The Origins of the Cold War 1941–1949

SECOND EDITION

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This study is an attempt at post-revisionism. Its aim is not to apportion blame but to attempt to unravel some of the complexities of the issues which gave rise to the Cold War and to consider whether the whole episode could have been avoided.

PART TWO: DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS

2 MOSCOW'S VIEW OF THE WORLD

Stalin and his advisers had three sources on which to draw when analysing global events and forecasting the shape of the post-war world they hoped to see emerge. First there was Imperial Russia's historical experience. Imperial Russia had never acquired the status of a great power, merely that of a regional power. It was also a weak power when contrasted with Imperial Germany, Great Britain or the United States. The Russians had time and again been forced to use their wits in order to survive in the hard pre-1914 world.

Secondly, there was Soviet Russia's bitter experience of world politics. The military, political and economic intervention by foreign powers which spanned the years 1918 to 1920 left deep scars on the Soviet body politic. The narrowness of the Bolshevik victory in the Civil War and Intervention was always present in communist minds. They felt that, given the opportunity, the capitalist powers would launch round two of their intervention so as to crush the Soviet state since they were perceived as being implacably hostile to it.

Thirdly, there was the factor of ideology. Marxism-Leninism states that conflict between the socialist and capitalist worlds is inevitable and that eventual victory will go to socialism. Hence capitalism is a transient phenomenon; it is moribund, but there is no objective way of predicting the date of its eventual demise. The element in ideology which is the most useful to policy-makers is the dialectic. This states that change is a permanent feature in the social, as in the natural, sciences, being the inevitable product of conflict, and that neither change nor conflict can be held up for an indefinite period or on a world scale. Compromise, an attempt to find a solution which satisfies both sides, is hence a meaningless concept since those powers which cease to advance inevitably decline. This way of looking at global developments implies that no agreement, treaty, regulation or deal can ever be concluded which is final and will lead to a stable world order. It is obsolescent as soon as the ink has dried because it only represents the balance of world forces at the moment of signature – a balance that will change immediately

afterwards. Hence Marxism-Leninism holds that those powers which are passive and merely react to world events are faced with decline. The inference to be drawn by Soviet policy-makers was always to seize and maintain the initiative and ensure, whenever possible, that the adversary was so enmeshed in reacting to Soviet moves that he had little energy left to launch counter-initiatives.

The above represents the 'home' input in Soviet foreign policy decision-making. Another factor requiring great tactical skill was how much pressure to apply on the Western allies at any given time; just what to concede, and when and how to create the impression that most of the benefits were not accruing to the Soviet side. To acquire maximum results such an undertaking required an intimate knowledge of the American decision-making process and of the personalities involved. Through high-level spies the Soviets received a flood of information about American and Western policy thinking during the 1940s but did not use this knowledge to maximum effect – their evaluation of it turned out to be defective. Soviet information-gathering techniques were first class, but the task of lower-level officials was merely to collect material, not to analyse it. Analysis only took place at the very top, which meant that Stalin and his advisers were responsible for the mistakes. The evidence points in one direction: that Stalin conducted Soviet foreign policy in such a way as to limit the options open to the American administration. This in turn strengthened the hand of the proponents of the 'Riga axioms'. Stalin began to think about the shape of the post-war world very soon after the German invasion. Some stark realities however, had to be borne in mind as 1945 approached. The USSR had only just escaped military catastrophe, with the aid of American deliveries of war matériel and food, and as the end of the war came in view the Red Army's reserves of manpower were small.The most decisive contribution to the defeat of national socialist Germany on the European continent had been made by the Soviet Union, but at a fearful price (ninety Soviet citizens died for every American). In total, about 9 million military and more than 27 million civilians perished – about 19 per cent of the pre-war population (Soviet losses accounted for almost half of total fatalities during the Second World War) – and 70,000 villages, 65,000 kilometres of railway track, half of all the railway bridges in occupied territory and over half of urban living space there had been destroyed. Agriculture, after suffering disorganisation during collectivisation, had again been thrown into disarray, and the total area of sown land in 1945 was only 75 per cent of that of 1940. The grain harvest was 47.3

million tonnes, compared with 87 million tonnes in 1940. (Global agricultural production was 60 per cent of that of 1940.) Although global industrial production was stated to be 90 per cent of the 1940 figure, steel output only reached 12.3 million tonnes compared to 18.3 million tonnes in 1940. The Red Army counted about 11 million men and women whereas the US forces alone came to about 12 million. Rapid demobilisation of Soviet forces led to troop levels dropping to 2.8 million by 1948, according to Khrushchev. Top priority had to be given to restoring the shattered economy and in this regard reparations from ex-enemy countries were valuable. Reparations were held to be of key importance by the Soviets whereas they were of no significance to the US economy and of little value to Great Britain. Such a situation dictated that the USSR should conduct a prudent foreign policy, one which secured maximum advantage without involving the country in any new conflict.

