting the brewing war. He emphasized the fact that an alliance of Germany and the Soviet Union would encourage Hitler to take a course of action that would force Britain and France into declaration of war – the invasion of Poland. He also warned that if the Soviet Union had allied with the western countries, Hitler would have tried to “seek a *modus vivendi*” with them and the war would not have come.¹⁷

¹⁵ Reuben Ainsztein, “Review: Stalin and June 22, 1941: Some New Soviet Views,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Oct., 1966) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2610158> (accessed October 11th, 2009), 662-663; Teddy J. Uldricks, “The Icebreaker Controversy: Did Stalin Plan to Attack Hitler?” *Slavic Review*, Vol. 58, No. 3 (Autumn, 1999) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2697571> (accessed October 11th, 2009), 626; *Ibid.*, 641.

¹⁶ Uldricks, “The Icebreaker Controversy: Did Stalin Plan to Attack Hitler?” 626-627.

¹⁷ Nordling, “Did Stalin Deliver His Alleged Speech of 19 August 1939?” 94.

The speech then continues by explaining the reasons why the war among the three western countries was desirable for the Soviet Union. Stalin believed that in case of the defeat of Germany, a Communist government would soon emerge in the country. However, he did not want to afford the situation where such a government is quickly suppressed by Britain and France. Therefore he intended to support the German war effort with raw materials and provisions for as long as possible, so that in case of Germany's defeat, both Britain and France would be weakened and exhausted by a long war and "no longer in a position to put down a Sovietized Germany."¹⁸

Stalin also had a plan in mind for the case of Hitler's victory. He rejected fears that victorious Germany would pose a serious threat to the Soviet Union. On the contrary, he believed that this scenario would ensure the security of the Soviet Union for "a decade at least" as Germany would be both weary by the war and too dependent on Soviet support to endanger Russia. Furthermore, Stalin counted on the strength of the Communist party in France, where he expected a Communist takeover which would provide the Soviet Union with an important ally and further ensure that Germany would not try any military attempts. His enumeration of potential allies did not end here, though – he also predicted that he would find them in the countries that Germany would conquer during the war. He expected communism to become popular when put in contrast with the German warmongers. To sum up his intentions, the pact was an excellent opportunity for Stalin to achieve two great objectives – assuring the security of his own country and strengthen communism around the world.¹⁹

2.3 The implications

In the scholarly works which deal with the origins of the Cold war, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is inexplicably belittled or not mentioned at all. That is a surprising fact, considering that the decision to ally himself with Hitler must have put Stalin in an extraordinarily condemnable position in the eyes of the West. Anyone blaming the United States for causing the Cold War obviously does not realize how difficult it was for the

¹⁸ Nordling, "Did Stalin Deliver His Alleged Speech of 19 August 1939?" 94.-95.

¹⁹ Ibid., 95.

western countries to trust Stalin after such an act. Hitler was expected to make any kind of deal to help Germany in the war and he would have been a fool had he rejected such an opportunity. Stalin, on the other hand, disappointed the hopes of the western powers. Agreeing on the non-aggression pact with Germany was his greatest contribution to the start of the Cold War.

3 THE ATLANTIC CHARTER

During World War II, the events that increased the tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union to rise were often avoidable or came as a result of mistakes or misunderstandings. Nonetheless, one of them occurred purely on the basis of ideological differences, this being the signing of the Atlantic Charter.

The Atlantic Charter “was a joint declaration released by U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill on August 14, 1941 following a meeting of the two heads of state in Newfoundland.” They met aboard the U.S.S. *Augusta*, and according to Roosevelt’s memorandum, the meeting was a result of mutual desire to discuss the issue of war against Germany. Roosevelt wrote: “I told [Harry Hopkins] to express my hope to Churchill that we could meet some day to talk over the problem of the defeat of Germany . . . Churchill expressed exactly the same thought to Hopkins. Thus it may be truthfully said that the meeting was suggested by both Churchill and me.”²⁰

The meeting, dubbed the Atlantic Conference, took place on 9 and 10 August, 1941. Each of the two leaders traveled to Newfoundland with different hopes, and although the conference was far from fruitless, some goals were not achieved. Roosevelt expected that the Atlantic Charter would influence the opinion of the American public and raise support for the eventual “U.S. intervention in World War II on behalf of the Allies.” That was not the case, though – only after the attack on Pearl Harbor was Roosevelt able to justify U.S. participation in the war. Churchill’s primary goal was, in his own words, “to get the Americans into the war.” He was therefore “extremely disappointed by Roosevelt’s refusal to discuss American entry into the war.”²¹

In spite of the fact that these goals were not achieved, the Atlantic Charter drafted during the conference remains a very important document. It contained eight points total. Among them were the aims to achieve international peace, freedom of the seas, organizing “a permanent system of general security” and expressing no desire of “aggrandizement,

²⁰ “The Atlantic Conference & Charter, 1941,” U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwii/86559.htm> (accessed March 5, 2010); Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Memorandum of trip to meet Winston Churchill 8/23/41,” Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, <http://docs.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/psf/box1/t07x01.html> (accessed March 5, 2010).

²¹ “The Atlantic Conference & Charter, 1941,” U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/wwii/86559.htm> (accessed March 5, 2010).

territorial or other. Perhaps Stalin could have agreed to these points, but the remaining ones were certainly not his cup of tea.²²

3.1 Ideological differences

Among the problematic points which were not in agreement with the Soviet policies were the “desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the peoples concerned,” the assurance that all nations have the right to “choose the form of government under which they will live,” the promise of continual efforts to ensure that all countries have the option of free trade, “improved labor standards, economic advancement and social security.”²³

The state-controlled market and economy in the Soviet Union did not desire free trade or economic advancement. Furthermore, the plan to reject any territorial changes was in opposition to Stalin’s plans for Poland where he intended to move the borders further west as a compensation for the Soviet Union’s territorial gains. Finally, Stalin also did not intend to let the countries of Eastern Europe, particularly Poland, choose their own form of government, which is the content of the third point of the Charter. Stalin had plans for Eastern Europe that will be discussed later.

The Atlantic Charter was certainly not written with the Stalin’s interests in mind, but it was also not aimed against him. Nevertheless, it became clear at this point that cooperation between the United States and Russia in the future would be hampered by ideological differences and therefore very difficult indeed.

²² “Social Security Online History Pages: Text of Atlantic Charter,” Social Security Online - The Official Website of the U.S. Social Security Administration, <http://www.ssa.gov/history/acharter2.html> (accessed April 20, 2010).

²³ Ibid.

