

on it his own social system. Everyone imposes his own system as far as his army can reach. It cannot be otherwise."¹³

For ordinary Russians, the Great Patriotic War meant that Stalin and the Communist Party became symbols for the defense of the country. In the 1930s Stalin may have symbolized modernization, social justice, and the welding together of the Soviet Union into a new kind of state, but he and his henchmen were still outsiders. One, whom I later spoke to, told me about their sense of having stolen a country and got away with it. In a 1933 poem, Osip Mandelstam had described the *vozhd* as "the Kremlin's mountain yokel." Perhaps it was the line "the huge laughing cockroaches on his top lip" that cost the poet his life. But many shared his sense of insult at a "foreign" regime led by a Georgian imposing its authority on Russians.¹⁴ The ferocity of the German attack, Hitler's policy of extermination in the occupied areas, and, maybe most importantly, the ability of the Soviet regime to fight foreign invaders, had changed much of that. In 1945 Stalin's dictatorship could be seen as representing the Russian nation simply through having fought, and in the end defeated, the German invasion. Even the Russian Orthodox Church—an institution for which the original Bolshevik approach in 1917 had been to burn its churches, if possible with worshippers inside—blessed the Soviet regime in 1945. "The Russian people accepted this war as a holy war," said one of the church leaders, "a war for their faith and for their country. . . . Patriotism and Orthodoxy are one."¹⁵

The pride of the Russians in the victory over Nazi Germany was also reflected in how others viewed the Soviets. In many parts of Europe the Red Army was seen as the real liberator of the continent from Nazi rule. In northern Norway, where Soviet troops entered in 1945, fishermen and their families emerged from hiding with banners praising Stalin and the Red Army. In Czechoslovakia, which had suffered six long years of German occupation, people embraced the Soviet soldiers as they marched through. In eastern Europe, many saw the Red Army as a Slav army liberating them from German racial oppression. But even outside their zones of occupation, Stalin and the Soviets were hailed as the liberators of the continent.

In France, quite a few who had condemned Communism in the 1930s now saw it in a more positive light because of the amount of Soviet sacrifice in the war against Hitler. Support for Communist parties in western Europe had never been greater. Most of the new Communists were young people who had come of age during the war. In their eyes Communism and the Soviet example were first and foremost about much-needed reform in their home countries. They wanted full employment and social services. Women who had joined the workforce during the war did not want to be forced back into patriarchal domesticity. Communists were genuinely admired by many for their role in the resistance to German occupation, including by people who regretted their own failure at taking up weapons. Now Nazism and Fascism were dead, and Europe could renew itself. In spite of the Soviets' bloody past, Communism had a model ready for Europe's transformation.

The sense of the need for change was also very visible outside of Europe as World War II was coming to an end. If the First World War had sounded the death knell for Europe's world domination, the Second World War made its abolition a necessity, not least for Europeans themselves. Young people in Europe who had survived the war were far more preoccupied with welfare in their own countries than in what happened to their colonies. Crucially, large numbers of them no longer believed that their own income and status were dependent on the maintenance of colonial control overseas. At the same time anti-colonial resistance was on the increase, especially in Asia. Reeling from the war against Germany and Japanese attacks in the east, in 1942 Britain had offered India self-government as soon as the war was over. But independence leader Mohandas Gandhi, known as the Mahatma, or "Great Soul," refused to budge on his demand for immediate independence. In 1942 he launched the Quit India Movement, which aimed at making use of British wartime weakness to drive them out of the subcontinent. Gandhi wanted no compromise. Churchill's offers "have shown up British imperialism in its nakedness as never before," Gandhi wrote. The British "desire our help only as slaves . . . it is harmful to India's interests, and dangerous to the cause

of India's freedom, to introduce foreign soldiers in India," even to fight Hitler and the Japanese.¹⁶

