

# Truman's Decision

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*“There isn't any difference between totalitarian states ... Nazi, Communist or Fascist, or Franco, or anything else – they are all alike.”*  
*President Harry Truman<sup>1</sup>*

Over the period of just a few years after World War II, agreements were made and broken, the world's most dangerous arms race began, and allies became enemies. The major players in this development were the United States President Harry Truman, the British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and the totalitarian leader of Russia, Joseph Stalin. Because of Stalin's violent rule and his desire for Communist revolutions around the world, it is sensible to view this period, in retrospect, as attempts by democratic countries to negotiate with the U.S.S.R., rather than an equally weighted discussion between three sides.

A historian summarizing the postwar period, therefore, might leap to the conclusion that the United States did the best that it could to cooperate and was forced into the policy of containment (the Truman Doctrine) by Soviet arrogance. A 1952 history textbook, used in classrooms for decades, explains things along these lines. At the United Nations Security Council's first sessions in 1946, “Russian intransigence effectively thwarted the will of a majority group that more often than not was led by the United States”. When the question of controlling atomic weapons was posed, the “Soviet Union and [the] United States were unable to agree on the control of atomic energy.”<sup>2</sup> The 1967 edition goes even further: “Had the Soviet Union and its allies been able to settle all outstanding political problems, the United Nations might have been able to work as originally intended.”<sup>3</sup> Reading this textbook, it is easy to gain a favorable opinion of the

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1 As quoted in Gaddis, John, *The Long Peace*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987. p. 36.

2 Carman, Harry. *A History of the American People*. Vol. 2. New York: Knopf, 1952. p. 668.

3 Carman, Syrret, and Wishy, *A History of the American People*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Vol. 2. NY: Knopf, 1967. p. 733.

American administration that dealt with Stalin during the postwar period.

One modern, liberal textbook is not so quick to editorialize. While admitting that “it seems all but inevitable that the two major powers to emerge from the war would come into conflict,” it does not specifically side with the Americans. “Convinced that Stalin could not be trusted and that the United States had a responsibility to provide leadership to a world that he tended to view in stark, black-and-white terms, Truman soon determined to put the policy of containment into effect.”<sup>4</sup> This is, in my view, a much more accurate representation of the facts. The policy of containment was not inevitable, but rather was Truman's decision.

The story of relations between the United States and the Soviet Union began long before World War II. “Red Scares,” culminating in McCarthyism, happened at infrequent intervals in the first half of the twentieth century. In 1938, at its most successful, the American Communist Party had 82,000 members, but even that number quickly began to fall when the USSR signed a nonaggression pact with the Nazis in 1939.<sup>5</sup> Even when the United States was allied with Russia in March 1942, the Democratic politician Martin Dies was able to cause a minor scandal by claiming that “thirty-one high government officials... show affiliation with front organizations of the Communist Party.”<sup>6</sup> On the international level, the United States and the Soviet Union were able to compromise, however shakily, in 1944 to create the United Nations with a host of other countries. This agreement, however, did not prove anything except that the Soviet Union was willing to make international agreements. The first real test of US-USSR cooperation was in February 1945 at Yalta.

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4 Foner, Eric. *Give Me Liberty! An American History*. Vol. 2. New York: Norton, 2005. pp. 896-7.

5 Schrecker, Ellen. *Many are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1998. pp. 15-16.

6 Schapsmeier, Edward L. and Frederick H., *Prophet in Politics: Henry A. Wallace and the War Years, 1940-1965*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1970. p. 51.

The Yalta Conference is sometimes seen as representing Roosevelt's method of negotiating with the Soviet Union, since it produced the most important agreement that he made with Stalin. If this is true, he would have made a terrible President in the postwar period. The conference surrendered Soviet prisoners of war to the Russian government, which had a policy of executing returned prisoners, and put the fate of Poland in Soviet hands.

However, it should first be noted that in Roosevelt's own opinion, the United Nations would be a more effective way of dealing with Stalin than direct negotiation. He remarked, "I didn't say the result was good. I said it was the best I could do."<sup>7</sup> His interpreter also wrote that the end result was "the best agreement that could have been made."<sup>8</sup> While Yalta was a failure for Eastern Europe, it was probably not one that Roosevelt intended to duplicate in future negotiations with Russia.

