Truman's Hard Line Prompted the Cold War

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Truman entered the White House a highly insecure man. (“I felt like the moon,

the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me," he told reporters.) And’ he held the

wor|d’s most responsible job in a world that was changing radically. Truman tried

to compensate for his insecurity in several ways. First, he was extremely jealous of

his presidential powers and deeply suspicious of anyone who challenged those

powers. Truman made decisions rapidly not only because that was his character but

also because he determined “the buck stopped" at his desk. There would be no more

sloppy administration or strong, freewheeling bureaucrats as in FDR’s later years.

Second, and more dangerously, Truman was determined that these decisions

would not be tagged as “appeasement.” He would be as tough as the toughest. After

only twenty-four hours in the White House, the new President conﬁdently informed

his secretary of state, “We must stand up to the Russians,” and he implied “We had

been too easy with them.” ln foreign-policy discussions during the next two weeks,

Truman interrupted his advisers to assure them he would certainly be “tough.”

His determination was reinforced when he listened most closely to such advisers

as Harriman, Leahy, and Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal, who urged him to

take a hard line. Warning of a “barbarian invasion of Europe,” Harriman declared that

postwar cooperation with the Soviets, especially economically, must depend on their

agreement to open Poland and Eastern Europe. In a decisive meeting on April 23,

Secretary of War Henry Stimson argued with Harriman. Stimson declared that peace

must never be threatened by an issue such as Poland, for free elections there were

impossible, Russia held total control, and Stalin was “not likely to yield . . . in sub-

stance.” Stimson was not an amateur; he had been a respected Wall Street lawyer and

distinguished public servant for forty years, including a term as Herbert Hoover's

secretary of state. But Truman dismissed Stimson’s advice. accepted Harriman's, and later that day berated Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov “in words of one syllable” for breaking the Yalta agreements on Poland. Truman demanded that the Soviets agree to a “new” Polish government. An astonished Molotov replied, “I have never been talked to like that in my life.” “Carry out your agreements," Truman supposedly retorted, “and you won't get talked to like that.” The next day Stalin rejected Truman’s demand by observing that it was contrary to the Yalta agreement. The dictator noted that “Poland borders with the Soviet Union, what [sic] cannot be said of Great Britain and the United States." After all, Stalin continued, the Soviets do not “lay claim to interference" in Belgium and Greece where the Americans and British made decisions without consulting the Russians . . .. Stimson had been correct. Truman's toughness had only stiffened Russian determination to control Poland.

An “iron fence” was falling around Eastern Europe, Churchill blurted out to

Stalin in mid-1945. “All fairy-tales," the Soviet leader blandly replied. But it was

partly true. The crises over Rumania and Poland only raised higher the fence around

those two nations. In other areas, however, the Soviet approach varied. A Russian-

sponsored election in Hungary produced a noncommunist government. ln Bulgaria

the Soviet-conducted elections satisﬁed British observers, if not Americans. Stalin

agreed to an independent, noncommunist regime in Finland if the Finns would follow

a foreign policy friendly to Russia. An “iron fence" by no means encircled all of

Eastern Europe. There was still room to bargain if each side wished to avoid a con-

frontation over the remaining areas.

But the bargaining room was limited. Stalin’s doctrine and his determination that

Russia would not again be invaded from the west greatly narrowed his diplomatic

options. So too did the tremendous devastation of the war. Rapid rebuilding under

communism required security, required access to resources in Eastern and Central

Europe, and continued tight control over the Russian people. The experience of war

was indelible. Russians viewed almost everything in their lives through their “searing

experience of World War II,” as one psychologist has phrased it. The conﬂict had

destroyed 1700 towns, 70,000 villages and left 25 million homeless. Twenty million

died; 600,000 starved to death at the single siege of Leningrad . . . .

Some scholars have examined Stalin’s acts of 1928-1945, pronounced them

the work of a “paranoid,” and concluded that the United States had no chance to

avoid a cold war since it was dealing with a man who was mentally ill. That inter-

pretation neatly avoids confronting the complex causes of the Cold War but is

wholly insufficient to explain those causes. However Stalin acted inside Russia,

where he had total control, in his foreign policy during 1941-1946 he displayed a

realism, a careful calculation of forces, and a diplomatic ﬁnesse that undercut any

attempt to explain away his actions as paranoid. If he and other Soviets were suspicious of the West, they were realistic, not paranoid: the West had poured thousands

of troops into Russia between 1917 and 1920, refused to cooperate with the Soviets

during the 1930s. tried to turn Hitler against Stalin in 1938, reneged on promises

about the second front, and in 1945 tried to penetrate areas Stalin deemed crucial

to Soviet security.