Further east, colonialism also seemed in free fall. In Indonesia—a new territorial concept coined by nationalists for all the southern islands of southeast Asia, as well as Malay-speaking regions of the mainland—the anticolonial leader Sukarno worked with the Japanese occupiers to secure independence from the Netherlands. In Vietnam, also a new term for all Viet-speaking regions that had been colonized by France, the Communist Ho Chi Minh established an independent state, with himself as president. The US government had promised the Philippines its independence before the war and used the promise to mobilize against the Japanese occupation of the islands. In Iran and Egypt nationalists protested against imposed British control. For many people in these countries, Nazism and Japan were not the main problems. The problem was European colonialism in all its forms. Working with Berlin and Tokyo could even help hasten the day of independence and national self-determination. The Atlantic Charter, issued by Roosevelt and Churchill in August 1941, seemed to some non-European nationalists too reminiscent of Woodrow Wilson's World War I idealism, even if it inspired others. In the charter, the two countries pledged to "respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights and self government restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them."¹⁷ This, Indian, Indonesian, and Algerian nationalists claimed, must be as true for their countries as it would be for such white European countries as Czechoslovakia, Poland, Denmark, and France.

For most Americans, the Atlantic Charter summed up the principles for which they fought. The United States had been attacked by Japan and Germany, they thought, because these countries' leaders hated the principles to which America had dedicated itself. World War II, in the American view, was a battle for individual liberty, constitutional order, and the American way of life. As in World War I, it was the enemies of these principles who had unleashed global war, and the United States had yet again to sacrifice the lives of its young

men to attempt to set the rest of the world right. Toward the end of World War II, there was in America, across the political spectrum, a deeply felt sense that the country had earned the right to lead by example and that the world needed to be reformed along US lines if yet another war was to be avoided.

The growing US impatience with being challenged on any major issue even by its allies was in part a reflection of American power as the war was ending. The United States had outproduced and outfought its enemies. By mid-1945 the US Navy was bigger than all the world's other navies combined, and US bombers had devastated Berlin, Dresden, Tokyo, and Yokohama. As the war ended, more than 60 percent of all the world's heavy aircraft were American. No enemy bombers ever hit the US mainland. Both because of its productive power and because it was untouched by warfare, the US economy in 1945 reigned supreme. It now accounted for more than half of the world's manufacturing capacity. It held two-thirds of the total financial reserves available, providing it with the world's only stable currency and therefore the one in which all global trade was denominated.

President Franklin Roosevelt had no grand plan for what the world ought to look like after the war had ended. When he died, suddenly, on 12 April 1945, his focus was still squarely on fighting the war. The conflict in Europe had not yet ended, although German military power was fading fast. Japan showed no sign of surrendering. Roosevelt still wanted a Soviet entry into the war against Japan in order to spare American lives if an invasion of the Japanese home islands should be necessary. Supremely self-confident to the last, FDR had no doubts that he would be able to manage his relations with his allies as the war came to an end, and after that, too. In spite of rising tension with the Soviets, especially over the future of Poland, Roosevelt was convinced that the wartime alliance would muddle through, not least because of his own charisma, political suaveness, and ability to avoid overall confrontation (sometimes through being economical with the truth, both to his allies and his own people). Political defeat at home, not to mention death, simply did not figure in his calculations.

Because FDR had managed to transmit this confidence in his own durability, if not immortality, to his Administration, Vice President Harry S. Truman had the worst day of his life as he was sworn in as president upon Roosevelt's sudden demise. The new US president had been abroad only once, seeing combat as a captain in France during World War I, and FDR had never drawn him into any foreign policy decision-making. Now Truman suddenly had to take charge of the most powerful country on earth just as the war was ending. Like his predecessor, the new president believed that the Grand Alliance would remain in place after the defeat of Germany, but he lacked the tools FDR had counted on to make it happen: personal charm, strategic (and moral) flexibility, and knowledge of world affairs. Down-to-earth, middle-class Truman was, in other words, closer both to the behavior and the outlook of most of his countrymen than his patrician predecessor had been. He was also more convinced that the United States had the power to set things right, and with that conviction came an impatience when being challenged. Both FDR and Truman disliked Communism, but from the very beginning of his presidency, the new president saw Communism as a challenge to the United States, as an undesired alternative to a US-led world order. Truman wanted to strike deals with Stalin, but only if the latter behaved according to a US view of how the world was supposed to operate.