Secondly, Roosevelt considered Yalta a "trial" of the USSR's ability to cooperate with the West.<sup>9</sup> He had been careful to speak nothing but good of Russia throughout World War II, suppressing his private qualms, to show Stalin his commitment to peace.<sup>10</sup> In a speech to Congress in March of 1945, Roosevelt announced his disdain for what would later be Cold War policy, and his continued support for internationalism. "There have been instances of political confusion and unrest," he said, "in these liberated areas-- that is not unexpected-- as in Greece or in Poland or in Yugoslavia, and maybe more. Worse than that, there actually began to grow in some of these places queer ideas of 'spheres of influence' which were incompatible with the basic principles of international

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7 [Yalta:] *The Cold War Begins*. Schoenherr, Steve. 20 April 2004. U of San Diego. 9 April 2005  
<<http://history.sandiego.edu/gen/20th/coldwar1.html>>

8 Bohler, Charles. *The Transformation of American Foreign Policy*. New York: Norton, 1969. p.40

9 Ibid., p. 46.

10 Freeland, Richard. *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism*. p.41-2. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1985.

collaboration.”<sup>11</sup>

Orthodox Cold War historian John Lewis Gaddis considers this strategy emblematic of Roosevelt's only policy toward Russia, saying, “If [Roosevelt] had doubts [about Stalin] ... he kept them so carefully hidden that historians have had to strain to find them.”<sup>12</sup> Beginning in late March, however, there is very good evidence that Roosevelt decided that the trial had run its course, and that it was a failure. When American troops met to discuss the surrender of the German troops in Italy, Stalin's foreign minister Molotov demanded that the Russians be represented, saying it was “not a misunderstanding but something worse.” When Roosevelt tried to reassure Stalin, “he received an even ruder reply.”<sup>13</sup> On 23 March, Roosevelt had become fed up with the USSR: “Averell [Harriman] is right, we can't do business with Stalin. He has broken every one of the promises he made at Yalta.”<sup>14</sup>

On 29 March, Roosevelt wrote to Churchill, saying that he was “acutely aware of the dangers inherent in the present course of events,” and to Stalin with an angry notice that he would not tolerate a “thinly disguised continuance” of the Communist regime as their provisional government of Poland. Complimenting Churchill on a similar message, Roosevelt wrote, “We must not permit anybody to entertain a false impression that we are afraid.”<sup>15</sup> His policy towards Russia was definitely changing, but Roosevelt had not yet defined exactly how it would change, nor made any public statement, when he suffered an untimely and fatal stroke on 12 April 1945.

Roosevelt's Vice President, Harry Truman, was sworn in as President within a few

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11 *Roosevelt's Report to Congress on the Crimea Conference*. Jewish Virtual Library. 9 April 2005  
<<http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/ww2/fdrcrimea.html>>

12 Gaddis, John Lewis. *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997. p. 2.

13 Maddox, Robert James. *From War to Cold War: The Education of Harry S. Truman*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1988. p.42.

14 Hugh, Thomas. *Armed Truce*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986. p. 121.

15 Maddox 1988, p. 42.

hours. A Missouri native with no experience in international politics, he had not been expecting to succeed Roosevelt, even as the President's health failed. He wrote of that day, "I felt like the moon, and the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me."<sup>16</sup> Truman had been chosen by the Democrats not for his experience in foreign policy, but because of his excellent work as a senator. He listened to the opinions of two of his new advisors from Roosevelt's Cabinet: Averell Harriman, who advocated restraining Stalin on the Polish question, and Henry Stimson, who gave his opinion that Stalin would never yield Poland and advised Truman to give Stalin a friendly first impression of the new administration. The fact that Truman took Harriman's advice rather than Stimson's has long been a staple point of Cold War revisionists; they are assisted by Truman's own memoirs, where he reports that he spoke rudely to Molotov and that Molotov was insulted.<sup>17</sup> In reality, Molotov's newly unearthed diary proves that Truman was businesslike and did not insult him, and that their meeting of the previous day was cordial, Truman even giving a toast to Stalin.<sup>18</sup> Also, Harriman's advice to Truman was not all that radical, considering that Roosevelt had agreed with Harriman just a few weeks earlier. So Truman's first message to the Russians is important not for its content, but for how Truman remembered it. It must have been sometime early in 1945 that Truman became convinced that dealing with Russia was impossible, at a point so close to his taking office that being rude to Molotov on 23 April did not seem like a false memory.