Internally, the war had loosened the hold of Stalinism on the Soviet population. The initial response to the German invasion in Belorussia and Ukraine and in non-Slav areas in the Caucasus was one of indifference and defeatism; sometimes the advancing Wehrmacht was even welcomed by the local population. Many non-Russian Soviet prisoners-of-war stated that they wished to be afforded the opportunity of fighting the Red Army but the Germans did not trust their intentions. Among the Soviet population patriotism and religion were used to rally support for the struggle against Germany. The majority of Red Army soldiers were peasants, and they, as well as their counterparts who had toiled on the home front, expected tangible rewards at the end of hostilities. The communist party, which had retreated into the background during the early part of the war, began to reassert its authority in 1944 and the Stalinist system was gradually reimposed. Millions of people found themselves in labour camps, including many ex-prisoners-of-war. Partisan groups offered some resistance in the Baltic states and Ukraine, but the ease with which the old system was reimposed – even though it involved cutting the Soviet military leaders down to size by transferring them to less important posts – revealed the strength of Stalinism. It was in Stalin's interest to seek an accommodation with other powers, but had a war broken out he would have had at his disposal a formidable military machine and the ability to exact even more sacrifices from the Russian population and, to a lesser extent, from the non-Russian Soviet population. How long the USSR could have sustained a total war, however, is quite a different question.

The First World War had given rise to high hopes that capitalism was on its last legs, and Lenin was very optimistic that the socialist dawn was ready to break over the whole world. These hopes had proved unfounded, for capitalism had shown more vitality than expected. How would it emerge from the Second World War? No Soviet economist would dare advise Stalin that capitalism would prove so strong that its demise was out of the question. Soviet thinking proceeded on the assumption that the war had either mortally wounded capitalism or that it had given it only a temporary access of strength, and that the renewal of the struggle for markets would lead inevitably to its self-destruction. The fact that the American gross national product had more than doubled during the war pointed to the strength of capitalism there, but what of continental Europe, where the war had exhausted the market economies? Eugene Varga, a Hungarian who had become a leading Soviet economist, published his findings in 1945 and they were widely discussed in the Soviet economic literature [104]. One conclusion was that the old Soviet methods of analysis were no longer adequate. In the capitalist economies, the war had necessitated the development of large-scale state administrative structures, and it was unlikely that these would be completely dismantled when peace returned. Hence the 'anarchy of the market' would be contained to a certain extent. The huge expansion of the wartime American economy would lead, it was thought, to overproduction after the war. On the other hand, European states would suffer from unemployment and underproduction. It was likely that the conjunction of these two factors would lead to the export of American capital and goods to Europe and elsewhere. The result would be a world-wide expansion of US economic power, a corollary of which would be increased American political influence. The constellation of forces within capitalism would thus change, but Soviet analysts predicted that this change contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction, since it could only produce fratricidal strife as each state sought to defend its own markets.

The Soviet state was hopeful of obtaining some of the available US capital for its own economic development. To this end various requests involving huge amounts of credit were made to the US government – without, of course, conceding that the Soviet government would tolerate any linking of these loans to Soviet political behaviour in Europe or elsewhere. Moscow presumed that Washington would be genuinely interested in capital exports. Along with the desire for American credits went the fear that American

penetration of Europe – which could also include the desired Soviet sphere of influence in eastern and south-eastern Europe – could take on an imperialist character. If this occurred in Europe it could also occur in Asia and elsewhere. The inevitable result would be that anti-Soviet forces would be immeasurably strengthened. The Americans would not need to station troops in order to acquire influence; the mighty, not to say the almighty, dollar would perform the same function.

Looking back, one can list Soviet foreign policy tactics under three headings: (1) all resources and forces had to be mobilised to halt and turn back the march of American capitalism but to stop short at endangering the security of the Soviet Union. The support of communists, socialists, radicals and capitalists who were also nationalists was to be enlisted; (2) Soviet sources of strength, such as the Red Army and Soviet control of foreign communist parties, were to be utilised to the very limit so as to defend Soviet security interests and, wherever possible, expand Soviet influence; (3) great care was to be taken, given the different levels of influence the Soviet Union enjoyed in eastern and south-eastern Europe, Germany and western and southern Europe, not to provoke the United States unnecessarily [100].