Hitler committed suicide on 30 April and Germany capitulated unconditionally on 7 May 1945. With the Führer dead and the country in ruins, Hitler's generals had nothing left to fight for. The endgame had come quickly, with Soviet forces rushing in from the east and US and British forces from the west and south. While all sides attempted to end up in control of as much land as possible, as long as the war lasted military considerations generally overrode the competition for territory. US and Soviet soldiers hugged and drank together, teaching each other songs from home, when they first met up by the River Elbe north of Leipzig. It would take more than forty years for Americans and Soviets to be able to mingle so effortlessly again.

The heads of the three main victorious states met outside Berlin, the capital of defeated Germany, from 17 July to 2 August 1945. At the

small town of Potsdam, where the Prussian kings had their summer palaces, Stalin yet again played the host, as he had at Yalta and Tehran. But even if it was Soviet forces who had taken the German capital, Stalin wanted to avoid a clash with his allies over the occupation regime in Germany. At Potsdam the Soviet leader mainly wanted US and British acceptance of his country's predominant position in eastern Europe. Both Roosevelt and Churchill had given him reason to believe that would be the case. But at Potsdam, Stalin was the only constant of the three leaders. When the meeting convened, FDR was dead, and Truman took his place. During the conference, the Conservatives lost the British general elections to the Labour Party, so on July 26 Prime Minister Clement Attlee replaced Churchill in Potsdam. Stalin distrusted Truman and Attlee from the beginning—Truman because Soviet intelligence reports stressed his anti-Communism and Attlee because he represented the Right wing of the British Labour movement, the old enemies of Communists everywhere. The Soviet leader knew, however, that he held two trump cards. His troops occupied half of Europe. And the war in east Asia was still not over. The new US president, like the old one, needed Soviet assistance to defeat Japan.

The Potsdam Conference is testimony to how fast global events can move, especially when a great war is coming to an end. The participants were not much preoccupied with Germany. Hitler was dead and his country defeated. The agreement on temporary zones of occupation, demilitarization and denazification, reversal of all German annexations, and moving Polish borders west at Germany's expense (so that Stalin could keep his conquests of 1939) were easily arrived at. Tehran and Yalta had set the pattern on these matters, and Stalin was secretly relieved to find that those agreements still stood. The attention of all three main participants had moved to war in east Asia and to the political settlements in liberated Europe. Stalin knew that Truman's eagerness to get the USSR into the war against Japan would help with other matters, maybe also in Europe. The US development of nuclear weapons, which Truman alluded to during their conversations, came as no surprise to Stalin; his spies had been following the

US development of the atomic bomb since 1942. There is no evidence that the Soviet leader felt threatened by the US atomic monopoly in 1945, even though it made him speed up his own nuclear program. The Red Army had ten million soldiers in Europe, though Stalin, prior to Potsdam, had started transferring troops to east Asia in preparation for an attack on Japan. Stalin had just survived the biggest war in human history and emerged as its victor. He may have had forebodings about the future (he always did), but at Potsdam he was brimming with self-confidence and gusto. Truman believed he could take the measure of the man, and that negotiations with the Soviets were possible. "I can deal with Stalin," the new president confided to his diary. "He is honest—but smart as hell."¹⁸

The Potsdam Conference spent a great deal of time avoiding making decisions for the future. It was a waiting game: the war in Asia was still on, Truman and Attlee were new in power, and Stalin wanted to solidify the gains he had already made on the battlefield in Europe and, as a consequence thereof, at Tehran and Yalta. The British and Americans expected elections in Soviet-occupied eastern Europe and at least a pro forma adhesion to principles of democracy there. But at the moment the material challenges of the peace were enormous. All across the continent, great masses of people who had fled from the war were trying to get back home. Big cities were in ruins. Millions had no food or fuel. It is not surprising that there was a general feeling that political resolutions could wait. But while leaders hesitated on the big issues, decisions were being made on the ground, in part as a result of conflicting visions of how societies should be reorganized after the war had ended.