American diplomats who frequently saw Stalin understood this background.

In January 1945 Harriman told the State Department, “The overriding consideration

in Soviet foreign policy is the preoccupation with ‘security,’ as Moscow sees it." The

problem was that Americans did not see “security” the same way. They believed

their security required an open world, including an open Eastern Europe. . . .

By mid-I945 Stalin’s policies were brutally consistent, while Truman's were con-

fused. The confusion became obvious when the United States, opposed to a sphere

of interest in Europe, strengthened its own sphere in the Western Hemisphere. A young assistant secretary of state for Latin American affairs, Nelson Rockefeller, and Senator Arthur Vandenberg (Republican from Michigan) devised the political means to keep the Americas solidly within Washington’s sphere. They called for collective self-defense through special regional organizations to be created outside the United Nations but within the principles of the charter. In this way, regional organizations would escape Russian vetoes in the Security Council. The United States could control its own sphere without Soviet interference. . . .The obvious confusion in that approach was pinpointed by Secretary of War Stimson when he condemned Americans who were “anxious to hang on to exaggerated views of the Monroe Doctrine [in the Western Hemisphere] and at the same time butt into every question that comes up in Central Europe.” Almost alone, Stimson argued for an alternative policy. Through bilateral U.S.-U.S.S.R. negotiations (and not negotiations within the United Nations, where the Russians would be defensive and disagreeable because the Americans controlled a majority), Stimson hoped each side could agree that the other should have its own security spheres. But as he had lost the argument over Poland, so Stimson lost this argument. Truman was not prepared to bargain. Even in Rumania, where the Russians were particularly sensitive. the State Department secretly determined in August 1945, “lt is our intention to

attain a position of equality with the Russians." When, however, the Americans

pressed, the Soviets only tightened their control of Rumania. . . .

At Potsdam, en route home, Truman received the news that a weapon of unimaginable power, the atomic bomb, had obliterated Hiroshima, Japan, on August 6. Eighty thousand had died. This was some 20,000 fewer than had been killed by a massive American ﬁre bombing of Tokyo earlier in the year. but it was the newly opened secret of nature embodied in a single bomb that was overwhelming. Roosevelt had initiated the atomic project in l94l. He had decided at least by I944 not to share information about the bomb with the Soviets, even though he knew Stalin had learned about the project. By the summer of I945 this approach, and the growing Soviet-American confrontation in Eastern Europe, led Truman and Byrnes to discuss securing “further quid pro quos” in Rumania, Poland, and Asia from Stalin before the Russians could share the secret of atomic energy.

Stimson, about to retire from the War Department, made one ﬁnal attempt

to stop an East-West confrontation. ln a September 11 memorandum to Truman,

Stimson prophesied “that it would not be possible to use our possession of the

atomic bomb as a direct lever to produce the change" desired inside Eastern Europe.

If Soviet-American negotiations continue with “this weapon rather ostentatiously on

our hip, their suspicions and their distrust of our purposes and motives will increase.”

He again urged direct, bilateral talks with Stalin to formulate control of the bomb and

to write a general peace settlement. Truman again tumed Stimson’s advice aside. A month later the President delivered a speech larded with references to America's monopoly of atomic power, then attacked Russia's grip on Eastern Europe. With every utterance and every act. the wartime alliance further disintegrated. . . .

During early l946 Stalin and Churchill issued their declarations of Cold War. In an

election speech of February 9, the Soviet dictator announced that Marxist-Leninist

dogma remained valid, for “the unevenness of development of the capitalist countries” could lead to “violent disturbance” and the consequent splitting of the “capitalist world into two hostile camps and war between them.” War was inevitable as long

as capitalism existed. The Soviet people must prepare themselves for a replay of the

l930s by developing basic industry instead of consumer goods and, in all, making

enormous sacriﬁces demanded in “three more Five-Year Plans, l should think, if not

more." There would be no peace, internally or externally. These words profoundly

affected Washington. Supreme Court Justice William Douglas, one of the reigning

American liberals, believed that Stalin's speech meant “The Declaration of World

War Ill.” The New York Times front-page story of the speech began by declaring

that Stalin believed “the stage is set” for war.