4 CONQUERING ITALY

In 1943, Anglo-American military operations were centered on Italy. The invasion began in July with an attack on Sicily and then continued in September with landing on the coast of southern Italy. It turned out to be a long campaign – even though Italy quit the war soon thereafter, it was not until the spring of 1945 that the Allies controlled the whole Italian peninsula. Nonetheless, Italy played an important role in shaping the relations of the members of the Grand Alliance. It was, as Silvio Pons stated, the first European country to be reoccupied by the Allied armies, and it was therefore seen as an initial test of peacemaking and cooperation among the Allies.”²⁴

4.1 The new government

After the Allies landed at Sicily, preparations for the invasion of the peninsula began. Among them were air strikes, including bombing the Italian capital, Rome. This was the last drop for the Fascist Grand Council, whose members overthrew Mussolini on 25 July 1943 and installed a new military government headed by Marshal Pietro Badoglio. “Badoglio’s sole objective was to double-cross the Germans. The Anglo-Americans were willing enough to oblige. On 3 September 1943, “a secret armistice was concluded between Italy and the Allies.”²⁵

4.2 The terms of armistice

The new Italian government had several conditions, though. Among them was an understandable request of protection against Germany. They also wanted “to be allowed to declare war on Germany and join the Allies as a cobelligerent” to avoid signing an unconditional surrender, and finally to retain the Italian monarchy. The Italian requests were discussed among the Allies at the Moscow Conference of October 1943, where the United States, Great Britain and the Soviet Union agreed on the terms of the Italian armistice. However, the negotiations were not easy. Churchill and Roosevelt were initially hesitant to concede to the demands, but in the end, their desire “to avoid social upheaval

²⁴ Stephen Ambrose and Douglas H. Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 8th ed. (New York: The Penguin Press, 1997), 24; Silvio Pons, “Stalin, Togliatti, and the Origins of the Cold War in Europe,” *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring, 2001), www.janeliunas.lt/files/Stalin%20and%20Italy.pdf (accessed November 14th, 2009), 3.

²⁵ Ibid.

and possibly chaos” made them agree to all the conditions. The Italian government thus remained in power backed by an Allied Control Council (ACC) comprised of the British and Americans. “The Soviet Union was not given a role in the main administrative bodies” and “had been systematically excluded” from the ACC. The Soviets, of course, were not pleased with the arrangement, but did not protest for long.²⁶

4.3 The Soviet approach

Even though Italy was the primary concern of the Soviet foreign policy, it still had a certain importance. That is why the Soviets “unilaterally reestablished diplomatic relations with Italy in March 1944, a step that produced serious tension in Soviet relations with both Britain and the United States.” They also broadened cooperation with the Italian Communist Party.²⁷

Nobody in the U.S. or British administration suspected any deception when the Soviets backed off so quickly, but the reason why Stalin did not press the matter and eventually agreed to the situation in Italy was simple: “He recognized the value of the precedent – those who liberated a country from the Nazis could decide what happened there.” And that was exactly what he intended to do in the countries of Eastern Europe.²⁸

²⁶ Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 24-25; Pons, “Stalin, Togliatti, and the Origins of the Cold War in Europe,” 3-4.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 3-5.

²⁸ Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 25.

5 SITUATION IN EASTERN EUROPE

Since the non-aggression pact with Germany, Stalin observed Eastern European countries as opportunities for both the territorial growth of the Soviet Union and for the spread of Communism westwards. This attitude never changed and when it became obvious that the German invasion would fail, the time had come for Stalin's schemes to come to fruition. In spite of the proclamations made in the Atlantic Charter, the United States proved unable to thwart Stalin's ambitions.

5.1 Military circumstances

When Italy surrendered, it was only a matter of time before the whole Italian peninsula would be conquered and it seemed as a waste of resources to continue to concentrate on the Italian front. The question of what to do next in Europe was at hand. "The Americans insisted on slowing down operations in Italy and using the troops instead to invade the south of France." This had a single objective – to support the upcoming operation OVERLORD, which was of top priority. Churchill had other intentions, though. He tried to persuade Roosevelt to abandon the idea of invading France and instead push into Yugoslavia and Austria to secure the British position in the Mediterranean and, according to his own words after the war, "to forestall the Russians in the Central Europe," though it should be noted that he did not use that argument at the time. Maybe if he had done so, he would have been successful, as it is now clear that this was the last opportunity for the United States and Great Britain to influence the liberation of Central and Eastern Europe. The decision to go ahead with the invasion of the south of France was understandable from Roosevelt's point of view. He could afford no setback in OVERLORD, not only because of military reasons, but any problems with the operations in Normandy would also gravely endanger his presidential election, due later in 1944.²⁹

Stalin had everything he needed to spread his influence. He had not only the Italian precedent concerning who would decide the future of countries liberated from the Nazis, but also a free hand in military operations and liberating Eastern Europe. Still, the United States was not ready to let him do whatever he wanted.

²⁹ Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 27.

5.2 False promises

The post-war situation in Eastern Europe concerned the United States since early in the war, when the State Department “began to lay plans for a postwar confederation that would enable them to overcome the disunity that had invited aggression in the past.” As the Americans found out by the summer of 1943, this plan had no chance to succeed, because Stalin rejected attempts to discuss a confederation of any kind. There was nothing the United States could do about this matter. Even Roosevelt recognized the influence of the Soviet Union in the region and that the United States should “ameliorate the situation” while Eastern Europe should “look to Russia for security.”³⁰

Although Roosevelt and his officials may have tolerated a certain level of Soviet predominance in the region, there was no doubt among them that it should not be unlimited. As Gaddis stated, “a division of Europe into spheres of influence . . . would leave little room for the Europeans to determine their future – that was why Roosevelt worried about it.” On the other hand, he was willing to tolerate a situation where the nations of Eastern Europe would “accept some degree of Soviet supervision in foreign affairs” in exchange for the freedom “to conduct their domestic affairs without interference.” According to historian Eduard Mark, “The question was not whether Europe would be divided but how.” And that was one of the primary matters to be discussed at the Yalta Conference in February 1945.³¹

At Yalta, the problem was “Josef Stalin’s insistence upon retaining the fruits of his alliance with Hitler: Poland east of the so-called Curzon Line, the Baltic States, and parts of both Romania and Finland.” Stalin claimed the need for a “protective belt” of countries to ensure the security of the Soviet Union. “The struggle centered on Poland.” Negotiations were difficult as Stalin was utterly convinced of its importance for the Soviet Union. He expressed this attitude in the following words:

³⁰ Eduard Mark, “American Policy Toward Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1946: An Alternative Interpretation,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 68, No. 2 (Sep., 1981). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1889975> (accessed October 11th, 2009), 316-317.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 317-320; John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: The Penguin Press, 2007), 20.