Truman's first major decision in office was to drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He seems to have been genuinely uninformed about the number of civilians in those cities. Certainly he was informed about the destructiveness of the bomb;

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<sup>16</sup> LaFeber, Walter. *America, Russia, and the Cold War, 1945-1984*. p. 16. New York: Random House, 1985.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16-7.

<sup>18</sup> Roberts, Geoffrey. "Sexing Up the Cold War: New Evidence on the Molotov-Truman Talks of April 1945." *Cold War History* 4.3 (April 2004), pp.105-125.

speaking privately to his advisers, he said, “You have got to understand that this isn't a military weapon ... It is used to wipe out women and children and unarmed people, and not for military uses.”<sup>19</sup> He wrote in his diary that “I have told the Sec. of War, Mr. Stimson, to use it so that military objectives and soldiers and sailors are the target and not women and children. Even if the Japs are savages, ruthless, merciless and fanatic, we as the leader of the world for the common welfare cannot drop this terrible bomb on [Kyoto or Tokyo].”<sup>20</sup> Thus, hearing the news on 6 August, he proclaimed: “This is the greatest thing in history.”<sup>21</sup> Speaking publicly, he prayed “that [God] may guide us to use [the bomb] in His ways and for His purposes,” and portrayed Hiroshima as a military base, ignoring its quarter-million civilian population.<sup>22</sup> This level of misunderstanding between Truman and his Secretary of War was not merely dangerous— it led to mass murder. Once Truman learned of “all those kids” killed in Hiroshima, he ordered a halt to atomic bombing.<sup>23</sup> This early event set a bad example both for Truman's internal communications and for his relations with Stalin, whom he had failed to inform of the nature of the weapons that he would be using against Japan.

In the summer of 1945, both before and after the bombs were dropped, the media were filled with praise for American ingenuity, and looked forward to a prosperous postwar period in which the United States would spread liberty throughout the world. “American optimism will prove to be a great asset” for leading the world, wrote a European scholar, predicting that America would succeed where Europe had failed.<sup>24</sup> An

19 David Lilienthal, *The Journals of David E. Lilienthal, Vol. Two*, pg. 391. as quoted in Long, Doug, “Hiroshima: Random Ramblings”. 10 April 2005 <<http://www.doug-long.com/rambling.htm>>

20 “From the President's Diary, July 17, 18, and 25.” Truman Library. 10 Apr 2005 <[http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study\\_collections/bomb/ferrell\\_book/ferrell\\_book\\_chap5.htm](http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/bomb/ferrell_book/ferrell_book_chap5.htm)>

21 Herken, Gregg. *The Winning Weapon*. New York: Knopf, 1980. p.3.

22 Fousek 2000, p. 23. There was a military base outside of Hiroshima, but the bomb was dropped on the city.

23 Truman is quoted in Wallace's diary; John Blum, ed., *The Price of Vision: the Diary of Henry A. Wallace, 1942-1946*, p. 473-474, which I quote from <<http://www.doug-long.com/rambling.htm>>

24 Conden, Richard. “American Optimism versus European Pessimism”. *Saturday Evening Post*, 15

editorial in *Life* magazine discarded isolationism without mention; “The purpose of American strength is to promote liberty and self-government throughout the human race.”<sup>25</sup> 81% of Americans supported U.S. involvement in the U.N., and the great majority of supporters considered it “very important.”<sup>26</sup>

The USSR was mentioned in these editorials, but it was still considered an ally, not a threat. A good 45-55% of Americans believed that Soviet-American cooperation would continue after the war.<sup>27</sup> The atomic bomb would put the “USSR virtually in the position of also-ran.”<sup>28</sup> *Life* admitted that “there were Americans who felt a Jovian impulse to redress the wrongs of Eastern Europe by threatening to hurl atomic thunderbolts,” but the United States had a responsibility to “keep world peace on a genuinely Allied basis.”<sup>29</sup>

Putting controls and limits on the production of nuclear weapons, however, would not be a subject in which Truman's administration excelled. In his first public statement on the matter, at Linda Lodge in Tennessee, Truman explained to reporters that only the United States had the “know-how” and “resources” to make weapons. Truman's Secretary of State, James Byrnes, had a similar opinion; responding to an atomic scientist who warned him that the Soviets could build their own nuclear weapons soon, he said, “General Groves tells me there is no uranium in Russia.”<sup>30</sup> Such statements were not merely shortsighted but flat-out wrong. It took no more than four years for the USSR to develop and test its own atomic weapons.