Winston Churchill delivered his views at Fulton, Missouri, on March 5. The

former prime minister exalted American power with the plea that his listeners

recognize that “God has willed” the United States, not “some Communist or neo-

Fascist state" to have atomic bombs. To utilize the “breathing space" provided by

these weapons, Churchill asked for “a fraternal association of the English-speaking

peoples“ operating under the principles of the United Nations, but not inside that

organization. to reorder the world. This unilateral policy must be undertaken because

“from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended

across the Continent" allowing “police government” to rule Eastern Europe

The “iron curtain” phrase made the speech famous. The Soviets perceived this as a direct challenge to their power in Eastern Europe. Within a week Stalin attacked Churchill and his “friends” in America, whom he claimed resembled Hitler by holding a “racial theory" that those who spoke the English language “should rule over the remaining nations of the world.” This, Stalin warned, is “a set-up for war, a call to war with the Soviet Union."

Within a short period after the Churchill speech, Stalin launched a series of

policies which, in retrospect, marks the spring and summer of 1946 as a milestone

in the Cold War. During these weeks the Soviets, after having worked for a loan

during the previous ﬁfteen months, ﬁnally concluded that Washington had no interest

in loaning them $1 billion, or any other amount. They refused to become a member

of the World Bank and the Intemational Monetary Fund. These rejections ended the

American hope to use the lure of the dollar to make the Soviets retreat in Eastern

Europe and join the capitalist-controlled bank and IMF.

Truman’s difﬁculties came into the open during the autumn of 1946, when

he was attacked by liberals for being too militaristic and by conservatives for his

economic policies. The liberal attack was led by Henry Agard Wallace, a great secretary of agriculture during the early New Deal, Vice President from 1941-I945, maneuvered out of the vice-presidential nomination in 1944 so that Harry Truman could be FDR's running mate, and ﬁnally secretary of commerce in 1945. At a political rally in New York on September l2, 1946, Wallace delivered a speech, cleared personally, and too rapidly, by Truman. The address focused on the necessity of a political understanding with Russia. This, Wallace declared, would require guaranteeing Soviet security in Eastern Europe. . . . At that moment Bymes and Vandenberg were in Paris, painfully and unsuccessfully trying to negotiate peace treaties with Molotov. They immediately demanded Wallace’s resignation. On September 20. Truman complied, and Wallace was fired.

On March 12, 1947, President Truman ﬁnally issued his own declaration of Cold

War. Dramatically presenting the Truman Doctrine to Congress, he asked Americans

to join in a global commitment against communism. The Truman Doctrine was a milestone in American history for at least four reasons. First, it marked the point at which Truman used the American fear of communism both at home and abroad to convince Americans they must embark upon a Cold War foreign policy. This consensus would not break apart for a quarter of a century. Second . . . , Congress was giving the President great powers to wage this Cold War as he saw ﬁt. Truman's personal popularity began spiraling upward after his speech. Third, for the ﬁrst time in the postwar era, Americans massively intervened in another nation’s civil war. Intervention was justiﬁed on the basis of anticommunism. In the future, Americans would intervene in similar wars for supposedly the same reason and with less happy results. . . . Finally, and perhaps most important, Truman used the doctrine to justify a gigantic aid program to prevent a collapse of the European and American economies. Later such programs were expanded globally. The President’s arguments about the need to ﬁght communism now became confusing, for the Western economies would have been in grave difﬁculties whether or not communism existed. The complicated problems of reconstruction and U.S. dependence on world trade were not well understood by Americans, but they easily comprehended anticommunism. So Americans embarked upon the Cold War for the reasons given in the Truman Doctrine, which they understood, and for real reasons, which they did not understand. . . .

The President’s program evolved naturally into the Marshall Plan. Although the

speech did not limit American effort, Secretary of State Marshall did by concentrating the administration‘s attention on Europe. Returning badly shaken from a Foreign Ministers conference in Moscow, the secretary of state insisted in a nationwide

broadcast that Western Europe required immediate help. “The patient is sinking,"

he declared, “while the doctors deliberate.” Personal conversations with Stalin had

convinced Marshall that the Russians believed Europe would collapse. Assuming

that the United States must lead in restoring Europe, Marshall appointed a policy-

planning staff under the direction of George Kennan to draw up guidelines. Building on this premise, round-the-clock conferences in May I947 began to fashion the main features of the Marshall Plan. The all-important question became how to handle the Russians. Ostensibly, Marshall accepted Kennan’s advice to “play

it straight” by inviting the Soviet bloc. In reality the State Department made Russian

participation improbable by demanding that economic records of each nation be

open for scrutiny. For good measure Kennan also suggested that the Soviets’ devastated economy, weakened by the war and at that moment suffering from drought and

famine, participate in the plan by shipping Soviet goods to Europe. Apparently no

one in the State Department wanted the Soviets included. Russian participation

would vastly multiply the costs of the program and eliminate any hope of its acceptance by a purse-watching Republican Congress, now increasingly convinced by

Truman that communists had to be fought, not fed. . . .

