

The Origins of the Cold War:

**The Failure of Free Elections in Eastern
Europe as
A Cause of the United States' and Soviet
Union's Postwar Conflict**

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Since the beginning of the conflict between the Soviet Union and the United States over the geographic makeup of postwar Europe, historians have attempted to find the causes of the Cold War. Western historiography of the subject has gone through four distinct generations in the attempt to find the reasons for the Cold War.

The first generation of the histories on the origins of the Cold War was started by the Director of Planning for the United States Department of State, George Kennan. In 1947 he wrote,

“...stress has come to be laid primarily on those concepts that relate most specifically to the Soviet regime itself: to its position as the sole truly Socialist regime in a dark and misguided world, and to the relationships of power within it.”¹

Kennan’s article led to many historians to place the blame for the Cold War on the Soviet Union. They maintained that the United States was provoked by Soviet policies in Eastern Europe. Thus, the origins of the Cold War. However, these historians fail to put any importance on American actions in the postwar period and the Soviet reaction to those policies.

In the 1960s, another generation of Cold War histories were being published, which were the polar opposite of the original interpretations. For these revisionists, it was not the actions of the Soviet Union that caused the Cold War, but, instead, the actions of greedy American policy makers in an effort to create an American empire of

¹ Kennan, George F. “The Sources of Soviet Conduct,” *Foreign Affairs* 12, (Spring 1974), page 583. Despite his views about the intentions of the Soviet Union, Kennan argued the United States should not provoke the Soviet Union. He maintained that the superiority of the American system would defeat Soviet ideology over time. Instead the Soviet Union must be contained.

influence.² Just as the original historians incorrectly placed the blame for the Cold War entirely on the Soviet Union, the revisionists fail to take into account the actions of the Soviet Union as a contributing factor in the origins of the Cold War.

The natural progression of the historiography continued into the 1970s when the third generation of histories was published. To the post-revisionists, the blame for the start of the Cold War did not easily fall to one side. These histories see the cause of the Cold War as an inevitable fate between two superpowers that sought power over the same lands.³ These works became the standard interpretation of the postwar events until the late 1980s. However, the main criticism of the post-revisionists was that they relied only on Western sources. Of course, this criticism was unfair, since they had no access to the archives of the Soviet Union and other Eastern European archives.

The opening of the Soviet archives and other Eastern European archived has led to the fourth generation of histories on the origins of the Cold War. Unfortunately, these new sources have led the historians no closer to the main reason(s) for the Cold War.

Theories as to why the United States and Soviet Union began an epic struggle for the last half of the twentieth century are an numerous as the historians writing on the subject. The idea that the Russians saw themselves as creating the “third Rome” in the city of Moscow conflicted with the “Manifest Destiny” ideas of the American empire as granted by God. This may have led to some tensions between the two great postwar powers, but probably not enough to cause the type of tensions found in postwar Europe.

² The most prominent of the revisionist histories was Williams, William Appleman. The Tragedy of American Diplomacy. (New York: Delta, 1962). It is an interesting to note that the perceptions of the origins of the Cold War changed as the American political climate changed. The conservative, McCarthy era, 1950s led to the publication of the United States government can do no wrong. Then, the liberal 1960s brought about histories arguing the United States government can do nothing right.

Also, some theories have focused on the beginning of the Cold War, not as a competition after World War II, but instead dating back to President Woodrow Wilson's efforts to defeat the Bolsheviks in the 1917 Russian Revolution. Again, this may have caused resentment to build, but Lenin seemed willing to forgive and forget as he asked the United States for economic aid during the early 1920s.⁴ All of these prewar tension theories forget to explain how the World War II alliance between the United States and Soviet Union worked together to achieve the defeat of Nazi Germany. If the tensions would have been that strong, it seems the alliance would have broken up under the weight of that tensions. If cooperation worked during the war, why did it fail after the war and lead the world into a Cold War?

One cause of this developing postwar tension was the failure of the United States and Soviet Union to achieve postwar free elections in Eastern Europe that were acceptable to both sides. As tensions over the elections increased in the years immediately after World War II, the actions of the United States and the Soviet Union led to the bipolarization of Europe in the late 1940s.