In September of 1945, Truman sent Byrnes to the London Council of Foreign

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September 1945, as quoted in Fousek, John, *To Lead the Free World*. U. North Carolina Press, 2000. p. 49.

25 “The Fourth of July.” *Life*, 2 July 1945, as quoted in Fousek 2000, p. 47.

26 AIPO poll, cited in Freeland 1970, p. 44.

27 55%: Ibid. 45%: Fousek 2000, p.10.

28 *New York Daily News*, 7 Aug 1945, p.2, as quoted in Fousek 2000.

29 “The Atomic Age”. *Life*, 20 Aug 1945, p.32, as quoted in Fousek 2000, p. 26.

30 Herken 1980, p.36 and 99.

Ministers. Stimson, who was nearing the end of his career, was wary of this appointment. He told Truman, “I found that Byrnes was very much against any attempt to cooperate with Russia,” and warned Truman that Byrnes might try to use the atomic bomb as a bargaining chip, returning Soviet-American diplomacy to “power politics.” Indeed, in August Byrnes had advised an atomic scientist to “keep ahead of the race.” One modern historian thinks that, “the choice of Byrnes thus suggests that a reversion to power politics ... was what the President desired.”<sup>31</sup>

Although he was uncertain how the Russians would respond to the threat of nuclear weapons, Byrnes went to the council determined to use the bomb as a wedge and make the Russians “more manageable”. But the USSR was unfazed by American atomic power, or at least appeared to be. Molotov joked about Byrnes' attempts, asking him if he had “an atomic bomb in his side pocket.” He did not back down from making major demands to the Americans, such as asking for a Soviet seat in the provisional Japanese government. Byrnes returned to report that, “The Russians are stubborn, obstinate, and they don't scare.”<sup>32</sup> The lack of compromise at the London council set a bad example for future diplomacy.

In the winter of 1945, the American public remained optimistic about internationalism. Marine sergeant Jameson G. Campaigne wrote for the *Saturday Evening Post* that, “other countries of the world look to us for help in pulling themselves out of confusion, devastation, and hunger... They know that we can help them more and lead the way better.”<sup>33</sup> Magazines promoted the idea that all Europeans “worshiped” American culture and democracy, and that many wished to immigrate. The term

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31 Herken 1980, p.25, 45 and 41.

32 Herken 1980, p. 43-52.

33 Campaigne, Jameson G. “What's the Matter with the U.S.A.” *Saturday Evening Post*, 3 Nov 45, as quoted in Fousek 2000, p.49.



“isolationist” became ammunition for mudslinging.<sup>34</sup> Truman supported the theory of internationalism and global responsibility on 6 February 1946 by declaring a “complete and immediate mobilization of this country's tremendous resources to win this worldwide war against mass starvation.”<sup>35</sup> While he was funding humanitarian aid, however, privately he was worried about the USSR and saw the need to retaliate. “I am tired [of] babying the Soviets,” he wrote in an unsent letter, and to his administration he suggested taking up an official policy of an “iron fist and strong language.”<sup>36</sup>

What Truman thought in private, Churchill spoke of in public. His “iron curtain” speech, delivered in Missouri on 5 March 1946, caused Stalin to display the Soviet Union's power by rejecting a \$1 billion loan from the United States,<sup>37</sup> but it did not have an immediate impact on American policy. The internationalists responded to the speech by proposing that the United States should function as a “world umpire,” mediating disputes between the British and Russian empires, ensuring “conciliation,” and not taking sides.<sup>38</sup> One famous commentator, Raymond Swing, criticized Churchill for speaking of a “darkly divided world,” when the reality was of “one world”. Swing claimed that the power of the atomic bomb made “the whole speech really meaningless.” The public's faith in Soviet cooperation actually rose over the year, from 35% in March 1946 (before the speech) to 43% in December 1946.<sup>39</sup>

Unfortunately, these hopes for cooperation, at least in the United Nations Energy Commission, would be undermined by Truman's appointment to that group, Bernard Baruch. Baruch was given an excellent, detailed policy to work with, prepared by the Secretary of State's Committee on Atomic Energy and known as the Acheson-Lilienthal

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34 Fousek 2000, p.50, 67, 88.