One effect of the war had been to give the Soviet Union, under the leadership of 'Uncle Joe' Stalin, a much better image in the world as a whole, and the abolition of the Comintern in May 1943 seemed to indicate that the Soviet Union was no longer expansionist. Moscow appealed to all peace-loving, democratically minded and anti-fascist forces to unite under the banner of democracy, a new type of democracy. Just what this implied was never spelled out, for by leaving it undefined it could be all things to all men. It involved communist parties declaring that their immediate goal in the Soviet sphere of influence was the democratic revolution and that socialism was a long way off. In line with this approach revolutionary rhetoric was placed in cold storage. The emphasis was now on cooperation with the Western Allies. The nature of this cooperation varied from country to country, depending on the strength of pro- or anti-Soviet forces. The Soviets themselves had no clear vision of where the new-type democracy and socialist internationalism would lead. However, they were clear about one thing; it had to serve Soviet security needs. Hence the shape it took would be determined to a considerable extent by the American reaction to it. Three different approaches were pursued in chasing this goal: (1) in eastern and south-eastern Europe, and in

north Korea, every effort was made to secure a decisive role in government for the communist party and to hasten the social transformation of the area in order to ensure a permanent pro-Soviet commitment there; (2) in western and southern Europe and in China – the obvious areas of expansion for American capitalism – an effort was to be made to stabilise the political and economic order even when this meant restricting the activities of communist parties; (3) in countries such as Germany and Austria, where the Soviet Union had to cooperate with the Western Allies, its aim was to win the goodwill of the inhabitants in order to ensure that eventual Soviet withdrawal would not lead to these countries slipping into the capitalist orbit. Germany was the more serious problem, and here the aim was to obtain guarantees which would banish the prospect of Germany adopting anti-Soviet policies. On the other hand, the Soviets had to ensure that German industrial potential did not serve the interests of Anglo-American capitalism [100;102;115]. Besides these three approaches there were others which corresponded to the peculiarities of the local situation. In Finland, for example, the Soviets could have imposed a people's democracy but did not bother to do so [105]. Hence Soviet tactics in respective countries were very flexible and varied and this confused American analysts; which in turn created mistrust.

EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

In the immediate aftermath of the October revolution the precise boundaries of Soviet Russia were not of great significance to Lenin and the other Bolshevik leaders. Even the one-sided Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which the new government concluded with Imperial Germany in March 1918, was viewed with equanimity by Lenin, since he took it for granted that after the inevitable socialist revolution in Germany it would melt away like snow in the midday sun. Following the defeat before Warsaw, in 1920, immediate Soviet expansion was out of the question, but in negotiating the Treaty of Riga in March 1921 the young Soviet state actually offered the Polish republic more territory than it was willing to swallow. Moscow reasoned that the more non-Poles there were in Poland the more unstable that state would be. The defeat of left-wing German attempts at revolution in 1923 finally ended Bolshevik hopes for a socialist Europe in the foreseeable future.

With this change of heart went a change in diplomatic practice. Soviet Russia now began to stake out its frontiers with all

contiguous states and to arrange bilateral treaties of friendship. The first goal was to seek to recover the frontiers of Imperial Russia, and then to venture further afield in eastern and south-eastern Europe. This was deemed necessary as a result of inter-war developments in the region. The peace treaties at the end of the First World War had sought to establish a cordon sanitaire to hold back permanently the advance of Bolshevism. Poland had spurned all Soviet efforts to construct a pact in eastern Europe to resist German expansion. Czechoslovakia, the only state to retain a bourgeois democratic form of government in the area, had gone under, due partly to the activities of Slovak fascists. Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria had all sided with national socialist Germany and the first two had not only declared war on the USSR but had provided fighting troops as well. To the Soviets it seemed self-evident that the only way to prevent a recurrence of such events was to establish Soviet hegemony there.

The Soviet Union had already taken the first step in this direction by the secret protocol to the Soviet-German Non-Aggression Pact of August 1939 which had established mutual spheres of influence. As a result, Finland, the Baltic states, eastern Poland and Bessarabia came within the Soviet orbit. By late August 1940 Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, eastern Poland, Bessarabia and northern Bukovina had been incorporated in the USSR through military occupation and 'arranged' plebiscites [105; 115]. The Treaty of Moscow, in March 1940, which ended the Winter War – not ratified by Finland at the time – meant that large tracts of Finnish territory bordering the Soviet Union were acquired. When Stalin's Foreign Minister, Molotov, visited Berlin in November 1940 he asked for German acceptance of Soviet domination of Finland, and the incorporation of southern Bukovina into the USSR. He also declared that Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Greece and even a part of Poland then occupied by the Germans should be regarded as falling within the Soviet zone of influence. Furthermore, Molotov requested military bases in the Straits (the Bosphorus, the Sea of Marmora and the Dardanelles) and a Soviet–Danish condominium over the Skaggerak and Kattegat [115]. Even after the German invasion of the Soviet Union Stalin made several attempts to conclude a peace treaty with Hitler on the basis of the above spheres of influence.