One of the arguments that the revisionists made in the 1960s was that the United States wanted to keep the Soviet Union from having influence anywhere in Europe and forced the idea of free elections to create independent governments that would develop into friendly relations with the United State, which the Soviets could not accept due to their experience in the world wars. However, the United States accepted the influence the

³ The most prominent post-revisionist would be Gaddis, John Lewis. The United States and the Origins of the Cold War. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972).

⁴ Kennedy-Pipe, Caroline. Stalin's Cold War: Soviet Strategies in Europe, 1943-1956. (New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), 23.

Soviet Union would have in Eastern Europe. Assistant Secretary of State Adolf Berle, Jr. wrote,

We have been and are fully mindful of the wholly legitimate interest which Soviet Russia has in the area of the Baltic Republics, namely, the necessity that they shall not be used as military or "fifth column" springboards against; and the necessity to her of full outlet to the Baltic Sea.⁵

President Franklin Roosevelt also approached the Eastern Europe question in much the same manner. Roosevelt recognized the Soviet Union would be the power in Eastern Europe and that the United States would have to use whatever influence it had in order to make the situation as acceptable as possible.⁶ However, Roosevelt was advised by the State Department that the Soviet Union would not allow an Eastern Europe to develop that would be able to go to war with the Soviet Union again.

The Soviet Union will probably prevent a return to the prewar situation under which, in the Soviet view, nearly all the states of Eastern Europe had anti-Soviet regimes and were freely able to conclude alliances among themselves or with the powers of Western and Central Europe against the Soviet Union.⁷

American policy makers, however, did understand the importance of the solving the situation in a manner that was acceptable to all sides. They feared that if the Soviet sphere in Eastern Europe became one of domination by the Soviets, the Western countries of Europe would probably organize themselves into a military alliance to check the encroachment of the Soviets. If this were allowed to develop, the American policy

⁵ Department of State. Foreign Relations of the United States: The Diplomatic Papers, 1942 III (Washington : Government Printing Office, 1955), 539. This serial will be referred to as FRUS...(year), vol. for the rest of the paper.

⁶ Campbell, Thomas M. and George C Herring, eds. The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, Jr. 1943-1945. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), 214.

⁷ Policy Group, Document PG-14, "Soviet Attitudes on Regional Organizations in Eastern Europe," 23/9/1944, Box 119, Records of Harley Notter. This is quoted in Mark, Eduard, "American Policy toward Eastern Europe and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1946: An Alternative Explanation," Journal of American History, September 1981, 316-7.

makers feared, would put Europe once again on the path to war.⁸ These policy makers saw the solution of the problem in Berle's 1942 letter, which hoped Eastern Europe would develop ties to the Soviet Union in much the same way that Latin American developed ties with the United States.

I hope that we might work out an arrangement by which the relation of these republics to Russia would be analogous to the relationship that prevails between Cuba, Haiti, Costa Rica and the United States – that is, a relationship in which every military and economic interest is fully taken care of, but the life of the peoples is developed according to their own desires.⁹

When United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union W. Averell Harriman met with Soviet Foreign Minister Viacheslav Molotov in November, 1943 to discuss postwar Europe, specifically the fate of Poland, Harriman reported back to Roosevelt that the American dream of a peaceful postwar Europe seemed to be a very realistic goal.

They are determined to recognize only a Polish Government that will be a wholeheartedly friendly neighbor. On the other hand, Molotov told me definitely that they were willing to have a strong independent Poland, giving expression to whatever social and political system the Polish people wanted...Molotov told me that the relations they expect to establish with the border countries did not preclude equally friendly relationships with the British and ourselves.¹⁰

Washington was even further encouraged by the actions of the Soviet Union in late 1943. The Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia signed a pact of mutual assistance on December 10, 1943. While the agreement bound the Czechs economically, diplomatically and militarily to the Soviet Union, the Soviets pledged to not interfere in

⁸ Department of State. Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1955), 104-8. This will be referred to as FRUS...Yalta for the rest of the paper.

⁹ FRUS...1942 III, 539-540.