35 *Public Papers of the Presidents, 1946*, p. 107-8, as quoted in Fousek 2000, p. 70.

36 Messer, Robert L. *The End of an Alliance*, p. 156-8. 1982.

37 LaFeber 1984, p. 39.

38 *Collier's*, 23 March 1946, as quoted in Fousek 2000, p. 75.

39 Fousek 2000, p.108-9.

Report; but as a report from the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* puts it, “Baruch ... added conditions to the original proposal that undermined whatever hopes there may have been for agreement.”<sup>40</sup> He told his fellows to begin “preparing the American people for a refusal by Russia.”<sup>41</sup> Under Baruch's proposal, the powerful Security Council veto would be abolished for nuclear weapons inspections, and a veto-free Atomic Development Authority, commanded by the United States, would control the use of nuclear power throughout the world, even inside Russia!<sup>42</sup> In addition to this, he envisioned an “atomic league of nations” whereby a select number of countries, as well as the U.N., would stockpile atomic weapons to use on anyone who violated the treaty.<sup>43</sup> As this treaty was developed and Baruch refused to modify it, Truman said privately that the choice of Baruch was “the worst mistake I have ever made ... but we can't fire him now.”<sup>44</sup>

On 14 June 1946, Baruch presented his plan to the Commission. Obviously, the USSR turned down his proposal, but in a rare show of international cooperation, it proposed its own plan, whereby a worldwide ban would be placed on the production, possession, or use of atomic weapons. Baruch would have nothing of this. He demanded that Russia agree to his plan, or else there would be no plan at all.<sup>45</sup> So the commission was an utter failure, and nuclear weapons remained uncontrolled and dangerous. Baruch refused even a joint request by the French and the Soviets to stop manufacturing atomic bombs temporarily, until an international policy was written.<sup>46</sup>

“There has been a tremendous change in public opinion towards Russia,” said

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40 Cortright, David. “The Coming of Incrementalism.” *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, 52.2 (Mar-Apr 96).

41 Herken 1980, p. 162.

42 LaFeber 1984, p. 42.

43 Herken 1980, p. 167.

44 Herken 1980, p. 170.

45 LaFeber 1984, p. 42.

46 Herken 1980, p. 175.

Baruch,<sup>47</sup> and the mass media reflected this changing attitude. On 29 April, *Life* magazine printed a story on the Paris meeting of foreign ministers, and expressed its hopes that the conference would create a worldwide peace that included Russia. By the end of May, its perspective had abruptly changed; “There is no 'misunderstanding' between Russia and the West. There is a conflict.”<sup>48</sup> Similarly, the *Saturday Evening Post* ran a story on 30 March calling for the removal of both American and Russian troops from Korea in order to create “a democratic, progressive republic friendly to both Russian and American.” By 31 August, it too had changed its tone; a photo of the Korean border was captioned, “Americans, trying to bring freedom to miserable Korea, are being shoved around by Russians.”<sup>49</sup> Not all of the media took an immediate stance against Russia. In June of 1947 *National Geographic* ran a story on the Korean border written by Lieutenant General John Hodge, who wrote, “[On the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel] our soldiers come into contact with Russian soldiers. Man to man, they get along extremely well and are very friendly.”<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, the sudden ideological changes of *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post* reflected a growing ideology of anti-Communism that increasingly displaced internationalism.

In December of 1946, the United States and the United Kingdom fused their areas of influence in West Germany, the first of several actions that gradually separated Germany into halves. The Truman administration feared that a united, neutral Germany would be subverted by the Communists, even though the U.S. Military Government in Germany strongly believed that the Communist Party was weak in East Germany, that the Soviets were more concerned with the reparations promised at Yalta than with control of

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47 Herken 1980, p. 177.