After the failure to agree spheres of influence with Germany in Europe Stalin turned his attention to Great Britain as a potential partner. When Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Secretary, visited beleaguered Moscow in December 1941 Stalin asked that the territorial gains made by the Soviet Union under the Non-Aggression

Pact with Hitler be recognised by the British government [*Doc. 5*]. He insisted on the USSR's need for an area around Memel, Tilsit, the Petsamo area in Finland and military bases in Finland and Romania. In return he stated that the USSR would not object if Britain established bases in Norway, Denmark, Belgium, the Netherlands and France. However, these proposals were not as far-reaching as the agreement with Germany which had divided Europe into two spheres of influence, one German and the other Soviet. Germany, of course, was to be the great loser. Poland could be compensated for its loss of territory in the east by being given most of east Prussia and other German territory, possibly up to the river Oder. East Prussia north of the Neman river was to become part of Lithuania. Czechoslovakia was to be re-established in its pre-Munich frontiers and to receive some Hungarian territory. Yugoslavia was to reappear and be enlarged at the expense of Hungary and Italy. Albanian independence was to be restored at the expense of Italy. Turkey could receive the Dodecanese Islands and possibly some Bulgarian territory [115]. Separatist movements in the Rhineland and Bavaria were to be supported. Stalin also raised the question of German reparations and suggested an armed council of the victorious powers to keep the peace after Germany's defeat.

The British reaction to such talk about spheres of influence was not entirely negative. Churchill drafted plans for federations in east central Europe and in the Balkans, with the aim of restricting the expansion of German influence in those areas. However, a by-product of these plans would have been the erection of barriers to the expansion of Soviet influence also. Churchill even thought of launching a second front in the Balkans instead of in France or Belgium since it held out better hopes of military success. Churchill was ready to include territorial concessions in the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of May 1942, but in the end the view of President Roosevelt prevailed that there should be no binding frontier agreements made before the end of hostilities. At Tehran, in November–December 1943, Churchill conceded the Curzon line as Poland's eastern frontier with the USSR and accepted the Soviet Union's other territorial gains of the period 1939–41. When he went to Moscow in October 1944 the British Prime Minister proposed spheres of influence in south-eastern Europe [*Doc. 7*]: the Soviet Union was to be accorded 90 per cent influence in Romania, the British 10 per cent; in Greece the percentages were to be reversed; Bulgaria was to be divided 75:25 in favour of the Soviet Union, with Hungary and Yugoslavia 50:50. Stalin put a large tick against these numbers but

the following day Molotov asked for a revision; he wanted Hungary to be 75:25 (in favour of the USSR) and Bulgaria 90:10 instead of 75:25. No firm agreement was reached, but it appeared that Great Britain and the Soviet Union had agreed on spheres of influence. The British claimed that the agreement was only temporary, to last until the end of hostilities, but they must have been aware that the penetration of these countries by the Red Army would have more than temporary consequences.

The German invasion of the Soviet Union marked the turning-point in the war for Great Britain. Another turning-point of equal impact was the landing of American troops in north Africa in November 1942; from then onwards it was the United States which would have the major say about military operations in Europe. This implied that any agreement about spheres of influence between Stalin and Churchill would have to be counter-signed by the stronger Western power, the United States. While Great Britain was inferior to the Soviet Union in Europe it was also clear that the USSR was weaker than the United States. Stalin therefore gave priority to the attainment of hegemony over eastern and south-eastern Europe, since he regarded this as absolutely essential to Soviet security needs. American penetration of the area had to be prevented, even if this meant souring relations with the United States.