The European request for a four-year program of $17 billion of American aid

now had to run the gauntlet of a Republican Congress, which was dividing its attention between slashing the budget and attacking Truman, both in anticipation of the

presidential election only a year away. In committee hearings in late 1947 and early

I948, the executive presented its case. Only large amounts of government money

which could restore basic facilities, provide convertibility of local currency into

dollars, and end the dollar shortage would stimulate private investors to rebuild

Europe. administration witnesses argued. . . .

And then came the fall of Czechoslovakia. The Czechs had uneasily coexisted with

Russia by trying not to offend the Soviets while keeping doors open to the West.

By late I947 the lure of Western aid and intemal political changes began to pull the Czech govemment away from the Soviets. At this point a Soviet mission of top ofﬁcials flew to Prague to demand the Czec’s government surrender. The communists assumed full control on February 25. Two weeks later Masaryk either committed suicide, or, as Truman believed, was the victim of “foul play." Truman correctly observed that the coup “sent a shock throughout the civilized

world.“ He privately believed “We are faced with exactly the same situation with

which Britain and France were faced in 1938-9 with HitIer.” . . . Two days before.

on March I4, the Senate had endorsed the Marshall Plan by a vote of 69 to I7. As it

went to the House for consideration, Truman, fearing the “grave events in Europe

[which] were moving so swiftly," decided to appear before Congress.

In a speech remarkable for its repeated emphasis on the “increasing threat" to the very survivl of freedom,” Truman proclaimed the Marshall Plan “not enough.” Europe must have “some measure of protection against intemal and external aggression." He asked for Universal Training, the resumption of the military draft, and speedy passage of the Marshall Plan. Within twelve days the House approved authorization of the plan's money. . . .

Then on September 22 President Truman announced that Russia had exploded an atomic bomb. Within six days the NATO appropriations raced through the House and went to the President for approval. Although publicly playing down the signiﬁcance of the Russian bomb, the administration painfully realized that, in Vandenberg’s words, “This is now a different world." Few American ofﬁcials had expected the Soviet test this early. Because it was simultaneous with the fall of China, the American diplomatic attitude further stiffened. A grim President, pressed by domestic critics and the new Soviet bomb, demanded a wide-ranging reevaluation of American Cold War policies. In early I950 the National Security Council began work on a highly secret document --NSC-68.

NSC-68 proved to be the American blueprint for waging the Cold War. lt began

with two assumptions that governed the rest of the document. First, the global balance of power had been “fundamentally altered" since the nineteenth century so that the Americans and Russians now dominated the world: “What is new, what makes the continuing crisis, is the polarization of power which inescapably con- fronts the slave society with the free.” It was us against them. Second, “the Soviet Union, unlike previous aspirants to hegemony, is animated by a new fanatic faith,

antithetical to our own, and seeks to impose its absolute authority," initially in “the

Soviet Union and second in the area now under [its] control.” Then the crucial sentence: “In the minds of the Soviet leaders, however, achievement of this design requires the dynamic extension of their authority and the ultimate elimination of any effective opposition to their authority. . . . To that end Soviet efforts are now directed toward the domination of the Eurasian land mass.” NSC-68 then recommended (l) against negotiations with Russia since conditions were not yet sufﬁcient to force the Kremlin to “change its policies drastically”; (2) development of hydrogen bombs to offset possible Soviet possession of an effective atomic arsenal by 1954; (3) rapid building of conventional military forces to preserve American interests without having to wage atomic war; (4) a large increase in taxes to pay for this new, highly expensive military establishment; (5) mobilization of American society, including a government-created “consensus” on the necessity of “sacrifice” and “unity” by Americans; (6) a strong alliance system directed by the United States; (7) and—as the topper—undermining the “Soviets” from within by making “the Russian people our allies in this enterprise.” How this was to be done was necessarily vague. But no matter. Truman and Acheson were no longer satisﬁed with containment. They wanted Soviet withdrawal and an absolute victory

Rethinking Cold War History

John Lewis Gaddis

[Joseph] Stalin appears to have relished his role, along with [Franklin D.]