THESE CONTESTS HAPPENED throughout Europe, but it could still be argued that the Cold War began in Poland. There, Stalin's policy of imposing strict Soviet control clashed with the wishes of his allies and those of the great majority of Poles. Britain had gone to war with Germany over the fate of Poland in 1939, and it would be hard for any British government to accept Soviet occupation and dictatorship in that country. Churchill was led by the exigencies of war and a great

deal of wishful thinking about Stalin's intentions to accept the Soviet plan for a reorganization of the Polish government over the heads of the Poles themselves. But this was only a first step in the Soviet campaign to bring Poland to heel. When the Poles had rebelled against the Germans in Warsaw in the summer of 1944, the Red Army deliberately stopped its offensive outside the Polish capital, allowing the Nazis to destroy the Polish Home Army. Stalin reckoned that the fewer Polish officers alive, the better for Soviet control of the country. When the Red Army was finally ordered to take Warsaw, a quarter of a million Poles had already been killed by the Wehrmacht and the SS and most of the city had been razed to the ground. Even so, after entering the Polish capital, Stalin's secret police kidnapped many of the surviving leaders of the resistance and shipped them off to Moscow for a typical Stalinist show trial. Stalin had instructed the Soviet judges to give them "light" sentences, as a favor to his great power allies. All but a few were to die in captivity anyway.

As all of this went on in Warsaw, US views of Soviet behavior started to change. Roosevelt had become increasingly concerned with the Polish issue; his main concern had been the disdain for foreign opinion with which the Soviets handled matters in Warsaw. His successor saw matters in more concrete terms. Harry Truman believed that the Yalta agreements on Poland ensured democratic freedom and an inclusive transition government that would prepare free elections. The Soviets were not living up to their commitments, Truman thought. As a result, the new president's first meeting with Soviet foreign minister Viacheslav Molotov, twelve days after FDR's death and three months before Potsdam, had been quite frosty. "The President said that he desired the friendship of the Soviet Government," reads the official US record, "but that he felt it could only be on the basis of mutual observation of agreements and not on the basis of a one way street."¹⁹ "I gave it to him straight," Truman told a friend afterward. "I let him have it. It was the straight one-two to the jaw."²⁰

Poland seemed a dividing line to Allied leaders. Churchill, who had less at stake in the final stages of the war in Asia, moved effortlessly back to some of his earlier views of the Soviets. On 12 May

Churchill sent Truman a personal message, in which for the first time a western leader used a term that would define the Cold War, "Iron Curtain":

An iron curtain is drawn down upon [the Soviet] front. We do not know what is going on behind. There seems little doubt that the whole of the regions east of the line Lubeck-Trieste-Corfu will soon be completely in their hands . . . as this enormous Muscovite advance into the centre of Europe takes place. . . . It would be open to the Russians in a very short time to advance if they chose to the waters of the North Sea and the Atlantic. . . . Surely it is vital now to come to an understanding with Russia, or see where we are with her, before we weaken our armies mortally or retire to the zones of occupation.²¹

Increasingly concerned about Soviet behavior in the east, Churchill wanted US and British troops to remain in the positions they had had when the war ended. Truman turned him down, ordering a withdrawal to conform with the lines of responsibility previously agreed with the Soviets. As a result, hundreds of thousands of Germans fled west to avoid the Soviet zone of occupation. But Truman was concerned enough to send Harry Hopkins, FDR's trusted adviser and a champion of cooperation with the Soviets, to Moscow to try to convince Stalin of the error of his ways. Hopkins was already dying of cancer, and the grueling trip to Russia took the best out of him. He still tried his hand with the Soviet dictator, though. "I told Stalin," Hopkins reported to Truman, "that I personally felt that our relations were threatened and that I frankly had many misgivings about it and with my intimate knowledge of the situation I was, frankly, bewildered with some of the things that were going on."²² Stalin would not budge. He accused the British of muddying the waters in US-Soviet relations. Even though mainly conceived as part of US postwar cost-cutting, Truman's abrupt termination of the Lend-Lease arrangements with the Soviet Union right after victory in Europe in May 1945 had also helped convince Stalin that he was facing a new attitude in