A key element in re-structuring eastern and south-eastern Europe was finding a solution to the problem of national minorities. Moscow solved the problem either by force or by acting unilaterally. The Germans were expelled from Pomerania and Upper and Lower Silesia, this benefiting the Poles. They were also expelled from east Prussia, where once again the Poles were the chief beneficiaries, and from the Sudetenland, where they were replaced by Czechs and Slovaks. Transylvania was transferred to Romania and most of the Hungarian minority was expelled from Slovakia. Land reform was enacted everywhere and resulted in landowners, one of the main props of support of bourgeois rule, being socially and politically emasculated. Enterprises which had been under German control were seized by the Soviets, thus sapping much of the political and economic vitality capitalists might have exercised. Anti-fascist democratic mass organisations were established and communists and communist nominees obtained key posts in government. Those states which had gained territorially and financially, mainly at the expense of the Germans, needed a strong ally to ensure that the gains were permanent. The USSR was ideally suited to play this role. A

network of treaties of friendship and cooperation was gradually built up and the Soviet aim was to conclude agreements touching on every aspect of life. The presence of Soviet forces, or the threat of their intervention, was a powerful conditioning factor. The progress of the region towards people's democracies was varied, however, not only because of differing local circumstances but also because of divergent attitudes towards 'sovietisation'.

The roughest Soviet treatment was reserved for Poland. Traditionally anti-Russian, the Poles had seen their country invaded by both Germans and Soviets in September 1939. The Soviets were held responsible by most Poles for the murder of 15,000 captured Polish officers in the spring of 1940. Polish communists had also fared badly. Most of the leadership was executed during the Soviet purges, having been found guilty of Trotskyism and other heinous crimes. Then there was the westward shift of Poland's frontiers and the dislocation this entailed. All in all, Poland proved to be the most difficult country in which to find bourgeois politicians willing to cooperate with the Soviet Union. The discovery of some 4,000 bodies of Polish officers in the Katyn forest in early 1943 by the Germans (who blamed the massacre on the Soviets) led to a request by the Polish government-in-exile in London, headed by General Sikorski, for an inquiry to be undertaken by the International Red Cross. Previous to this Sikorski's government had refused to discuss changes in the pre-war Polish frontiers. Stalin seized the opportunity to terminate the Polish–Soviet agreement of 1941 and to break off diplomatic relations with the London Poles. Nevertheless, Stalin still hoped to find among them some politicians who would be willing to break the stalemate, since a future Polish government composed entirely of communists would be very weak. There were Polish émigrés in Moscow with their own organisation, and in Poland itself Wladyslaw Gomulka and fellow communists set up the National Homeland Council in January 1944 without Stalin's prior approval.

Stalin hoped that a broadly based provisional government could be established in Poland, but Stanislaw Mikolajczyk, Sikorski's successor, proved just as obdurate on the frontier question. However, the establishment of the second front in France in June 1944 made it likely that the Red Army would dominate Poland, and in view of some positive American remarks about the Homeland Council, Stalin formed a minority government – the Lublin committee – and imposed this on Poland on 22 July 1944. Although a minority, the Polish communists were not willing to follow Moscow's directives slavishly. For instance, they argued strongly in favour of the western Neisse as Poland's western frontier instead of the Oder, which Stalin had proposed.

The leaders of the non-communist Polish underground in Warsaw were unaware of the change in Soviet policy, and on 1 August 1944 they launched an uprising designed to secure them a position of influence in the post-war government. Stalin branded them as 'adventurers' and refused them military assistance. He even prevented American and British planes from flying in aid until September, by which time it was too late to save the insurgents. The Red Army was then able to take Warsaw without much trouble. In the rubble of the capital lay the hopes of non-communists for a major say in post-war Polish development. Along with the hopes died many of the social class which would have most effectively resisted the sovietisation of their country. The Lublin committee moved quickly in the wake of the Red Army to re-establish its authority and in January 1945 it was officially recognised by the Soviets as the provisional Polish government [100; 105; 115].

Soviet experience with the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London was quite different. The Czechoslovaks lacked the suspiciousness about Soviet motives which so influenced Soviet–Polish relations, and many of the Czechoslovaks were openly anti-Western. The origins of Polish hostility lay in historical experience. Russia had partitioned and ruled part of Poland for over a hundred years before 1918 – an experience spared the Czechoslovaks. Their critical attitude to the West flowed from the Munich agreement of 1938 which had in effect handed their country over to Nazi Germany. Since the West had failed Czechoslovakia in its hour of need a new protector against a resurgent Germany had to be found. It was believed that the USSR would fit the bill very well. Eduard Beneš, a former president and head of the government-in-exile, played an important role in shaping Czechoslovakia's post-war life. He was willing to concede primacy to Soviet interests and abandoned plans to promote a Polish-Czechoslovak federation after liberation when the Soviets made clear their opposition. He took it upon himself to visit Moscow in December 1943 and to sign a treaty of friendship, alliance and mutual assistance. This guaranteed the communists a position of primary importance in the post-war government and in the shaping of the nation even before the war was over and before the communists had contested an election. At the last election in 1935 they had secured a mere 10 per cent of the vote. The communists actually refused the position of Prime Minister but

claimed the ministries of the interior, defence, agriculture, propaganda and education.

