

Towards a Bipolar World: The Cold War Begins

3 main factors:

- Weakened Western Europe
- ideological (forward Communism) and security (create a buffer zone between USSR and Germany) ambitions of the Soviet Union
- assumption by the US of a much more *interventionist* role in Europe

1. 1945-1948: "salami tactics" and breakdown of the wartime alliance

- The take-over of Poland (1945-1947):

- June 1945: creation of a Polish government dominated by the "Lublin Poles" (Polish government created by Stalin in the city of Lublin in 1944 and composed mostly of communists) but including a few "London Poles" (members of the pre-war Polish government who had fled to London and were strongly anti-communist)
- rigged elections in January of 1947 after an intimidation campaign (thousands of non-Communist party members imprisoned, deportations to the USSR, others fled into exile): victory of the Communists

- The take-over of Romania and Bulgaria (1945-1947):

- Set up of coalition governments dominated by the communists in late 1944
- rigged elections in Bulgaria in 1945, execution of other parties leaders
- in Romania Stalin forced the king to designate a communist prime minister then abolished the monarchy in 1947

- The take-over of Hungary (1947):

- Stalin first allowed free elections to take place in 1945 in which the non-communists won a big majority. However, some communists were elected, led by a pro-Russian called Rakosi.
- Rakosi managed to get control of the police, and started to arrest his opponents. (Rakosi was the one to coin the expression "salami tactics" to describe how each opposing party was eliminated in turn)
- In 1947, rigged elections took place and a communist only government put in power.

- Take-over of Czechoslovakia:
the "Prague coup" (1948)

- election of a left-wing coalition in 1945.
- In 1948, the Communists used armed force to seize power, banned all other parties and killed their leaders
- rigged elections in 1948 leading to a communist victory



cartoon by British cartoonist Leslie Illingworth published in June 1947

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2. Western reaction to Soviet tactics: Truman doctrine and Marshall plan

- The "*Long Telegram*" by George Kennan (American embassy official in Moscow, strongly anti-communist), February 22, 1946 - secret analysis of Soviet position which became the basis of American policy towards Russia for the years to come:

- importance of Communist dogma
- neurotic fear of the West seen as "evil, hostile and menacing"
- Kennan's "prophecies" (some were quite accurate):
 - *Internal policy devoted to increasing in every way strength and prestige of Soviet state: intensive military-industrialization; maximum development of armed forces; great displays to impress outsiders; continued secretiveness about internal matters*
 - *Russians will participate officially in international organizations [such as the UN] only to extend Soviet power*
 - *weakening of power and influence of Western nations in colonial areas*
 - *conspiration with pro-Soviet elements (Communist Parties) in capitalist countries to undermine their governments (less accurate)*
 - *However the Soviet threat could be defeated without a world war (→ Cold War)*
 - *Soviets sensitive to show of force (→ basis of containment policy)*
 - *necessity to make people happy, wealthy and secure to fight Soviet influence (→ basis of Marshall Plan)*

- Fulton speech (by former British Prime Minister Churchill), 5 March 1946

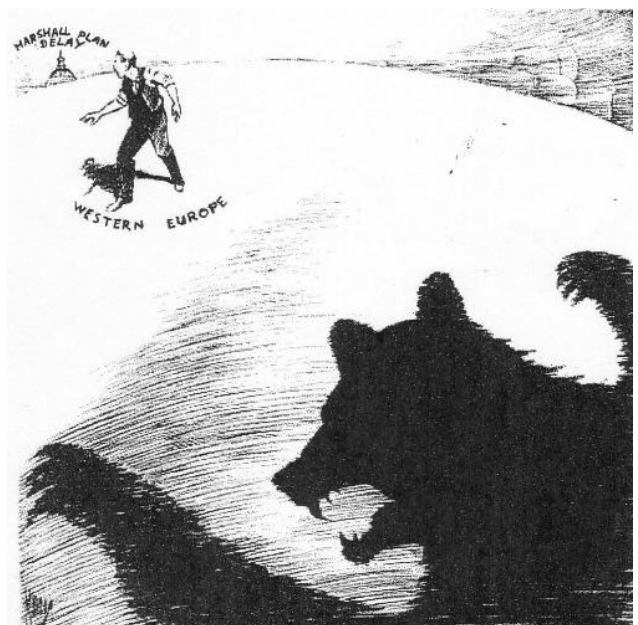
- reaction to "salami tactics"
- Churchill was accused by the Soviets of starting the Cold War:
 - *"Mr Churchill has called for a war on the USSR."* (Stalin, writing in the Russian newspaper *Pravda* in March 1946)
 - *"The Cold War set in. Churchill had given his famous speech in Fulton urging the imperialistic forces of the world to fight the Soviet Union. Our relations with England, France and the USA were ruined."* (Nikita Khrushchev, writing in 1971. In 1946 he had been a member of the Soviet government.)