Roosevelt and [Winston] Churchill, as one of the wartime Big Three. And during the war, the US had good relations with the Russians. Even if Stalin's long-range thinking about security did clash with that of his Anglo-American allies, common military purposes provided the strongest possible inducements to smooth over such differences. It is worth asking why this practice of wartime cooperation did not become a habit that would extend into the postwar era.

The principal reason, it now appears, was Stalin's insistence on equating security with territory. Even in 1941, he told Western allies that he wanted territory in Eastern Europe. After strong initial objections,

Roosevelt and Churchill did eventually acknowledge the Soviet Union's

right to the expanded borders it claimed; they also made it clear that they

would not oppose the installation of "friendly" governments in adjoining

states. This meant accepting a Soviet sphere of inﬂuence from the Baltic to

the Adriatic, a concession not easily reconciled with the Atlantic Charter.

But the authors of that document saw no feasible way to avoid that out-

come: military necessity required continued Soviet cooperation against the

Germans. Nor were they themselves prepared to relinquish spheres of inﬂuence in Western Europe and the Mediterranean, the Middle East, Latin

America, and East Asia. So, out of necessity, they agreed. But they also wanted free elections in Poland, Hungary, and Rumania. For his part, Stalin did not understand the importance of this request. ”lt is all nonsense!” Stalin complained to [Soviet Foreign Minister V. M.] Molotov. "[Roosevelt] is their military leader and commander in chief. Who would dare object to him?" When at Yalta F.D.R. stressed the need for the ﬁrst Polish election to be as pure as ”Caesar's wife,” Stalin responded with a joke: "They said that about her, but in fact she had her sins." Molotov warned his boss, on that occasion, that the Americans’ insistence on free elections elsewhere in Eastem Europe was ”going too far." "Don't worry, " he recalls Stalin as replying, "work it out. We can deal with it in our own way later.

The Soviet leader was, in one sense, right. Military strength would

determine what happened in that part of the world, not the enunciation of

lofty principles. But unilateral methods carried long-term costs Stalin did

not foresee: the most signiﬁcant of these was to ruin whatever prospects

existed for a Soviet sphere of inﬂuence the East Europeans themselves

might have accepted. This possibility was not as far-fetched as it would

later seem. . . . [Stalin] would, after all, approve such a compromise as the

basis for a permanent settlement with Finland. He would initially allow

free elections in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and the Soviet occupation zone

in Germany. He may even have anticipated an enthusiastic response as he took over Eastern Europe. "He was, I think, surprised and hurt," [W. Averell] Harriman [one of Roosevelt's closest advisors] recalled, ”when the Red Army was not welcomed in all the neighboring countries as an army of

liberation.”

. . . It has long been clear that, in addition to having had an authoritarian

vision, Stalin also had an imperial one, which he proceeded to implement

in a single-minded way. He demanded all of Eastern Europe as well as much of Asia where he insisted on bringing the Soviet Union back to the position Russia had occupied in Manchuria prior to the Russo-Japanese War: this he ﬁnally achieved at the 1945 Yalta Conference in return for promising to enter the war against Japan. ”My task as minister of foreign affairs was to expand the borders of our Fatherland," Molotov recalled proudly many years later. "And it seems that Stalin and l coped with this task quite well." . . .

From the West's standpoint, the critical question was how far Moscow's

inﬂuence would extend beyond whatever Soviet frontiers turned out to be

at the end of the war. Stalin had suggested to Milovan Djilas that the

Soviet Union would impose its own social system as far as its armies could reach, but he was also very cautious. Keenly aware of the military power

the United States and its allies had accumulated, Stalin was determined to

do nothing that might involve the USSR in another devastating war until

it had recovered sufficiently to be certain of winning it. "I do not wish

to begin the Third World War over the Trieste question," he explained to

disappointed Yugoslavs, whom he ordered to evacuate that territory in

June 1945. Five years later, he would justify his decision not to intervene

in the Korean War on the grounds that "the Second World War ended not

long ago, and we are not ready for the Third World War." Just how far the

expansion of Soviet inﬂuence would proceed depended, therefore, upon a

careful balancing of opportunities against risks. . . .