Beneš urged the Soviet government to eliminate 'feudalism' in Poland and Hungary and sought Soviet support for the expulsion of the Germans from the Sudetenland and for the elimination of the Slovak fascists. He also agreed that the Agrarian party should be banned, thus permitting the communists to take the lead in rural politics and to apportion the rich land of the Sudetenland among their supporters. When Stalin hinted that the USSR was interested in what later became known as Sub-Carpathian Ukraine, Beneš led him to believe that no objection would be raised if it were annexed. This was an important concession, since it afforded the Soviet Union a direct frontier with Hungary. It must have been very gratifying for Stalin to observe how forthcoming Beneš was in promoting Soviet interests in his country. When the National Front government was established in March 1945, Czech and Slovak communists enjoyed a position of influence out of all proportion to the support they enjoyed among the population. After liberation, Soviet and US troops left Czechoslovakia; there was no need for Stalin to drag his feet over withdrawal, since its government was among the most pro-Soviet in the region [100; 105; 115]. In Hungary the Soviets tried to reach agreement with Admiral Horthy, which would have involved the country changing sides and fighting its former ally, Germany. Horthy hesitated and even tried to surrender but was not decisive enough. Instead, the Arrow Cross, the local fascists, took over, and held Hungary to its pro-German course. As the Red Army advanced, however, a coalition government, consisting of members of the Smallholders' party, the National Peasants' party, socialists and communists, came into being in late December 1944 at Debrecen. The old political system and political class had been destroyed by the German and Soviet occupations so the opportunity existed for a new departure. The Soviets insisted on the resurrection of the old parties and so the fear of bolshevisation passed in 1945. The rural nature of the country contributed to the popularity of the Smallholders' party, and when elections were held in Budapest in October 1945 it won an absolute majority, even garnering the votes of the middle classes. In the national election which followed in November 1945 the Smallholders, much to their surprise and embarrassment – the local joke had it that it was as if the party leader had won a lion in a lottery and was afraid to take it home – polled just over 57 per cent of the votes, with the communists only claiming 17 per cent. The Smallholders were an uneasy coalition of

interests, so the communists began to pick it to pieces. This process, referred to as 'salami tactics' by the communist leader, Matyas Rakosi, proved very successful [105].

In Romania, Marshal Antonescu headed a pro-German authoritarian regime which had sent combatant troops to fight against the Soviet Union and had gained control of Soviet territory up to Odessa. A coup carried out by King Michael and some of his officers, with the support of opposition politicians and communist-led armed civilian units, removed Antonescu on 23 August 1944 as the Red Army was penetrating Moldavia. The armistice agreement of 12 September 1944 and the Stalin-Churchill percentages agreement gave the Soviets a dominant say in the shaping of the new Romania. In October 1944 the communists established a National Democratic Front with the social democrats, and this organisation, aided directly and indirectly by the Soviets, gradually acquired greater and greater influence. The government could not control land seizures by peasants and therefore resigned, to be replaced by a new cabinet on 4 November 1944, which included a number of communists and left-wing social democrats. However, in January 1945, the Soviet representatives in the Allied Control Commission denounced the Prime Minister, Radescu, as a traitor and declared the anti-communist opposition to be fascist. Soviet pressure, combined with the wrecking tactics of Romanian communists, made it impossible for the government to maintain its authority, and on 28 February 1945 Andrei Vyshinsky, speaking for Stalin, presented King Michael with a two-hour ultimatum to name a new Prime Minister. The man acceptable to Moscow was Dr Petru Groza, of the tiny Ploughmen's Front. He was a rich landowner but in reality a fellow traveller. The real authority in the land was the Red Army which supported the communists, and the latter attracted more and more adherents as power beckoned [105].

Bulgaria was at war with the Western Powers but not with the Soviet Union. The Soviets hoped that they could come to an agreement with the Bulgarians and refused to channel Anglo-American requests for a cease-fire to Sofia. The Romanian coup of August 1944 and King Michael's order that his army should allow passage to the Red Army to pursue the retreating Germans transformed the situation in Bulgaria. The USSR declared war on Bulgaria on 5 September 1944. The communist-led Fatherland Front staged a *coup d'état* on 9 September and communist partisans moved into Sofia. The traditionally pro-Soviet population then welcomed the entry of the Red Army. By mid-1945 the Fatherland

Front was securely in the hands of the communist party. The opposition was not as harshly treated as in Romania, however, since the new Bulgarian government was actively seeking western recognition [115].