¹⁰ FRUS...1943 III (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1961), 591-2. This meeting between was in response to the Soviets turning down a proposal to create a European confederation of states reconquered from Nazi Germany. This stance alarmed many in the West, but Harriman's meeting with Molotov seemed to quiet these alarms.

their internal affairs. The United States viewed this agreement as the model for future Soviet relations in Eastern Europe.¹¹

What Washington could not know about the postwar world was what the Soviets were envisioning. Did the Soviet Union conspire to create a dominant Eastern European empire by making false pledges to the United States? Were the Soviets acting only out of their, and the world's, interest in maintaining a lasting peace for the European continent? Since the opening of the Soviet archives, the world has found out what the Soviet's were thinking while the United States was attempting to put into motion its ideas for postwar Europe.

In January, 1944, Ivan Maisky, a deputy in the Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, wrote to Molotov that the main goal of the Soviet Union should be to guarantee a durable peace by becoming so powerful that no combination of countries in Europe or Asia could threaten her. By doing so, Maisky argued, the rest of Europe, at least on the continent, would be enticed within the next fifty years to become Socialist. This would be attained by making sure that Germany and France remain impotent, thus, leaving the Soviet Union as the only land power. In addition, the countries of postwar Europe would be politically based on the principles of broad democracy. Maisky believed that many countries would be ready to do this immediately after the war. However, countries such as Germany, Italy, Japan, Hungary, Rumania, Finland, Bulgaria, Poland, Yugoslavia, Greece and Albania would need external help in this development from the Soviet Union.¹²

¹¹ Mastny, Vojtech. The Cold War and Soviet Insecurity: The Stalin Years. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996). 21-2.

¹² Due to this author inability to access former Soviet documents, in addition to his inability to read the Russian language, this letter is paraphrased from Zubok, Vladislav and Constantine Pleshakov. Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). 28-9.

Stalin also believed that the postwar world would increasingly become more pro-Soviet as years went by. Stalin believed that the Soviet Union needed to create an economic and political buffer zone in order to heal from the wounds of the war. Stalin believed this would not be a problem since, after the war, the Soviet Union would be the only land power in Europe. Without a serious threat, the Soviet Union would be able to heal itself, then continue on the path of creating a natural socialist world with Moscow as its ruler. The only thing that Stalin believed could alter these plans was a strong Great Britain and/or United States. However, Stalin believed the destruction caused by World War II would hamper any British efforts, and would actually bring the British into closer ideology with the Soviet Union. In addition, Stalin believed the United States would return to its historic nature of political isolationism after the war, which would eliminate it as an influence on the postwar European continent.¹³

While both the Americans and the Soviets have different views on the postwar world and the long-term future, there was a lot of common ground between the two powers. Both sides seemed to be interested in having independent governments throughout the European continent and both sides were dedicated to insuring a peaceful Europe. The main difference between these proposed plans for the postwar world was that while the United States envisioned a peaceful Europe would migrate toward capitalism, the Soviet Union envisioned a peaceful Europe would migrate toward

¹³ Zubok, 32-35. Stalin's belief about the power of the Soviet Union had been confirmed by the Grand Alliance, which allowed the Soviet Union an equal footing of the other great power, the United States and Great Britain. Stalin took great pride in his role, along with Winston Churchill and Roosevelt, of creating a plan for the defeat of Germany and the postwar world. Stalin believed this was the true world acceptance the Bolsheviks had been struggling for since 1917.

socialism.¹⁴ While some of the details may have been slightly different, by the time of the Yalta Conference in February 1945, a continued cooperation among the Big Three was not impossible to imagine.

While there was some tense negotiating moments among the Big Three, Yalta provided the biggest agreement on the makeup of the postwar world. While Stalin initially hesitated at tripartite supervision of the elections throughout Europe, the pledge was made from the Soviet Union that free elections would be held throughout Europe after World War II and the United States, Soviet Union and Great Britain would guarantee these elections be above reproach. The three leaders agreed

the three governments will jointly assist the peoples in any European liberated state or former Axis satellite in Europe where conditions require a) to establish conditions of internal peace; b) to carry out emergency measures for the relief of distressed peoples; c) to form interim governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population and pledged to the earliest possible establishment **through free election of governments responsive to the will of the people**; and d) to facilitate where necessary the holding of such elections.¹⁵

The American delegation left the Crimea confident that the postwar world would be one of tremendous influence by the main powers, but also a world of free and independent countries. Americans believed that Stalin had promised to allow Poland to be a free and independent state. In addition the Americans felt they had not challenged Soviet leadership in Eastern Europe, while maintaining the Czechoslovakia example should be followed for the rest of Eastern Europe.¹⁶ However, there was little doubt about Roosevelt's seriousness about the free elections pledge. One of his first acts upon

¹⁴ Gaddis, John Lewis. We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997). 19-20.