Who or what was it, though, that set the limits? Did Stalin have a ﬁxed

list of countries he thought it necessary to dominate? Was he prepared to

stop in the face of resistance within those countries to “squeezing out the

capitalist order"? Or would expansion cease only when confronted with op-

position from the remaining capitalist states, so that further advances risked

war at a time when the Soviet Union was ill-prepared for it?

Stalin had been very precise about where he wanted Soviet boundaries changed; he was much less so on how far Moscow's sphere of inﬂuence was to extend. He insisted on having "friendly" countries around the

periphery of the USSR, but he failed to specify how many would have to

meet this standard. He never gave up on the idea of an eventual world revolution, but he expected this to result from an expansion of inﬂuence emanating from the Soviet Union itself.

But Stalin provided no indication—-surely because he himself did not

know—of how rapidly, or under what circumstances, this process would

take place. He was certainly prepared to stop in the face of resistance from

the West: at no point was he willing to challenge the Americans or even

the British where they made their interests clear. . . . He quickly backed

down when confronted with Anglo-American objections to his ambitions

in Iran in the spring of 1946, as he did later that year after demanding

Soviet bases in the Turkish Straits. This pattern of advance followed by

retreat had shown up in the purges of the 1930s, which Stalin halted when

the external threat from Germany became too great to ignore, and it would

reappear with the Berlin Blockade and the Korean War, both situations

in which the Soviet Union would show great caution after provoking an

unexpectedly strong American response.

What all of this suggests, though, is not that Stalin had limited ambitions,

only that he had no timetable for achieving them. Molotov retrospectively

conﬁrmed this: “Our ideology stands for offensive operations when possible,

and if not, we wait.” Given this combination of appetite with aversion to

risk, one cannot help but wonder what would have happened had the West

tried containment earlier. To the extent that it bears partial responsibility for

the coming of the Cold War, the historian Vojtech Mastny has argued, that

responsibility lies in its failure to do just that. . . .

The fact that Stalin was able to expand

his empire when others were contracting and while the Soviet Union was

as weak as it was requires explanation. Why did opposition to this process,

within and outside Europe, take so long to develop? One reason was that the colossal sacriﬁces the Soviet Union had made

during the war against the Axis had, in effect, "puriﬁed" its reputation: the

USSR and its leader had "earned" the right to throw their weight around,

or so it seemed. Western governments found it difﬁcult to switch quickly

from viewing the Soviet Union as a glorious wartime ally to portraying

it as a new and dangerous adversary. President Harry S. Truman and his

future Secretary of State Dean Acheson-—neither of them sympathetic in

the slightest to communism—nontheless tended to give the Soviet Union

the beneﬁt of the doubt well into the early postwar era. . . .

Resistance to Stalin's imperialism also developed slowly because

Marxism-Leninism at the time had such widespread appeal. lt is difﬁcult

now to recapture the admiration revolutionaries outside the Soviet Union

felt for that country before they came to know it well. . . . Because the

Bolsheviks themselves had overcome one empire and had made a career

of condemning others, it would take decades for people who were struggling to overthrow British, French, Dutch, or Portuguese colonialism to

see that there could also be such a thing as Soviet imperialism. European

communists—notably the Yugoslavs—saw this much earlier, but even to

most of them it had not been apparent at the end of the war. Still another explanation for the initial lack of resistance to Soviet

expansionism was the fact that its repressive character did not become

immediately apparent to all who were subjected to it. . . .

What is there new to say about the old question of responsibility for the

Cold War? Who actually started it? Could it have been averted? Here

l think the "new" history is bringing us back to an old answer: that as long

as Stalin was running the Soviet Union a cold war was unavoidable.

One could have removed Roosevelt, Churchill, Truman, Bevin, Marshall, or Acheson, and a cold war would still have probably followed the world war. If one could have eliminated Stalin, alternative paths become quite conceivable. For with the possible exception of Mao, no twentieth-century leader imprinted himself upon his country as thoroughly and with such lasting effect as Stalin did. And given his personal propensity for cold wars—a tendency ﬁrmly rooted long before he had even heard of Harry Truman—once Stalin wound up at the top in Moscow and once it was clear his state would survive the war, then it looks equally clear that there was going to be a Cold War whatever the west did. Who then was responsible? The answer, I think, is authoritarianism in general, and Stalin in particular.