In Yugoslavia Soviet influence was more limited, due to the fact that Josip Broz Tito and his partisan movement had played the largest part in the liberation of the country. Soviet troops did not tarry long in Belgrade and elsewhere since they were needed for the advance into Hungary and Austria, a factor which acquired greater significance as time passed. In Albania the communists liberated the country themselves and proclaimed a provisional government in May 1944, following the Yugoslav example. The Albanian communist party was a section of the Yugoslav, and Stalin appeared quite content to allow Tito to supervise developments there. A Soviet mission entered Albania in July 1944 but was not very active. Yugoslavia's plan was to form a Balkan union comprising itself. Albania and Bulgaria, but Stalin remained non-committal about this project.

In Finland the Soviet position was quite strong. When Finland (which had fought on the German side) left the war in September 1944 it accepted the provisions of the Treaty of Moscow of 1940. An Allied Control Commission, dominated by the Soviets, was established. The communist party was legalised and the country settled down to pay off the burden of reparations. The Prime Minister, Paasikivi, conducted a policy which accommodated Soviet interests. The main reason why the communist party failed to win a large following was that it was poorly led [105; 115].

Hence by the end of hostilities in May 1945 the Soviets had neutralised most of the anti-Soviet forces in their sphere of influence. Just what would happen after the euphoria of liberation wore off, as social and political strife increased, remained uncertain. An even more difficult factor to assess was the Western reaction to the increasingly pro-Soviet orientation of the region.

WESTERN AND SOUTHERN EUROPE

If Soviet policy in eastern and south-eastern Europe was offensive, in the rest of Europe, regarded as the American sphere of influence, it was defensive. Its goal there was to erect barriers to the advance of American capitalism, and to this end communists were enjoined to resurrect the tactics of the popular front of the 1930s. This meant participating in all organisations which stressed national development

and gaining as much influence as possible over political developments. Anti-Americanism was to be fostered, but this was not to include preparation for or attempts to seize power. The reconstruction of the war-ravaged economies was a primary goal, and, although strikes and protest movements were to be supported, they were not to be allowed to threaten economic chaos. The Soviets accepted that in the foreseeable future the regimes would remain bourgeois and every effort was therefore to be made to encourage them to adopt independent and neutral policies.

In France the communists (PCF) used the power and influence they had built up during their years in the resistance to revitalise the economy by advocating greater labour productivity. Participating in government, they ignored socialist plans for the nationalisation of large-scale industry, economic planning and co-determination. They accepted the portfolios of ministries involved in the economy and pursued a policy of holding down wages while output increased. When this led to strikes, the communist-dominated trade union, the CGT, came out against the strikers. The provisional government, headed by Charles de Gaulle, concluded a friendship treaty with the Soviet Union in December 1944, and Maurice Thorez returned from exile in Moscow to lead the communists. His French citizenship was returned to him in 1945. The communists sided with the government in demanding the internationalisation of the Ruhr, separation of the Rhineland and Saar from Germany, and the payment of huge reparations. Even in colonial matters the PCF supported the government's policy of binding the dependent territories more closely to the motherland. As de Gaulle later wrote, Thorez's main concern was the promotion of communist interests, but on many occasions he rendered the French republic a service [100; 105].

The role played by Thorez in France was taken in Italy by Palmiro Togliatti. In Italy, as in France, the communists (PCI) were the third most significant force, after the socialists and the Christian democrats. Hence they entered coalition governments whose aim was the re-building of the market economy. Indigenous communists were more radical than the exiles, however, and in January 1944, in Bari, communists joined other radicals in calling for the abdication of the king and the immediate transfer of power to the resistance. However, Togliatti's return from Moscow had a moderating influence and he announced a limited programme: a government of national unity, the convocation of a Constituent Assembly, and an uncompromising struggle against fascists and Germans. The PCI was

prepared to subordinate all other issues to the war effort; it would postpone all debate about the future of the monarchy and meanwhile would collaborate with the other parties in Marshal Badoglio's royal government. The communists therefore stood by as the partisans in the north were disarmed in early 1944 and their local councils dissolved in the course of 1945. The PCI, illegal since 1926, had more in common with liberals, socialists and Christian democrats than, for example, in France. The PCI had never been as thoroughly bolshevised as the PCF and this had strengthened its commitment to democratic ideals. Yet its liberal attitudes accorded well with the interest of Moscow in 1945 [100; 105].