For the Russian people, the question of Poland is not only a question of honor but also a question of security. Throughout history, Poland has been the corridor through which the enemy has passed into Russia. Twice in the last thirty years our enemies, the Germans, have passed through the corridor . . . Poland is not only a question of honor but of life and death for the Soviet Union.³²

In spite of this attitude, “Roosevelt and Churchill repeatedly pressed Stalin to allow free elections in the Baltic States, Poland, and elsewhere in Eastern Europe.” It seemed they were successful, because in the final Yalta Conference agreement, a whole section was devoted to the question of Poland:³³

. . . The Provisional Government which is now functioning in Poland should therefore be reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad. This new Government should then be called the Polish Provisional Government of National Unity . . . This Polish Provisional Government of National Unity shall be pledged to the holding of free and unfettered elections as soon as possible on the basis of universal suffrage and secret ballot. In these elections all democratic and anti-Nazi parties shall have the right to take part and to put forward candidates.³⁴

As a result, the American delegation left Yalta “confident that Stalin would permit free elections in Eastern Europe. Their assurance was reasonable in light of the prevailing beliefs that the Soviet Union had “changed greatly during the last years.” Roosevelt himself was elated by the latest development and when he “reported on the Yalta Conference . . . he emphasized Stalin’s agreement to hold free elections, which fed soaring American expectations about the shape of postwar East Europe.” They hoped that the Eastern European countries would become democratic, with close ties to the West.³⁵

Their hopes would not be fulfilled. Even before Stalin left Yalta, he knew full well that he was not going to keep his promise. “Do not worry,” he reassured . . . Molotov. “We can implement it in our own way later.” Stalin then quickly began to show that honoring the

³² Mark, “American Policy Toward Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1946: An Alternative Interpretation,” 314-315; Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 54; *Ibid.*, 55.

³³ Gaddis, “The Cold War: A New History,” 21.

³⁴ “The Yalta Conference Agreement February 11, 1945,” Russian News Network: News and Information Related to the Former Republics of the USSR, <http://www.russiannewsnetwork.com/yalta.html> (accessed October 9, 2009).

³⁵ Mark, “American Policy Toward Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1946: An Alternative Interpretation,” 326; Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 53-54.

agreements made at Yalta was not his intention. “He refused to reorganize the Polish government in any significant way, suppressed freedom of speech, assembly, religion and the press in Poland, and made no move to hold the promised free elections. His actions were, to a greater or lesser extent, similar in the rest of Eastern Europe.”³⁶

The United States, still shaken by Roosevelt’s death, did not have many options in regard to Poland – it could either “recognize the Russian puppet government or break relations.” Thus in June 1945, Roosevelt’s successor Truman gave up. He “accepted the inevitable and the United States established relations with the Communist government of Poland.” At the Potsdam Conference in July, Stalin did not wish to discuss the issue further and the United States and Great Britain had no other option but to accept the situation in Eastern Europe as it was. “They confront us,” said Truman of the Soviets, “with an accomplished fact and then there is little we can do.”³⁷

5.3 Stalin’s reasoning

It is clear that actions in Eastern Europe were only intended to spread the Soviet influence and Communist ideology. Stalin’s claims about a “protective belt” against possible future German attacks are hardly believable. If Germany, or any other country, had amassed enough military power to contend with the Red Army, and had decided to attack the Soviet Union, Stalin’s desired protective belt would have done nothing to stop it. At best, this protective belt might have served to buy the Red Army some time to prepare for defense. However, it is improbable that Stalin’s network of spies would not have found out about such a large scale attack well in advance.

Stalin knew what he wanted and how to get it. His actions showed that he was not afraid to backstab his own allies to get what he wanted. It was a huge disappointment especially for Roosevelt, who had hoped that Stalin may be reasoned with and said, two weeks before his death, “Stalin has broken every one of the promises he made in Yalta.” Neither Roosevelt nor Truman was able to get over this betrayal.³⁸

³⁶ Gaddis, “The Cold War: A New History,” 21; Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 56.

³⁷ Ibid., 63; Mark, “American Policy Toward Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1946: An Alternative Interpretation,” 328.

³⁸ Gaddis, “The Cold War: A New History,” 22.

6 TRANSITION FROM ROOSEVELT TO TRUMAN

It is generally considered that when President Roosevelt suddenly died and Harry S. Truman succeeded him in the function, the United States took a tougher stand to the Soviet Union. By some, such as D.F. Fleming, this event is seen as so important and the change in attitude so dramatic that they consider it to be the true beginning of the Cold War. It may seem that Truman changed Roosevelt's long-term plans and that Truman's succession provided him with an opportunity to finally deal with the Soviets as he saw fit. However, while the change in attitude is unquestionable, the circumstances were different.

6.1 Roosevelt's legacy

When Germany invaded the Soviet Union, Roosevelt saw it as an opportunity. He had a vision of a post-war world where "the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain and (improbably) China would serve as 'the policemen of the world.'" It would be a world where "[e]xclusive spheres of influence would be made redundant." His main effort was to "preserve the wartime alliance as the key instrument for postwar cooperation."³⁹

Roosevelt realized that the massive German invasion of the Soviet Union not only would require military assistance, but could possibly be used to "elicit Soviet cooperation in shaping the postwar world order and accord them a key role in it." He gave cooperation with the Soviet Union top priority and attempted to win the Soviets' trust by extending the lend-lease program to the newly invaded country.⁴⁰

Unfortunately, Stalin's trust was difficult to gain, especially after Roosevelt signed the Atlantic Charter, which was in conflict with Stalin's intentions in Eastern Europe. It had become clear that Roosevelt's vision of the post-war world would not come to fruition. As Professor Wilson D. Miscamble states, "Roosevelt had made no contingency plans should his blueprint for an accommodation with the Soviets not come to fruition." He was a man who kept his plans to himself and did not communicate them effectively to his administration. Thus, when he unexpectedly died in April 1945, he did not leave behind "any testament that might serve as a genuine guide for his successor." What was clear,

³⁹ Wilson D. Miscamble, *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima and the Cold War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 39.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 48; *Ibid.*, 50

though, was his immense disappointment in Stalin's behavior. By the time of Roosevelt's death, it was clear that Stalin was not the man the late President had thought he was.⁴¹