¹⁵ FRUS...Yalta, 848. Bold faced added for emphasis.

¹⁶ FRUS...Yalta, 679, and FRUS...1945 V. (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960), 669.

returning to Washington was to instruct Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinius to monitor Soviet compliance to the agreements.¹⁷

While the American delegation focused its attention on the free elections part of the Yalta agreements, the Soviets, mainly Stalin, viewed the agreements another way. Stalin saw Yalta as the West recognizing the tremendous power of the Soviet Union. At Yalta, Churchill and Roosevelt recognized the Soviet sponsored government in Poland on the condition that some members of the exiled Polish government in London be added to it. Roosevelt and Churchill also agreed to Stalin's plan of annexing the land to the Curzon line, which was the boundary created in the 1939 German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact, into the Soviet Union and compensating the Poles with Germany's Eastern Silesia, part of Saxony, and Western Prussia. This meant that Stalin would get Eastern Prussia as part of the Soviet Union. The Western Allies further agreed to Soviet dominance in Outer Mongolia and that the Soviet Union get back the Kurile Islands and the lower Sakhalin in exchange for a pledge of war against Japan. In addition, Churchill and Roosevelt agreed to leasing Port Arthur and Dairen to the Soviets.¹⁸

Stalin believed his postwar Socialist empire was being given to him by Churchill and Roosevelt. With these concessions, Stalin believed the consolidation of Soviet power would be unchallenged. With this belief, Stalin directed Molotov to sign the American-drafted "Declaration of Liberated Europe," which stated that the people of Europe had the

¹⁷ Mark, 326.

¹⁸ Zubok, 33.

right to self-determination. Stalin “did not mind signing it. We can fulfill this promise in our own way. What matters is the consolidation of power.”¹⁹

The different perceptions of the Yalta agreements became apparent almost immediately. Roosevelt was discouraged by the lack of progress toward a free election in Poland with the full participation of the Polish government in exile in London and the Polish Home Army. In fact, in a letter to Stalin on April 1, 1945, Roosevelt pleads with Stalin to allow the Yalta agreements to be fulfilled or tensions over postwar Europe may reach a breaking point.

I cannot conceal from you the concern with which I view the development of events of mutual interest since our fruitful meeting at Yalta. The decisions we reached were good ones and have for the most part been welcomed with enthusiasm by the peoples of the world who saw in our ability to find a common basis for understanding the best pledge for a secure and peaceful world after this war...So far there has been a discouraging lack of progress made in the carrying out, which the world expects, of the political decisions we reached at the Conference particularly those relating to the Polish question. I am frankly puzzled as to why this should be and must tell you that I do not fully understand in many respects the apparent indifferent attitude of your Government. Having understood each other so well at Yalta, I am convinced that the three of us can and will clear away any obstacles which may have developed since then.²⁰

Unfortunately, Roosevelt did not get another chance to meet with Stalin. He soon passed away and Harry Truman became President of the United States at a time when many American officials were beginning to believe that Stalin had no intention of fulfilling the Yalta promises. However, Truman made it his policy to carry out the Roosevelt dream of the people of Europe having the right of self-determination in the postwar period.²¹ One of his first acts as President was that he would not accept the

¹⁹ Stalin quoted in Mastny, 22. Stalin began to believe that he would not have to hold free elections. Just as they did in Yalta, Stalin believed Roosevelt and Churchill would give him whatever he wanted in order to avoid another major war.

²⁰ FRUS...1945 V, 194.