48 Fousek 2000, p. 118.

49 Fousek 2000, p. 117.

50 Hodge, John. “With the U.S. Army in Korea.” *National Geographic*, June 1947.

Germany, and that unification would spread democracy.<sup>51</sup> The Soviet Union's internal documents agree with the U.S.M.G. As late as 1952, Stalin was still hoping to dissolve the “temporary” Communist government and create a united Germany.<sup>52</sup>

In Truman's Cabinet, Stimson having retired, a lone voice of dissent remained: that of Henry Wallace, the secretary of commerce. In this job, Wallace had alternated at meetings between providing illucid commentary and intelligent opposition.<sup>53</sup> He had advocated outlawing the atomic bomb as early as 1945, saying, “Whether or not we do have an atomic bomb race with Russia is very largely up to us. We can either prevent such a race from taking place, or we can cause it to happen.”<sup>54</sup> In September 1946, Wallace feared that Soviet-American relations were collapsing, and asked Truman for special permission to give a speech supporting internationalism. Truman listened to the speech and green-lighted it, saying that it agreed fully with his foreign policy, but it would be roundly criticized in the media before the week was out. Wallace spoke of making concessions and of not taking sides for or against the Soviet Union. In addition, his audience was naively pro-Russia and shouted jeers and boos whenever the USSR was criticized; this caused Wallace to hesitate and skip over his criticisms, which made his speech even worse by turning it into Soviet apologia. Byrnes and Baruch called for, and got, Wallace's immediate dismissal.<sup>55</sup> In October, a Gallup poll reported that 76% of Americans favored Byrnes' policies over Wallace's, and that 17% believed Wallace to be a Communist.<sup>56</sup> By now Truman's cabinet was entirely dedicated to opposing

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51 Eisenberg, Carolyn. *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany*. p. 485-9. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

52 Loth, Wilfried. “The Origins of Stalin's Note of 10 March 1952”. *Cold War History*, 4.2 (Jan 2004), p. 66-88.

53 For examples, c.f. Herken 1980.

54 Schapsmeier, Edward and Frederick. *Prophet in Politics: Henry A. Wallace and the War Years, 1940-1965*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1970. p. 136, 149.

55 Schapsmeier 1970, p.156-60.

56 Fousek 2000, p. 121.

Communism by any means possible.

In March of 1947, Britain could no longer keep up its war of containment in Greece and Turkey. Undersecretary Acheson argued to a group of Congressmen that the war in Greece was a proxy war of the Soviets, and that without intervention from the United States, they would use it to set an example for Communist revolutions around the world. Senator Arthur Vandenberg (R-Mi) recommended that Truman use this argument to get aid for Greece, saying he should “scare hell out of the country.” On 12 March, Truman declared that, “it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.” Communism was mentioned only as the specific threat to Greece, but the implications of his speech were clear. Henry Wallace, at his new post as editor of *The New Republic*, predicted that Truman's speech would initiate a “century of fear”.<sup>57</sup> Wallace's predictions were not always correct, but this one was.

After the Truman Doctrine had been announced, relations with the Soviet Union had nowhere to go but downhill. The Soviets continued to hope for cooperation in some areas; it was their decision to end the Blockade of Berlin.<sup>58</sup> On the other hand, they tried to limit the power of the United Nations by vetoing many resolutions in the Security Council.<sup>59</sup> In the United States, many Americans were slow to adopt the language of the Cold War; African-Americans and other liberals resisted the mindset that Truman promoted. P.C. Prattis, editor of the *Pittsburg Courier*, wrote: “We should not be deluded into believing that it is necessary for America to have armed bases all over the world and to rush into every country to prevent the spread of communism.” In the popular media, however, their voices were drowned out. Henry Wallace's phrase “a free world”

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<sup>57</sup> LaFeber 1984, p. 53-5.

<sup>58</sup> Carman 1952, p. 671.

<sup>59</sup> Carman 1952, p. 666; *Yearbook of the United Nations 1946-7*.

began to be used in 1947-8 to mean the powers opposing the USSR, and as NATO developed, the phrase slowly changed to “the Free World.”<sup>60</sup>

At this point, the Cold War had been started up, and it would run its course until the late 1980s, nearly nuking the planet in the process. But how responsible was Truman? Although he picked anti-Communist advisers and delegates more often than not, it would be a stretch to say that he intended to set up a military structure based on constant intervention in foreign wars. Removing Stalin from the equation would have made a far greater difference than removing Truman. His policy of containment may not have been perfect, but it was at least a solution to the problem that Roosevelt had not lived to answer. Although Truman failed to prevent wars, fear, and nuclear proliferation, he succeeded in preventing the spread of a violent and totalitarian empire, and that this was his single most important decision.

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<sup>60</sup> Fousek 2000, p. 133 and 131.