6.2 Truman's policy

Because Stalin refused to honor the agreements made at Yalta, the approach to the Soviets had to change. In fact, "Truman became president in the midst of a debate over the means to deal with Soviets." It is safe to say that the new president was unprepared for the job. He never expected he would one day lead the country – had Roosevelt not picked him as his vice-president, he would have stayed in the Congress for the rest of his political career. It was not meant to be, and Truman suddenly had to face a new, difficult task. Unfortunately, during his time as a vice-president, Truman did not interest himself in foreign policy. On this matter he had no adviser and also did not seek any detailed briefings. Therefore, he relied heavily on Roosevelt's aides and advisors, who "gave the new president conflicting views of his predecessor's intentions." However, nobody felt qualified "to interpret his plans and designs authoritatively." It was up to Truman to decide on a course of action. And "Truman's inclination was to take a hard line with the Russians, an attitude that was supported by senior American officials stationed in Moscow." He "knew well that he stood in FDR's shadow." He also knew the expectations of his fellow Americans, and thus felt no need to devise his own grandiose plans. As Miscamble concludes, he "only genuinely wished to act how he thought Roosevelt would."⁴²

Perhaps the clearest indication of toughening the stance against the Russians was the well-known meeting of Truman and Molotov on 23 April, 1945. It was here that Truman bluntly accused the Soviet Union of breaking the agreements made at Yalta. The tone and language of his speech were so straightforward that both the official interpreter and Molotov were shocked. The Soviet minister remarked: "I have never been talked to like that in my life." Truman responded: "Carry out your agreements and you won't get talked to like that." Of course, this event did not have the desired effect, as the only response from Stalin was a letter repeating his concerns of the Soviet Union's security.⁴³

⁴¹ Miscamble, *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima and the Cold War.*, 82; *Ibid.*, 34.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 30; *Ibid.*, 82; *Ibid.*, 34-35; Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 56; *Ibid.*, 57; Miscamble, *From Roosevelt to Truman: Potsdam, Hiroshima and the Cold War.*, 104; *Ibid.*, 122-123.

⁴³ Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 59.

It is not the point of this thesis to speculate on what Roosevelt would have done had he not died. The important thing is that Truman was not a man of great ambitions. He did not campaign for his seat in the Oval office. Yes, Truman did change the approach to the Soviets, but it might not have been because he wanted to change Roosevelt's plans – there is a distinct possibility that he truly believed, and one can only speculate if he was right, that he was following in his predecessor's footsteps.

7 LEND-LEASE AND ITS SUDDEN INTERRUPTION

After the beginning of World War II in 1939, neutrality soon became an issue for the American government. The Roosevelt administration felt the need to support Great Britain, especially when Germany became an immediate threat to the British Isles after France was occupied. Because support could not be direct in order to preserve the neutrality, Britain had no other option than to start buying supplies on the cash-and-carry basis. This was hardly sufficient and by November 1940, the national treasury of Great Britain had been exhausted, and Churchill warned the newly reelected Roosevelt that “The moment approaches when we shall no longer be able to pay cash for shipping and other supplies.” Another way was needed.⁴⁴

An alternative to this cash-and-carry system came in the form of lend-lease, which gave the president “the powers to sell, transfer, exchange, lend equipment to any country to help it defend itself against the Axis powers.” After the administration overcame isolationist opposition, Congress passed the legislation on 11 March 1941. Because the lend-lease was not limited to Britain, Roosevelt did not hesitate to extend it to the Soviet Union after it was attacked by Germany. He “attached special military importance to assisting the Soviets.” It provided him not only with means to support the war against Germany, but he also considered it a way to improve the relations between the two countries and fight the Soviet suspicion of the west. Lend-lease was, in Roosevelt’s eyes, a way to convince Stalin of the United States’ good will and “provide a firm foundation for the Soviet-American cooperation upon which he came to base his hopes for a lasting peace.” Germany threw Americans and Russians “despite deep ideological differences, into positions of desperate dependence upon one another.” It is impossible to imagine Germany defeated without the incredible sacrifice of the Soviet soldiers, but it is also unlikely that the Soviet Union could repel the invasion without lend-lease.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 7; Kennedy Hickman, “Lend-Lease- World War II Lend-Lease Act,” *Military History - Warfare through the Ages - Battles and Conflicts - Weapons of War - Military Leaders in History*, <http://militaryhistory.about.com/od/industrialmobilization/p/lend-lease-act.htm> (accessed February 12, 2010).

⁴⁵ “Lend-Lease.” Spartacus Educational - Home Page, <http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/2WWlendlease.htm> (accessed February 18, 2010); George C. Herring Jr., “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of the Cold War, 1944-1945,” *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Jun., 1969), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1902065> (accessed September 28, 2009), 94-95; Gaddis, John Lewis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1998), 11.

The help to Soviets was essential in two ways. Firstly, the Soviet Union was in dire need of food. With major agricultural regions occupied and available food mismanaged and poorly transported and distributed, many Russians died of famine – an unfortunate situation that American supplies alleviated. Secondly, transportation was greatly improved by the delivery of Studebaker trucks that helped not only with the movement of troops and supplies, but also served as launch pads for rockets.⁴⁶

Considering the special status the lend-lease to the Soviet Union had for Roosevelt, who repeated several times that “a reduction or termination of aid to Russia would hurt the Allied war effort as much as it hurt the Soviet,” it may seem strange that this seemingly unproblematic issue caused more tension between the United States and the Soviet Union. However, the problem with the unconditional lend-lease policy was the fact that it was not sustainable forever. Sooner or later, the time would come when the terms of the service would have to be modified. The pressure to do something about the expensive lend-lease program was rising in 1944, but Roosevelt stood steadfast and in September 1944 ordered all planning of modifications to the lend-lease program stopped. Beyond this order, however, he offered no more guidance on the question. The task of changing Roosevelt’s cherished lend-lease policy thus fell to Truman’s administration.⁴⁷

There were two main reasons why lend-lease had to be changed. First, as Herring notes, it “reflected the Truman administration’s belief that Soviet-American cooperation could be established only if the United States adopted a stronger posture in its relations with the Russians.” Truman’s advisors agreed that “the unconditional aid policy could no longer be justified.” It is worth noting, however, that this would have occurred “even had Roosevelt lived or had Russian-American relations been amicable” because of the second reason the policy had to be changed – “the exigencies of domestic politics and the legal limitation of the lend-lease aid.” Congress and the public were getting increasingly worried about the purpose of sent items. The purpose of the lend-lease was to support the war effort, but as the end of the war was approaching, it was becoming clear that not everything the Soviet Union ordered could be used for warfare. “Congress insisted that the lend-lease

⁴⁶ Michael Parrish, “Russia’s Life Saver: Lend-Lease Aid to the USSR in World War II.” HistoryNet. www.historynet.com/russias-life-saver-lend-lease-aid-to-the-ussr-in-world-war-ii-book-review.htm (accessed January 15, 2010).