²¹ Gaddis, 85.

promises of Stalin to hold free elections, while the Poland situation, from the American perspective, remained unsettled.²²

At the Potsdam conference in July, 1945, Truman announced he would not recognize the current governments of Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria. However, the issue of free elections in postwar Eastern Europe took a back seat to the discussions on bringing the war in Japan to a conclusion.²³ However, in August 1945, the discussions concerning postwar Europe changed dramatically with the American use of the atomic bomb on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Revisionists have claimed that Truman dropped the atomic bomb on Japan to force the Soviet Union into a more conciliatory position concerning American demands for postwar Europe.²⁴ While the atomic bomb's effects on the postwar situation in Eastern Europe was discussed by the Truman administration, the ideas never got past the discussion stage due to the fact the administration was unsure about the impact of the new weapon.

[Secretary of State James] Byrnes had already told me that the weapon might be so powerful as to be potentially capable of wiping out entire cities and killing people on an unprecedented scale. And he added that in his belief the bomb might well put us in a position to dictate our own terms at the end of the war. [Secretary of War Henry] Stimson, on the other hand, seemed at least as much concerned with the role of the atomic bomb in the shaping of history as in its capacity to shorten this war. As yet, of course, no one could positively know that the gigantic effort being made concerning the bomb would be successful.²⁵

²² FRUS...1945 V, 195.

²³ Yergin, Daniel. Shattered Peace: The Origins of the Cold War and the National Security State. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977). 103.

²⁴ For the best work concerning the use of the atomic bomb and the argument that Truman used it to force the Soviets into holding free elections, which caused them to become more firm in their stance, thus the Cold War see Alperovitz, Gar. Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965).

²⁵ Truman, Harry S. Memiors Volume I. (Garden City, Doubleday and Company, Inc, 1955). 87.

Whatever the intentions of the Truman administration were concerning the bomb, Stalin viewed the use of the atomic bomb as a way of the United States trying to intimidate the Soviet Union. He stated to his atomic scientists, “Hiroshima has shaken the whole world. The balance has been broken. Build the bomb—it will remove the great danger from us.”²⁶ For Stalin, the bomb had been dropped at an inopportune time. He was in the midst of tough negotiations with the Western Allies over Eastern Europe, which based themselves in the agreements at Yalta. However, the use of the bomb on Japan meant the United States may be able to the Japanese War before Stalin could participate. This meant the land concessions he received from Churchill and Roosevelt at Yalta may become null and void, since the land had been promised on the condition the Soviet Union declare war on Japan after the defeat of Germany.

In addition, the bomb also wiped out his vision of the postwar military world. He had envisioned the United States and Great Britain remaining the great sea powers of the world, while the Soviet Union would be the lone, great land power of Europe and the world. The atomic bomb, to Stalin, seemed to make the idea of being a land power obsolete. Stalin also began to realize the United States probably would not return to its historic role of isolationism. Instead, the American involvement in world affairs seemed certain to Stalin. To counter this, Stalin began a massive rearmament of the Red Army and a push to industrialize the Soviet Union to match the United States. This, Stalin believed, was the only way to defend against the “American offensive.”²⁷

Emotions between the United States and the Soviet Union boiled over at the Council of Foreign Ministers in London from September 11-October 2, 1945. Byrnes had

²⁶ Stalin quoted in Zubok, 40.

told Molotov that the United States was close to recognizing Bulgaria and Romania as soon as the Soviet Union moved those countries' governments in the same direction as promised for Poland. However, the Soviets insisted the only reason the United States wanted these things was to create strong anti-Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe, which was contrary to previous agreements between the two great powers. As the tensions increased, both sides began making sweeping demands about the organization of the postwar world.²⁸

The rhetoric used at the council would be repeated many times in the next 50 years. In his memoirs, Byrnes wrote

To make the sacrifices Mr. Molotov demanded, I was convinced, would constitute a defeat for the Allies and the principles we had espoused. Only by refusing to bow to Soviet domination could we establish sound relations for the future. Our attitude was to shock them...Our stand at London required them to make a re-evaluation; it made them realize they could not force us to accept their position. It was, in a very real sense, a test of strength. Most of all, it was a test of whether we really believed in what we said about one world and our desire to build collective security, or whether we were willing to accept the Soviet preference for the simpler task of dividing the world into two spheres of influence.²⁹

Since it had become apparent to American policy makers that the Soviet Union was going to make its arrangement with Czechoslovakia the exception rather than the rule in Eastern Europe, it became apparent the United States had to move quickly in order to end Soviet occupation in Eastern Europe and get free elections held while the communist parties of each country were relatively small. At the Paris Peace Conference in 1946, Byrnes strove to get the treaties done quickly in order to turn the momentum of the future of Eastern Europe back into the favor of the United States.