Washington. He did not know whether it was the end of the war in Europe or the coming of a new president that had caused it. Stalin had been on his best behavior at Potsdam. But his suspicions were up. "Poland! What a big deal!" Soviet foreign minister Molotov noted in February 1945. "We are unaware," Molotov continued, "of how the governments in Belgium, France, Germany, etc. are organized. No one consulted us, although we don't say we like one or another of these governments. We didn't interfere because this is the zone of operations of British and American troops!"²³

In the rest of eastern Europe, which lay within the Soviet lines of occupation, Stalin's irritation with his Great Power partners showed more clearly. In Bulgaria he accepted a more radical line from the local Communists in early 1945; hundreds of key opponents of the Communist-led Fatherland Front, which ruled the country after the Red Army invaded, were executed and more than ten thousand sentenced to prison terms. Most of these had served in Bulgaria's wartime government, which had been an ally of Hitler's Germany. Neither the Allies nor most of the Bulgarian public therefore protested much. But these were not trials of collaborators as seen in western Europe. In Bulgaria, the Soviets and local Communists established a pattern in which all opposition to Communist control of the government was by its very nature defined as Fascist and therefore subject to imprisonment or worse. Inside the Soviet Union, more than a million Balts and Caucasians, including the whole Chechen population, were deported to Siberia and to the Russian Far East as the war came to an end. The Soviet regime did not want to take any chances with unreliable population groups in its border areas.

Stalin did not have a master plan for what to do in eastern Europe when the war was over. But the Communists there were loyal only to him and provided the ultimate guarantee for Soviet control if relations with the United States and Britain were to break down. And in the spring of 1945 Stalin increasingly fell back on what his Marxism told him about his erstwhile allies. Already in January he had warned against believing in any continuing community of interest between Moscow and the west. "The crisis of capitalism has manifested itself in

the division of the capitalists into two factions—one fascist, the other democratic,” he told a group of visiting Yugoslavs and Bulgarians. “The alliance between ourselves and the democratic faction of capitalists came about because the latter had a stake in preventing Hitler’s domination, for that brutal state would have driven the working class to extremes and to the overthrow of capitalism itself. We are currently allied with the one faction against the other, but in the future we will be against the first faction of capitalists, too.”²⁴

One of the biggest surprises the Soviets got in 1945 was the Labour Party victory in the British general election. Stalin may have distrusted Winston Churchill and seen in him the embodiment of British upper-class rule, but Winston was the devil he knew, just as he knew, through his spies, that the old Conservative had formed a bit of a sentimental relationship with Stalin as a fellow survivor and victor in World War II. Besides, there was already bad blood between British Labour and Soviet Bolshevism. The leaders of the Labour Party—Clement Attlee, who now became prime minister, and Ernest Bevin, who became foreign secretary—detested the Communists within their own trade union movement; Moscow’s supporters were responsible, both thought, for splitting the movement in the 1920s and 1930s. Bevin, an unskilled worker who had come to prominence as the head of the biggest of the British trade unions, the Transport and General Workers’ Union, had fought Communist influence there and elsewhere relentlessly. In his postwar dealings with Stalin and Molotov, Bevin saw many of these battles repeated on an international scale. Molotov, said Bevin later, was like a Communist in a local Labour Party branch: if you treated him badly, he made the most of the grievance, and if you treated him well, he put up the price next day and abused you. A cabinet colleague viewed Bevin as “full of bright ideas, as well as earthy sense, but dangerously obsessed with Communists.”²⁵

The Soviets hated British Labour back with equal fervor. In the Soviet documents of the era, there is nearly no sense of opportunity in the news that a Left-wing party, some of whose key union leaders and intellectuals had long-established contacts with Moscow, had won the