⁴⁷ Herring Jr. “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of the Cold War, 1944-1945,” 97; *Ibid.*, 99.

must be used exclusively for military purposes and could not be used directly or indirectly for postwar relief, rehabilitation, or reconstruction.” Lend-lease must not extend “1 minute or \$1 into the post-war period,” Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg from Michigan warned.⁴⁸

Concerning the Soviet Union, it was decided that the lend-lease would provide items intended only for the ongoing Soviet operations in the Far East. Furthermore, part needed to complete industrial plants that were already being constructed would be delivered as well, but every other program would have to be reevaluated and Russia would have to justify the need for all requests. There would be no more unconditional lend-lease.⁴⁹

The end of war in Europe came on 8 May 1945, and the time had come to make the discussed modifications to the lend-lease. A memorandum to the Foreign Economic Administration was prepared, Truman signed it on 11 May and it came into effect one day later. It was this memorandum that caused yet another needless stir up in American-Soviet relations.

The reason for this stir up was that the 11 May memorandum stated that supplies on order for the Soviets which were neither required for the Far Eastern operations nor for the completion of industrial plants would be “cut off immediately as far as physically practicable. (...) Even ships at sea containing supplies for uses other than Far Eastern operations should be brought back or the committee would have to explain why to Congress.” The Foreign Economic Administration followed the order to the letter, no matter how much chaos it caused in the ports and on the seas, let alone at the Soviet embassy. And chaos was the result.⁵⁰

When it was clear what had happened, Truman’s staff started doing everything in its power to minimize the damage. The ambassador to the Soviet Union, William Averell Harriman, immediately secured Truman’s permission to countermand the order.” The Assistant Secretary of State Will Clayton “attempted to explain that the action had been a mistake and that it had been corrected.” The order was adjusted and ships en route to their destinations turned again to continue their missions.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Herring Jr. “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of the Cold War, 1944-1945,” 99; *Ibid.*, 101-102.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 106-107.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 107.

All the countries that enjoyed the spoils of the lend-lease, including the Soviet Union, had to expect that it would not last forever and while the day when it was reduced or stopped must have been a bitter pill for all of them, it was not the reduction itself which infuriated the Soviets, but the manner in which this was done. It is clear that it was a pointless act which only worsened the relations between the two superpowers, but the reasons behind the 11 May memorandum and the actions that followed it are unclear. Revisionists argue that it was meant to coerce Russians into cooperation in Europe, but this does not seem plausible when taking into account the hasty adjustment of the order when the administration found out how rigidly it was implemented. Furthermore, the decision did not affect only the Soviets, but other countries as well. It seems more likely that this fiasco was caused by simple human error. By his own recollection, Truman “signed [the memorandum] without even reading it,” suggesting an inexplicable neglect on his side and of those who drafted it.⁵²

There is, however, one more possibility. Perhaps the Truman administration, concentrating on wrapping things up in Europe, neglected the ongoing war in the Pacific. In May 1945, the United States still relied on the help which the Soviet Union promised in the war against Japan. With the Soviet embassy angry over the sudden interruption of the lend-lease, there was a real possibility that Stalin might decide to back out on another promise and not enter the war against Japan. The adjustment of the order was therefore an attempt to calm the Soviets down. It would soon become clear, though, that this attempt was a needless one.

⁵² Herring Jr. “Lend-Lease to Russia and the Origins of the Cold War, 1944-1945,” 106.

8 THE DECISION TO USE THE ATOMIC BOMB

On 6 August, 1945 the United States of America dropped the first atomic bomb to be used in a military conflict on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. Three days later, the second and final bomb destroyed another Japanese city, Nagasaki, essentially ending World War II. It was not possible for the Japanese to fight against a weapon of such unimaginable power that was able to level whole cities within mere seconds. Although the effect of ending the war was positive, the decision to use the bomb remains one of the most controversial decisions of that time as there are implications that there were other alternatives and ending the war was not the only motivation for using the bomb.

In fact, the decision to use the atomic bomb was a complex one, and it is not enough to look at it from only one perspective as there were multiple factors involved. Nonetheless, it remains one of the biggest catalysts of the emerging Cold War, and understanding the development of the bomb and the decision to use it therefore hints at the origins of the almost half-a-century-long conflict.

8.1 The attitude towards the bomb

It took years to develop the atomic bomb and throughout this time, it was a topic frequently discussed by Franklin D. Roosevelt and Harry S. Truman, the two American presidents associated with its development and use. Apart from them, the most prominent figure who dealt with the bomb was Henry L. Stimson, the Secretary of War, who in the period between May 1, 1943 and his resignation as Secretary of War on September 21, 1945, had a major influence on all the decisions concerning atomic energy and “was also directly responsible to the President for the administration of the entire undertaking.”⁵³

According to historian Martin Sherwin, “What emerges most clearly from a close examination of wartime formulation of atomic-energy policy is the conclusion that policy makers never seriously questioned the assumption that the atomic bomb should be used against Germany or Japan.” Roosevelt realized how Germany threatened America and he

⁵³ Henry L. Stimson, “The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb,” Association for Asian Studies, <https://www.asian-studies.org/EAA/StimsonHarpers.pdf> (accessed October 9, 2009).

had no doubts about going to extraordinary lengths to fight the danger even while remaining neutral on the surface.⁵⁴

Since the start of the development of atomic weapons, the attitude of Roosevelt was simple. Because the experiments with atomic fission found their first significant success in Germany and since as late as 1942 it was believed that Germany was ahead of the USA in terms of developing atomic weapons, it became essential that the Germans were not the first ones with the capability to use the atomic bomb in battle. Additionally, any new weapon as powerful as the atomic bomb would predictably shorten the war. At no time during the weapon's development did Roosevelt or Truman suggest that it should not be used as any other weapon.⁵⁵

According to Stimson, all the people involved with the bomb understood the responsibility associated with using such a weapon, particularly Roosevelt, who spoke to him many times about "his own awareness of the catastrophic potentialities of [their] work." Roosevelt also told Supreme Court Justice Felix Frankfurter that "the problem of the atomic bomb 'worried him to death,' and that he was very eager for all the help he could have in dealing with it." And Roosevelt's successor Truman had a great respect for the weapon as well. One of the points in the memorandum discussed when he was first introduced to the project clearly says: "The world in its present state of moral advancement compared with its technical development would be eventually at the mercy of such a weapon. In other words, modern civilization might be completely destroyed." When everybody knew how high the stakes were, why was there so little hesitation to use it? Although it is indisputable that the bomb was an instrument which could bring the war to a quick end, there were other arguments in favor of its use.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Martin J. Sherwin, "The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War: U.S. Atomic-Energy Policy and Diplomacy, 1941-45," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (Oct., 1973). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1858347> (accessed September 28th, 2009), 946; Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*, 86-88.

⁵⁵ Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb."