²⁷ For Stalin's reaction to the use of the atomic bomb see Zubok, 38-48, and Mastny, 18-25.

²⁸ FRUS...1945 II, 194-200.

²⁹ Byrnes, James F. Speaking Frankly. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947). 105.

It was quite clear to me that we must find a way to resume the negotiations so that the peace treaties could be prepared—and signed. Until they were signed the Soviets would have an excuse to keep large military forces in the Balkans and in Austria, as well throughout Eastern Europe. Protected by a massive occupation army, their agents could work to take control of, and strengthen the Russian hold on, occupied countries.³⁰

Tensions continued to intensify in 1947 as the United States put together an economic aid package designed to rebuild Europe's war damaged economy known as the Marshall Plan. It was announced as a plan that would provide economic aid to "any government that is willing to assist in the task of recovery."³¹ The underlying theme to the Marshall Plan was that any country that held free elections, approved of by the United States, after the war would receive economic aid.³²

However, some Eastern European countries were willing to participate in the plan, which signified the Cold War had yet to start. Czechoslovakia accepted the invitation to join the conference in Paris to talk about the Marshall Plan in July, 1947. Also, Poland was willing to participate until Moscow ordered the two countries to withdraw from the negotiations, which angered Truman.

Indeed, Czechoslovakia accepted the invitation to the conference and Poland was also evidently eager to participate. In a dramatic move, however, the Kremlin ordered them to withdraw their acceptances, and Molotov departed from Paris with a blast against capitalism and the United States.³³

The Soviets viewed the Marshall Plan as an attempt to economically blackmail the Soviet Union into accepting the postwar vision of the United States. Stalin now had to face the fact, the "imperial capitalistic United States" would be a major factor in international politics. In addition, the Soviets saw the plan as an attempt to drastically

³⁰ Byrnes, James F. All in One Lifetime. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958). 318-9.

³¹ Truman, Harry S. Memiors II. 114.

³² Gaddis, 38-9.

³³ Tuman II, 116.

reduce their influence in Germany and central Europe.³⁴ Even more of a concern to the interests of the Soviet Union was the postwar map they believed was being created by the United States in its attempt to secure capitalism throughout the world, which, of course, was the opposite ideological desire of the Soviet Union to spread socialism throughout the world. Molotov saw the West as attempting a “behind-the-scenes collusion” in its attempts to build

a strategic circle around the USSR, passing in the West across West Germany and West European countries; in the North—over a network of bases on Northern islands in the Atlantic Ocean, and also in Canada and Alaska; in the East—across Japan and China; and in the South—over the countries of the Middle East and the Mediterranean.³⁵

At this point, Stalin changed his public policy. While having always promised the West of free election in territories controlled by the Red Army, Stalin began to move towards guaranteeing whatever elections were held, they would turn out the in favor of the Soviet Union and communism. The most influential organization created to insure this development was Cominform. The purpose of Cominform was not simply to exchange information between countries of Eastern Europe, but to establish a new communist ideological coordination and control of the East Europeans and other parties.³⁶

For Stalin, Cominform was a natural response to the growing capitalistic (i.e. United States) hegemony and his desire to complete the Soviet empire that he had dreamed of creating possibly as far back as the Russian Revolution of 1917. Cominform was originally created devoted primarily to

³⁴ Zubok, 103-5.

³⁵ Molotov quoted from Ibid., 105.

³⁶ Tucker, Robert C. “The Cold War in Stalin’s Time: What the New Sources Reveal,” Diplomatic History 21, (Spring 1997), 275.