- Truman doctrine: *containment* (the aim is not to destroy the Soviet Union but to STOP the spread of its influence)

- the crucial year: **1947** – towards a "*bipolar world*"
- Civil war in Greece: communists supported by USSR vs the monarchists supported by the British. In 1947 the British announce their *withdrawal* because they could no longer afford to pay for troops there.
- → In a speech to the US Congress in 1947 President Truman announced his doctrine: "*to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes*" (→ the Americans took over the British in the Greek Civil war) - official end of American isolationism.

- Main consequence of Truman doctrine → **Marshall Plan** (named after Secretary of State General George Marshall): massive economic aid (\$17 billion) to Western Europe to stop communist influence (poverty considered "breeding ground" of communism).

- offered to all European countries victims of the war but rejected by USSR (Stalin saw the plan as an attempt to impose capitalism on European countries)
- Poland and Czechoslovakia wanted to accept but were forced to refuse by Stalin
- Soviet response to Marshall plan:
 - creation of **Cominform** ((an organisation to strengthen links between communist parties in different countries)
 - *Zhdanov doctrine*: Communists in Western European countries told to wreck Marshall plan through strikes (but the tactics failed)
 - creation of COMECON (trading organisation of communist countries)



3. The German question and NATO

- The **Berlin Airlift** (June 1948-May 1949):

- Cause: June 1948, France, USA and UK decided to create a *common currency* for their zones of occupation in Germany
- On June 23rd Stalin started the *Berlin Blockade* by closing all freight and passenger traffic into the Western zones of Berlin



- Truman decided to avoid a full scale war by supplying West Berlin by aircraft
 - the blockade lasted 11 months
 - 275,000 flights carried in 1½ million tons of supplies. A plane landed every 3 mins.
 - "candy bombers"
 - However The USA stationed B-29 bombers (which could carry an atomic bomb) in Britain.
 - Berlin new symbol of Western freedom

- In April 1949 **creation of Western Germany** as a consequence of Stalin's failure

- Russian response: creation of Eastern Germany in October

- Also in April 1949: **creation of NATO** (most of Western Europe + USA and Canada)

4. The Korean War (1950-1953)

- The origins of the Korean War:

- After Japanese occupation, Korea was occupied by Soviet forces in the North and American forces in the South
- In 1948 creation of two separate states (communist in the North under Kim Il Sung and capitalist in the South)
- China became communist in 1949 (big setback for the western block)
- USSR got the A Bomb in 1949
- withdrawal of American troops in 1950

- Domino theory: Truman believed that, if one country fell to Communism, then others would follow, like a line of dominoes. He was worried that, if Korea fell (after China), the Communists would then capture Japan.

- *June 1950: North Korean invasion of South Korea*

- Truman was able to obtain the UN Security Council agreement to an American intervention (benefiting from the fact that Stalin was boycotting it at the moment)
- US *counter-attack* under General MacArthur → invasion of North Korea in Oct 1950 right up to the border with China (from "containment" to "roll back")
- Chinese troops ("*volunteers*") intervention → American retreat and Chinese invasion of South Korea
- General MacArthur proposal: invade China + use atomic bomb → rejected by Truman, MacArthur dismissed
- *Stalemate*: 1951-1953
- 1953: death of Stalin in USSR, President Eisenhower replaced Truman in USA → cease-fire (38th parallel)