⁵⁶ Stimson, "The Decision to Use the Atomic Bomb;" Sherwin, "The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War: U.S. Atomic-Energy Policy and Diplomacy, 1941-45," 955.

8.2 The bomb and Germany

One of the lingering problems looming over the U.S. government during the final months of the war in Europe was the question of how to deal with post-war Germany. As late as the Yalta conference in February 1945, Roosevelt was convinced of the need to eliminate the state that provoked two world wars, a need amplified by the impossibility of justifying an American military presence in Europe after the war due to pressure from Congress and the press. With the atomic bomb, the situation changed. No longer was the U.S. government required to deal with Germany in cooperation with the Soviet Union. Instead, it could opt for a divided Germany as it could attempt to economically restore its part and integrate it into the military alliance. It was understood that Germany would not pose a serious threat in the post-war period, and with the bomb, the U.S. government would be able to control Germany even without the presence of American soldiers and ignore Soviet security concerns. Thus, the bomb found its way into foreign policy related to the Soviet Union. It would not be for the last time.⁵⁷

8.3 The bomb in relation to the Soviet Union

8.3.1 Secrecy around the bomb

The development of the bomb was a joint Anglo-American project and as such, only important figures in the governments and science teams of these two countries knew about it. Due to the nature of the project, secrecy was of utmost importance. However, some insiders expressed their concern over how the revelation of the weapon would affect the relationship with the Soviets.

One of them was Danish physicist Niels Bohr, a consultant on the project. According to Sherwin, “Bohr was convinced that a postwar atomic armaments race with the Soviet Union was inevitable unless Roosevelt and Churchill initiated efforts during the war to establish the international control of atomic energy.” Bohr tried to promote this idea through Felix Frankfurter. However, Roosevelt rejected his opinion. The reason for Roosevelt’s attitude may have been the need to maintain the utmost secrecy, but it is also

⁵⁷ Gar Alperovitz, and Kai Bird, “The Centrality of the Bomb,” *Foreign Policy*, No. 94 (Spring, 1994), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1149125> (accessed September 28th, 2009), 5; *Ibid.*, 6; *Ibid.*, 7.

possible that Roosevelt believed that the Soviets would be even more suspicious if they knew about the project.⁵⁸

Bohr did not give up and was finally allowed a personal meeting with Roosevelt. In this meeting, Roosevelt told Bohr that the ideas Bohr proposed had to be attempted, and that he believed Stalin would understand the importance and consequences of the project. Another problem would be persuading British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, who distrusted the Soviets. The president, however, believed he would be able to deal with him. “They had disagreed in the past, he told Bohr, but they had always succeeded in resolving their differences.”⁵⁹

Roosevelt was either wrong or lying. After he met with Churchill, they signed an aide-mémoire which not only rejected any international control of the atomic weapons but also discredited Bohr. “Enquiries should be made,’ the last paragraph reads, ‘regarding the activities of Professor Bohr and steps taken to ensure that he is responsible for no leakage of information particularly to the Russians.’” The aide-mémoire also made clear their intentions to cooperate in further development of atomic weapons even after the war and also mentions the possibility of using the weapon against Japan. With this memorandum, states Sherwin, “an opportunity to gauge the Soviet Union's response during the war to the international control of atomic energy was missed, and an atomic-energy policy for dealing with the Soviet government after the war was ignored.”⁶⁰

Bohr made a valid point and the fact that Roosevelt did not listen to him had major consequences. Had the Americans and the British been cooperative with the Soviet Union, the three nations would have had other things on their minds after the war besides the Cold War. Mutual cooperation in technological development would have lead to strengthened relations between them and perhaps avoided the arms race that was an essential part of the Cold War.

⁵⁸ Sherwin, “The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War: U.S. Atomic-Energy Policy and Diplomacy, 1941-45,” 954; *Ibid.*, 957.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 958.

⁶⁰ Sherwin, “The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War: U.S. Atomic-Energy Policy and Diplomacy, 1941-45,” 959; *Ibid.*, 967.

8.3.2 The bomb as an instrument of diplomacy

During the Second World War, the Soviet Union was an important ally for the United States. Heroic efforts of the Red Army on the Eastern front made it possible to open a second front and ultimately defeat Germany. It made sense, then, for the Americans to wish for the presence of the Red Army in the war against Japan. At the conference in Yalta, “Roosevelt pressed Stalin to promise to enter the Pacific war and offered to force Chiang to make concessions to the Russians on the Sino-Soviet border in return.” Stalin agreed and promised to enter the war three months after the war in Europe was over. This was acceptable to the Americans and they counted on the plan even by the time the Potsdam conference started in July 1945.⁶¹

But then came the successful test of the atomic bomb and everything changed. Truman, according to Sherwin, “was visibly elated [when he found out about the test]. Stimson noted that Truman 'was tremendously pepped up by it and spoke to me of it again and again when I saw him. He said it gave him an entirely new feeling of confidence. ” This was reflected in his negotiating style, and he started using the bomb as an instrument of diplomacy. “According to Churchill the president 'got to the meeting after having read this report [and] he was a changed man. He told the Russians just where they got on and off and generally bossed the whole meeting.”⁶²

This shift in attitude is understandable. No longer did the American government have to keep the bomb a secret. “In less than three weeks the new weapon's destructive potential would be demonstrated to the world.” And particularly to the Soviet Union.⁶³

8.3.3 The use of the bomb

On June 1, 1945, after its discussions with the Scientific Panel, the Interim Committee unanimously adopted the following recommendations:

- (1) The bomb should be used against Japan as soon as possible.
- (2) It should be used on a dual target plant surrounded by or adjacent to houses and other buildings most susceptible to damage, and
- (3) It should be used without prior warning [of the nature of the weapon].

⁶¹ Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 46.

⁶² Sherwin, “The Atomic Bomb and the Origins of the Cold War: U.S. Atomic-Energy Policy and Diplomacy, 1941-45.”, 966-967.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 967.