British elections. Stalin and his lieutenants sensed that Labour’s dedication to building a Social Democratic welfare state could be the worst challenge to Communist aspirations not only in Britain—none of them were so deluded as to expect a Communist revolution in London anytime soon—but also in the rest of western Europe. Soviet foreign affairs experts presumed that the capitalist countries would be hit by an economic crisis after the war ended and that competition among them therefore would increase, as had happened after the First World War. European Communist parties could benefit from the ensuing impoverishment of the workers, since it would prove that no capitalist system could deliver what the working class wanted. The efforts of Social Democrats to reform capitalism was therefore, in the Soviet view, at best irrelevant and at worst counterproductive. Only countries that consciously patterned themselves on the Soviet experience, which had shown that it could deliver full employment and economic growth, would gain in economic terms from the war’s end.

The US perspective on conditions in Europe after the war ended was almost the diametric opposite of that of the Soviets. Americans feared the effects of an economic collapse and lasting poverty in Europe, one that could perhaps spread worldwide. While the Soviets expected revolution after the war, because the end of World War I had created the Russian Revolution, most Americans feared such revolutionary prospects. In their minds, World War I and the Great Depression had created Communism and Fascism, the enemies of America. Polls taken in the autumn of 1945 showed that the majority of Americans wanted their country to act to relieve the despair and poverty that had produced ideologies abhorrent to the American mind.

But American opinion polls also showed a contrary trend to this engagement with the world. Throughout the first postwar years, the vast majority of Americans felt their country had sacrificed enough in terms of blood and direct effort to stem the rot in Europe and Asia. Like Europeans and Asians, postwar Americans wanted their government to concentrate on improving living conditions at home. Essentially they wanted to get their boys in uniform back as quickly as possible. Fearful of the isolationist thinking that had emerged after

World War I and mindful of the fact that the United States had not entered World War II until it was attacked by Japan, the Truman Administration wanted to balance the obvious need for the United States to engage internationally after the war was over with the need to placate its voters back home. It could do so, the president himself believed, by using its enormous economic resources to alleviate want elsewhere and get foreign economies going again.

World War II had led to a wholesale transformation of the global economy. As we have seen, the rise of the United States as the center of world economic affairs had been ongoing since the early twentieth century, and had sped up during the interwar years. But it was World War II that made long-term change into a rapid transformation. The American economy had almost doubled in size during the war. In contrast, almost everywhere else lay devastated. In Japan, across the country a quarter of all buildings were destroyed—in Tokyo more than half. Its industrial output was below one-third of prewar figures. In China industrial production was down by more than 60 percent compared to 1937. In the Philippines, the Asian country most devastated by World War II, total economic output was just above 20 percent of what it had been in 1941.

During the war the Roosevelt Administration had realized that it needed to make use of its unique position to create a postwar world that would work better for the United States. FDR's key idea was to perpetuate the wartime alliances against Germany and Japan, while also creating a world organization to which all countries could belong. The United Nations, a term that Roosevelt used interchangeably for the Allied Powers and for the wider group of nations he wanted to put together, was founded as an organization in 1945, with its headquarters first in London and then in New York. In form, the UN was a compromise between two strands in the late president's own thinking. One was idealist: to create a truly global forum, which could assist progressive reform everywhere while keeping the peace. The other was realist: to create a forum through which the allied Great Powers could cooperate and, if necessary, force others to do their bidding. The first aim was realized through the UN General Assembly, which

at the beginning had fifty-one members, among them twenty Latin American republics. The second was constructed through the UN Security Council, which had just five members—the United States, Britain, the USSR, France, and China—and in which each had a veto against any proposal made. Only the Security Council could issue resolutions binding for all UN member states, including for sanctions or military action. Neither Stalin nor the British had much faith in the new organization, but each went along to please their mighty American partner. In 1945, nobody could foresee the global role that the UN was to play as the Cold War took hold.