In Belgium, communists had played their part in the resistance and joined the first post-liberation cabinet but their influence quickly waned. In Greece, when the communists launched the 'second round' of their insurrection in December 1944, British troops were used to put it down. The communists received some aid through Yugoslavia and Albania but it was never sufficient to ensure victory. Stalin appeared to be quite content to let them fight it out with the British. If the latter won it meant he was keeping his side of the bargain; if the communists won it could not be blamed on Soviet involvement [105]. In China, the Soviet government recognised Chiang Kai-shek, the Kuomintang leader, as head of state and Prime Minister, even though Chiang was the mortal enemy of the communist party of China led by Mao Zedong, and had been responsible for bloody massacres of many of its members. Moscow's attitude was determined by its desire for a united front in order to combat American influence.

The Soviets agreed to the establishment of the United Nations Organisation – much to the satisfaction of the Americans, who did not want the UN to be seen as just another anti-Soviet institution. In the course of 1944 the Soviet government established diplomatic relations with countries in the Middle East – Egypt, Syria, Lebanon and Iraq – and attempted to use the presence of Soviet troops in Iran to political effect. In 1945 Moscow demanded that Turkey should allow Soviet military bases to be set up in the Straits and also requested that the UN mandate for Libya should be granted to the USSR. The motive behind these Soviet moves may have been to test Western resolve, since, given the absence of Soviet forces, except in Iran, they held out little prospect of success [100].

GERMANY

Germany presented an acute problem for the Soviet Union. Neither the tactics applied in eastern nor in western Europe were relevant to the situation there. The USSR needed to cooperate with the Western Powers so as to ensure that German militarism never again reared its head, but not at the price of allowing American capital free play. A thoroughgoing social and economic transformation of the country was desirable, but how was this to be achieved? The methods adopted in eastern and south-eastern Europe would just not do; they ran the risk of concentrating resentment at miserable post-war conditions against the USSR, which in turn could only benefit the Americans.

The tactic adopted, therefore, was to proceed with the transformation of the Soviet zone once it had been discovered that residual support for Nazism was weak. The Soviets had no clearly thought-out plan for the future of Germany and indeed could not have had unless the Red Army had been able to occupy the whole country. Given the uncertainty until early 1945 about whether the Soviet Union would actually have a physical presence in Germany, Stalin and his advisers weighed up many options. Because they overestimated the strength of internal German resistance to Hitler, the Soviets called on all Germans to overthrow the national socialist regime, but as 1944 progressed – with the lack of any popular response to the attempt to assassinate Hitler on 20 July 1944 – it gradually became clear that this would not happen.

Various projects for the dismemberment of Germany were entertained. Besides the territories which were to be given to other countries, the Rhineland could either become a separate state or protectorate, while Bavaria could become independent; proposals along these lines were put to Eden in December 1941. At Tehran in November 1943 Stalin showed some sympathy for Roosevelt's plan to divide Germany into five states. At Yalta he asked for concrete suggestions about the dismemberment of Germany, without himself advancing any Soviet proposals. He made clear that he wanted the western Neisse recognised as the western frontier of Poland. He also announced that the USSR needed reparations worth $10,000 million from Germany, and that the other victims of German aggression should collectively receive a further $10,000 million. Little, however, came of the plans to dismember and weaken Germany economically. Churchill, especially, was aware that hasty agreements could engender future strife, and he did not want a repetition of

Versailles. As soon as the Red Army was over the German border, members of the National Committee for a Free Germany – set up in the Soviet Union in 1943 and composed of exiled communists and prisoners-of-war who had been 'turned' in anti-fascist schools – began to establish their control of local administration. In March 1945 Stalin came out strongly against dismembering Germany (apart from the eastern territories taken by Poland and the USSR) and after the end of hostilities he made it clear that he knew how to distinguish between fascism and the German people. The process of democratisation was set in motion in the Soviet zone even before the Potsdam Conference, but there was no way in which the Soviets could push through a similar programme in the western zones. As they developed a policy in their own zone, it acquired its own momentum. From September 1945 onwards, the unexpected strength of the social democrats in the Soviet zone led to a policy of fusing the social democratic and communist parties. This took place in April 1946 and resulted in the Socialist Unity Party (SED) coming into being. By then the die had been cast and there was no going back. This, in turn, made it impossible to adopt one policy for the whole of Germany.

Unlike the Americans, the Soviets had no clear vision of the post-war order in Europe. They were aware of their security interests and of what they hoped to prevent but had drawn up no master plan for the future. Their policies were flexible and would depend to a considerable extent on the actions and reactions of their Western Allies. Yet the Americans interpreted Soviet behaviour in eastern and south-eastern Europe as meaning that Moscow was resolutely and determinedly following a coherent overall strategy. They failed to perceive that outside this area – which constituted a special case because of its strategic importance to the Soviet Union – there was room for considerable manoeuvre and the possibility of compromise agreements [100].