At that time, the bomb was not tested yet, although it soon would be. In July 1945, when the United States successfully performed a test of a nuclear weapon, Japan was weakened and desperate, but willing to do everything in its power to keep its conquered territories and did not show any signs of signing an unconditional surrender. It still boasted considerable military power willing to fight against its invaders.⁶⁴

With the nuclear bomb in its arsenal, the United States warned Japan by an ultimatum made in Potsdam by the nations of the Big Three. This ultimatum was rejected by the Japanese as they did not know at the time what was meant by the statement which said: “the full application of our military power, backed by our resolve, will mean the inevitable and complete destruction of these Japanese armed forces and just as inevitably the utter devastation of the Japanese homeland.” So the bombs were dropped.⁶⁵

However, the United States was in no hurry. It could easily afford to bide its time as there were no major operations planned in the Pacific theatre up until November and dropping the bombs would not significantly change the military situation. The reason for moving quickly was the Soviet Union. “Churchill summed up the American attitude on July 23: 'It was no longer necessary for the Russians to come into the Japanese war; the new explosive alone was sufficient to settle the matter.' Later the same day . . . , Churchill declared, 'It is quite clear that the United States do not at the present time desire Russian participation in the war against Japan.'” The Soviet Union was going to enter the war on August 8, a mere two days after the first bomb was dropped. But that would mean letting the Russians take credit for defeating Japan, which was an alluring target to occupy for economic reasons.⁶⁶

“The British physicist P.M.S. Blackett, and later others, charged that the sequence of events demonstrated that the use of the bomb was “the first major operation of the cold diplomatic war with Russia.” Its primary purpose was to keep Russia out of the Far Eastern postwar settlement rather than to save American lives. A parallel interpretation claims that the American intention was to impress the Russians with the power of the bomb and to make it clear to them that the United States would not hesitate to use it.”⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 46-47.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 47.

After the explosions, Stalin had no intentions to remain without his own atomic bombs for long and Britain, having helped with the development, also wanted its own share of nuclear armament. The arms race had begun.

8.4 Consequences

There were many motivations associated with the use of the atomic bomb, from justifying the money spent on its development to ending the war in a quick and easy way. What remains a fact is that the Soviet Union played an important role in the decision, and the timing of the bombing suggests that it happened to keep the Red Army out of the war. Although nobody at the time may have realized it, detonating the bombs was the opening act of the Cold War.

9 ATTEMPTS TO LIMIT ATOMIC WEAPONS

Nonetheless, the use of the bomb opened up a final possibility to stop the Cold War from erupting in the way it later did. Clearly the possession of atomic weapons would not remain a U.S. monopoly forever, and as they were instruments of unprecedented power, the consequences of their uncontrolled use would be devastating. The opportunity for cooperation in the matter of atomic weapons was wasted during their development, so when the power of the atom was finally unleashed, the United States and the Soviet Union had one last chance to relieve the tension among them and cooperate on a common cause.

9.1 The Acheson-Lilienthal proposal

The emergence of atomic weapons created “an effort to establish international oversight of the use of atomic energy in the hopes of avoiding unchecked proliferation of nuclear power in the post World War II period.” Truman was worried about the situation and insisted that it should not be the military that would have control over atomic weapons. Instead, he wanted a civilian agency to manage their further development and access. Furthermore, “Truman refused to clarify the circumstances under which [the United States] could count on using atomic bombs in any future wars. That decision would remain a presidential prerogative . . .”⁶⁸

In the postwar “atmosphere of threat and counterthreat, bluff and counterbluff, achieving workable international control of atomic weapons was almost hopeless. Still the Americans tried.” Attempts to limit and control atomic weapons originated at “the Conference of Foreign Ministers held in Moscow between December 16 and 26, 1945,” where the UNAEC, a United Nations commission “to advise on the destruction of all existing atomic weapons and to work toward using atomic energy for peaceful purposes,” was created. This was an ideal body to fulfill Truman’s desire to keep atomic weaponry out of military hands. Therefore, Truman initiated the creation of the Acheson-Lilienthal proposal, which was to be presented before the UNAEC and “called for international control to be reached through a series of stages.” According to the proposal, the Atomic Development Authority would be created to oversee mining and handling of nuclear

⁶⁸ “The Acheson-Lilienthal & Baruch Plans, 1946,” U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/cwr/88100.htm> (accessed March 11, 2010); Gaddis, “The Cold War: A New History,” 54.

materials, including inspections of nuclear facilities and “the right to dispense licenses to those countries wishing to pursue peaceful nuclear research.” One thing it did not mention, though, was a timeframe for the United States to destroy its nuclear arsenal. This was because Truman would not allow the American atomic weapons program to be abolished unless it was certain that the Soviet Union would not be able to create its own bomb.⁶⁹

“The proposal was an honest attempt to avoid the horrors of a world in which Russia and the United States rattled nuclear-tipped sabers at each other.” But before the proposal was officially presented, a few modifications remained to be made.⁷⁰

9.2 The Baruch plan

Bernard Baruch, who was appointed as the American delegate to UNAEC, modified the plan. Under his guidance, the plan came to emphasize oversight for all facilities capable of working with nuclear materials for both peaceful and military purposes. It prohibited the illegal possession of atomic weapons and set the rules for punishing violators. “Most importantly, the Baruch Plan would have stripped all members of the United Nations Security Council of their veto power concerning the issue of United Nations sanctions against nations that engaged in prohibited activities.” This was an immensely important point. The Americans feared that if the veto was not a part of the plan, the Soviet Union would exploit it. The veto would enable Russia to break the rules set in the Baruch plan and then, when the Security Council voted about punishment for these violations, Russia would veto the decision and thus come away from the incident with no consequences. This, of course, was undesirable in American eyes.⁷¹

9.3 Opposition to the plans

The Baruch plan was unsurprisingly rejected during the vote at the UNAEC. Poland and the Soviet Union abstained from the voting which required a unanimous decision. Losing the veto and the obligation to allow foreign inspectors into the Soviet nuclear facilities was

⁶⁹ Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 71; “The Acheson-Lilienthal & Baruch Plans, 1946,” U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/cwr/88100.htm> (accessed March 11, 2010); Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 71-72; “The Acheson-Lilienthal & Baruch Plans, 1946.” U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/cwr/88100.htm> (accessed March 11, 2010).

⁷⁰ Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 72.

⁷¹ “The Acheson-Lilienthal & Baruch Plans, 1946.” U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/cwr/88100.htm> (accessed March 11, 2010).

too much for the Russians to tolerate, particularly when the United States would hold to its atomic weapons indefinitely. “The Soviet counterproposal called for an end to the production and use of atomic weapons and insisted on the destruction within three months of all existing stocks of atomic bombs. Only then would they discuss international control.” The United States had no such intentions.⁷²

It was not only the Soviets who opposed the plans. U.S. Army Chief of Staff Eisenhower pointed out that “the Russians might deliberately avoid the use of atomic weapons and undertake aggression with other – but equally decisive – weapons.” He also warned: “If the United States gave up the atomic bomb, how could it stop the Red Army?” The USA could not build up an army of comparative size nor could they force the Soviets to demobilize.⁷³

Neither the United States nor Russia were willing to step down from their conditions. Given the events of World War II, this is not surprising. It would have taken an exceptional display of trust and understanding to successfully negotiate a plan to effectively limit the atomic weapons, but with the amount of tension in Soviet-American relations, the task bordered on impossible. The world superpowers failed to get rid of the most terrifying weapon on Earth. The Cold War had begun, and it would take place with the threat of a nuclear war dangling over the world like the Sword of Damocles.