One of the new world organization's main duties was to deal with global economic issues. As the most powerful economy, the United States wanted free trade and access to markets abroad. But it also wanted increased stability in the world economic system. At Bretton Woods in New Hampshire in July 1944, the main allied industrial countries had signed a set of agreements that led to the establishment of an International Monetary Fund (IMF), to provide loans that could bridge a country's imbalance in payments, and an International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which later became part of the World Bank. But the most basic element of the Bretton Woods system, as it came to be called, was tying all other major exchange currencies to the US dollar at fixed parities. The Bretton Woods agreements gave the United States a massive opportunity for international trade and for influencing the economies of other countries. But it should not be forgotten that, just like the political division lines in Europe and Asia, the agreements were the outcome of what the war had already created. In the longer run, the United States got neither the opportunity nor the stability that it wanted from Bretton Woods. But the agreements did provide a system, of sorts, to legitimize the advent of the United States as the world's economic behemoth.

Given its unique position, could the United States have done more to avoid international conflict in the wake of World War II? A lot of different countries resented the consequences of America's rise but learned to live with it because they had to, for both political and

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economic reasons. Lines from a ditty much circulated in the British Foreign Office in 1945 went something like this:

*In Washington Lord Halifax
Once whispered to Lord Keynes,
"It's true they have all the money-bags
But we have all the brains."*²⁶

But by 1945 London had to accept that Washington had eclipsed it, by a wide margin, as the center of global power. Britain needed US financial assistance and, if it could get it, US protection against what it saw as the rise of Soviet power in Europe and Asia. Already in 1945, the Truman Administration—as its own relations with Moscow soured—did not need to impose its view in the matter on western European and British leaders. They were as concerned by Stalin's policy as were any group in Washington. British foreign secretary Bevin in 1945 told everyone who wanted to listen, including Soviet foreign minister Molotov, that "it was the Soviet government which was making things difficult."²⁷

Although the United States and the Soviet Union were wartime allies, some form of postwar conflict was next to inevitable. Leaders of the two countries had seen each other as adversaries ever since the Russian Revolution of 1917, and in some cases even before that. Stalin's policy of prioritizing control of eastern Europe over good relations with his allies contributed significantly to the weakening of the Grand Alliance as the war was coming to an end, as did his wartime atrocities, for instance in Poland, and his megalomania. Soviet ideology stood in the way, too, since it considered a future conflict with the capitalist world as unavoidable and predicted that intense revolutionary upheavals would occur in the postwar era. On the US side, there was little patience with the Soviet Union not recognizing the preponderance of the United States in international affairs. President Truman did not have the political agility and personal charm of President Roosevelt, and his key advisers, who long had been advocating a tougher line on the Soviets, led him to make decisions that pointed

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toward the containment rather than the integration of the Soviet Union. As we shall see, it was containment that made postwar conflict into a Cold War. Truman did not understand FDR's policy of attempting to tie Moscow to international arrangements and treaties. As the strongest power, the United States should have done more to keep open channels of communication, of trade, and of cultural and scientific exchange. Stalin would probably have chosen isolation anyway. But the intensity of the conflict, including the paranoia that it later produced on both sides, might have been significantly reduced if more attempts had been made by the stronger power to entice Moscow toward forms of cooperation.

It has to be realized, though, that such judgments can only be made with hindsight. It is not surprising that in spite of the absolute predominance of the United States, many people feared Soviet power, especially in Europe. The Red Army had vast forces on that continent in 1945. In terms of numbers and proven capability they outgunned everyone else. Soviet behavior in eastern Europe spread foreboding. Some say that Stalin was indeed terrible to his own people, but rather limited and traditional in his foreign policy aims. That may be so, at least on some issues. But by 1945 Stalin had taken his behavior into the heart of Europe and into China and Iran, too. Soviet actions in these parts precipitated changes in US policies, and they frightened others who glimpsed them from afar. By themselves, these actions may not have precipitated a Cold War. But they certainly made postwar containment against the Soviet Union much more likely.