1. an analysis of the postwar situation and the unmasking of the American plan for the political and economic subjugation of Europe;
2. the tasks of organizing forces for counteraction to new plans of imperialist expansion and for the further strengthening of socialism and democracy on both a national and international scale;
3. the increased role of Communist parties in the struggle against American serfdom;
4. the decisive significance of the USSR as the most powerful force and a reliable bulwark of the workers of all countries in their struggle for peace, socialism, and real democracy;
5. a critique of errors, committed by some Communist parties (French, Italian, Czechoslovak, and so on), in part because of a lack of communication and cooperation; and
6. the urgent necessity of coordinating the actions of Communist parties in the modern international situation.³⁷

All of the actions of Cominform were controlled directly by Stalin. Gradually, non-Communist parties of the governments were squeezed out until the Communist parties were heavy majorities in each government, if not in each society. By the end of 1947, Communist government had been installed into each country of Eastern Europe in elections that, even by Eastern European standards, were known for extreme fraud and violence.³⁸

By this point, the agreements reached by the Allied Powers during World War II were no longer being followed by either side. The era of cooperation between the United States and Soviet Union was finished. This is evident in the final event that led the world into the Cold War. The Marshall Plan had included in its estimates the cost of rebuilding the Western occupied zones of Germany and its capital, Berlin, which falls entirely within the borders of Communist controlled East Germany. In order to prevent the West from attempting to subject East Germany to the Marshall Plan in West Berlin, Stalin ordered the city to be cut off from the West and the first real showdown of the Cold War had started. When Truman ordered the airlift to supply the people living in Western

³⁷ Outline of the goals of Cominform quoted from Zubok, 130-1.

controlled sections of Berlin, he had called Stalin's bluff. When Stalin reopened the roads into West Berlin, Truman and the United States had won the showdown³⁹.

However, a noticeable change in rhetoric happened after the blockade. The United States no longer seemed interested in demanding free elections in Eastern Europe, instead solidifying power in Western Europe was the main priority.

When we refused to be forced out of the city of Berlin, we demonstrated to the people of Europe that with their cooperation we would act, and act resolutely, when their freedom was threatened. Politically, it brought the peoples of western Europe more closely to us.⁴⁰

While the defeat in Berlin was a setback for Stalin, he remained steadfast in his desire for complete control of Eastern Europe. In fact, the defeat in Berlin made Stalin more active in securing the areas around the Soviet Union, particularly in the east. After Berlin, Stalin increased his efforts in developing strong Communist Parties in China and Korea, which the latter would be a major "hot" spot of the Cold War.⁴¹

By the end of the Berlin Blockade and Airlift, it was apparent the Cold War had begun. The tensions between Moscow and Washington had reached a point where there could be no real compromise, which had existed during World War II. Truman felt he could not trust Stalin to hold to any promise, since he could not even hold to the simple promise of holding free elections in territories that he had complete economic and military control over. Stalin saw in every American policy a desire to undermine the Soviet Union and socialism, which would be an ideological threat to the Bolshevik regime of the Soviet Union.

³⁸ Mark, 336.

³⁹ For a more complete discussion of the Berlin Blockade and subsequent Airlift, any of the previously mentioned books on the Cold War would be good.

⁴⁰ Truman II, 131.

⁴¹ Tucker, 276-7.

Both sides held a utopian vision for the postwar world. For the United States, the world would be one of tremendous power for the Big Three, but a world where the people of individual countries could control their political futures. The Soviet Union's postwar world was one that would continue down the, according to Karl Marx, historical path to worldwide socialism. Could the Soviet Union have achieved this postwar utopia and still hold free elections in Eastern Europe, which would have probably pacified the United States and Great Britain? If this could have been achieved, which Byrnes had pointed out the United States had achieved in Cuba and other Latin American countries, would the Cold War have been prevented? If so, would socialism have continued on a natural path and have become a worldwide fact? This obviously would have made the ideological ideas of the Soviet Union victorious in the long run.

However, the Cold War began as a mistrust between the leaders of the two most powerful nations after the defeat of Nazi Germany. The United States was adamant about the holding of free elections throughout the continent of Europe. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was adamant about making sure postwar Europe, especially Eastern, was completely in line with its policies. These stances made the Cold War an inevitable occurrence, since there was little room to compromise, and an even more unwillingness to compromise.

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