⁷² “The Acheson-Lilienthal & Baruch Plans, 1946,” U.S. Department of State, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/time/cwr/88100.htm> (accessed March 11, 2010).

⁷³ Ambrose and Brinkley, *Rise to Globalism: American Foreign Policy Since 1938*, 73.

10 HISTORIOGRAPHY

The origins of the Cold War have been a subject of scholarly debates since the end of World War II and so far there has been little agreement. Most scholars can be divided into two groups – the orthodox school and the revisionists.

10.1 The orthodox school

The scholars of the orthodox school say “that it was the Soviet Union that had started the Cold War after WWII when it ruthlessly occupied territory and set up pro-communist puppet governments in Eastern Europe.” It blames the deterioration in Soviet-American relations on the Soviet Union and a number of its “acts which were impossible to justify, such as the refusal to permit free elections in eastern Europe . . .” Also, “these charges were widened to include the promotion of communism - identified with Soviet expansion - in France, Italy, Greece, Hungary, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Korea.” The orthodox authors also criticize the Soviet Union for not agreeing to American proposals concerning the control of atomic energy. Because this attitude was predominant in the early stages of the Cold War, it has been questioned with the emergence of new sources and evidence.⁷⁴

United States foreign policy scholars such as Charles Burton Marshall (1965), Dexter Perkins (1967), and David Rees (1967) viewed the Soviet Union “as an expansive force and have regarded Stalin as the exponent, not of Russian security, but of the Communist program.” In this argument they are on firm ground, for the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that Stalin’s actions throughout World War II had shown his insistence on keeping control of the Eastern European countries, starting with his pact with Hitler and continuing with dishonoring the agreements made at Yalta.⁷⁵

The orthodox authors are, however, wrong when blaming the Soviets for the breakdown in negotiations concerning nuclear weapons. Here, the blame lies on the

⁷⁴ Ronn Pineo, “Recent Cold War Studies.” *The History Teacher*, Vol. 37, No. 1, Special Feature Issue: Environmental History and National History Day 2003 Prize Essays (Nov., 2003), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1555601> (accessed September 28th, 2009), 81; Brian Thomas. “Cold War Origins, II.” *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Jan., 1968). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/259973> (accessed September 28th, 2009), 184.

⁷⁵ Norman A. Graebner, “Cold War Origins and the Continuing Debate.” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 13, No. 1 (Mar., 1969). <http://www.jstor.org/stable/173304> (accessed September 28th, 2009), 127.

unwillingness of both the Americans and the Russians to step down from their requirements. It is clear that the suggested conditions were never acceptable to both parties, as proven in the previous chapter.

Blaming solely the Soviet Union for causing the Cold War is the main weakness of the orthodox group. These scholars are quick to point out what the Soviet Union did wrong and why its actions are unjustifiable, yet they tend to overlook or excuse the blunders of the United States government.

10.2 The revisionist school

It is a common occurrence in life that when a popular theory or opinion appears, it soon comes under attack. According to the revisionist school, the orthodox interpretation of Soviet actions is not inaccurate, but “such acts were in reply to earlier western moves, and equally should have been anticipated.” The role of communist doctrine in Soviet foreign policy is also questioned – according to the revisionists, it either did not play an important role or it was also the result of external influences, such as the Siberian intervention in 1918.⁷⁶

As long ago as November 1944, the first article which may be considered revisionist was written by Professor E. H. Carr:

Russia, like Great Britain, has no aggressive or expansive designs in Europe. What she wants on her Western frontier is security. What she asks from her Western neighbours is a guarantee, the extent and form of which will be determined mainly by the experience of the past twenty-five years, that her security shall not be exposed to any threat from or across their territories.⁷⁷

Carr is not the only one who points to Stalin’s claim about the security of the Soviet Union. Some scholars during the 1960s began to assume that the Soviet Union “had the right to demand friendly buffer states as a defense against Western encirclement.” They argue that “It was the repeated British and American protests against the imposition of a Soviet hegemony in eastern Europe that inaugurated the successive responses which led to the Cold War.” The American unwillingness to accept Stalin’s demands concerning Eastern Europe is seen as the cause of the Cold War in works of authors such as “Herbert Feis

⁷⁶ Thomas, “Cold War Origins, II.” 184.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 185

(1957), William H. McNeill (1953), Martin F. Herz (1966), Norman A. Graebner (1962), and even Frederick L. Schuman (1961).” However, the theory about a “safety belt” of countries around the Soviet Union and Stalin’s intentions concerning Eastern Europe have been proven implausible in this thesis.⁷⁸

Schuman’s hypothesis is particularly inaccurate. He claims that the Munich Agreement in 1938 had allowed Hitler to invade Russia in 1941 and that the western powers had no right to deny Stalin’s claims when it was the Red Army who liberated the region while suffering immense casualties. While the Soviet sacrifices are unquestionable, Schuman, like many other revisionists, does not take into account the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact. While the Munich Agreement was intended to appease Hitler and avoid war in Europe, Stalin’s deal with Hitler had a completely opposite aim – to incite the war. It is therefore not possible to blame the German invasion of 1941 on the western powers.⁷⁹

Then there is the argument of Kenneth Ingram, who “concludes that the western case against Russia really rests on three counts: the Czech coup, the Berlin blockade, and the Korean War - all of which took place after the Cold War had begun.” Ingram obviously failed to notice all the events of World War II that gave the West a solid case against Russia.⁸⁰

Nevertheless, the revisionists have one thing in common with the authors from the orthodox school. They blindly blame one side, in their case the western powers, for causing the Cold War, while they fail to see the bigger picture. Additionally, some of the arguments presented by the revisionists are doubtful at best.

⁷⁸ Graebner, “Cold War origins and the ongoing debate: a review of recent literature,” 125-128.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 125.

⁸⁰ Thomas, “Cold War Origins, II.” 193.

CONCLUSION

American “Duck and Cover” is perhaps the best-known Cold War propaganda movie, but the Soviet Union also created its share of indoctrination films, many of them aimed at children, depicting the Americans as evil racist warmongers who exploit the working class. Both countries tried to convince their citizens that they live in the better country and the other is evil, because both had their reasons to hate their rival – reasons arising from historical events described in this thesis. In certain situations, it was the Soviet Union that fueled the tensions; other times, the United States did something to aggravate the situation. Both might have acted differently to achieve, if not a friendly relationship, at least mutual respect and cooperation. Both countries therefore share the blame for the origins of the Cold War.

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