
Cold War Origins, II

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Cold War Origins, II

Brian Thomas

The Cold War, partly because it remained cold, has already lasted longer than the wars of 1914–18 and 1939–45 combined. About every sixth year it seemed to reach crisis point – over Korea in 1950, over Hungary in 1956, over Cuba in 1962 – but the main points at issue remained unresolved. Perhaps for this reason the question of who began it has until recently been one for politicians rather than for historians.

The politicians of 1918 and 1945 were too immersed in the consequences of their acts to have much time for disputing the causes. This is certainly not true of the Cold War. The argument about its origins began among those who were waging it almost as soon as it had started, and has only recently ceased; the academics, with few exceptions, tended to keep out.¹ Over the years 1945 to 1955, the main arguments on each side are to be found only in Hansard, in Foreign Office and State Department pamphlets, and in reports of speeches and interviews given by Soviet leaders. Debate was rare; it was quite an event for the historical arguments of one side to be answered directly by the other.² Both appeared to start from premises which the other refused to accept, while those in any position to exercise a dissenting role – like Henry Wallace in the United States or Dr Benes in Czechoslovakia – tended to be squeezed out of active politics as the Cold War got under way.

When, therefore, in the middle 1950s, the question of the origins of the Cold War became one for serious academic discussion, historians found that much of the spadework had already been done, and were able to draw heavily on the research undertaken by those politicians who felt obliged to defend their views.

¹ For a summary of these early arguments see N.A. Graebner, *Cold War Diplomacy 1945–1960* (Princeton, 1962), 11–48.

² Examples are the Russell-Khrushchev-Dulles correspondence in the *New Statesman*, 23 November, 21 December 1957, 8 February, 15 March, 5 April 1958; the British Note to the USSR of 17 February 1951 and the Soviet reply of 24 February 1951.

In this respect historians who felt attracted to the 'orthodox' or 'western' view were in a much stronger position than the 'revisionists'; politicians in the communist states, having little need to defend their position at home, took far less trouble either to document their own arguments or to reply to the more telling points of their opponents. 'Revisionist' scholars, on the other hand, who challenged the 'official' or 'western' viewpoint, had substantially to make their own case.

The difference between the two schools can be sharply defined. The orthodox held that the deterioration in East-West relations which took place between 1944 and 1947 was due to a number of Soviet acts which were impossible to justify, such as the refusal to permit free elections in eastern Europe, the failure to disarm, and the continual use of the Soviet veto in the United Nations. From about 1947 these charges were widened to include the promotion of communism – identified with Soviet expansion – in France, Italy, Greece, Hungary, Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Korea.³ The events cited in support of this second indictment included Russia's refusal of Marshall Aid, the foundation of the Cominform, the Berlin blockade, civil wars in Greece and Korea, and coups in Hungary and Czechoslovakia. For a few years after 1950 this school was dominated by those who held that these acts were dictated not by Soviet national needs but by communist doctrine and therefore should have been anticipated.

The revisionist school, on the other hand, maintained not that this recital of Soviet deeds was inaccurate – although this was the view of communist writers⁴ – but that such acts were in reply to earlier western moves, and equally should have been anticipated. This school included both those who denied that communist doctrine played any significant part in Soviet foreign policy, and those who contended that that doctrine itself was the product of external causes, such as western intervention in Russia in 1918. In sum, to the orthodox school the Cold War was the result of Russia's

³ Compare, for example, Ernest Bevin's speeches in the House of Commons on 20 August 1945 and 22 January 1948. In the first, the objection is only to 'unrepresentative governments'; in the second 'the issue is not simply the organization of Poland or any other country, but the control of Eastern Europe by Soviet Russia, whose frontiers have . . . advanced to Stettin, Trieste and the Elbe'.

⁴ See A. Rothstein, *Peaceful Coexistence* (London, 1955), 71–146; D.N. Pritt, *Russia is for Peace* (London, 1951), 31–97; and W.P. and Z.K. Coates, *History of Anglo-Soviet Relations*, II (London, 1958), *passim*.

foreign policy after 1944; to the revisionists it was the cause of it.

The earliest indications of support for what later became the revisionist case came from some very dissimilar sources. The first, in which we can detect the hand of Professor E. H. Carr, appeared in *The Times* (he was then assistant editor) as long ago as 6 November 1944. Apart from its value from the revisionist viewpoint in defending the Russian presence in east Europe in advance of knowledge of the Churchill-Stalin agreement on spheres of influence, it went out of its way to link this presence with a previous 'western' act, namely, the German invasion of 1941:

Russia, like Great Britain, has no aggressive or expansive designs in Europe. What she wants on her Western frontier is security. What she asks from her Western neighbours is a guarantee, the extent and form of which will be determined mainly by the experience of the past twenty-five years, that her security shall not be exposed to any threat from or across their territories. Admittedly she is unlikely to regard with favour intervention by other Great Powers in these countries.

But Great Britain has traditionally resisted such intervention in the Low Countries or in the vicinity of the Suez Canal, and the United States in Central America – regions which these two powers have properly adjudged vital to their security. It would be incongruous to ask Russia to renounce a similar right of reassurance; *and it would be foolish, as well as somewhat hypocritical, to construe insistence on this right as the symptom of an aggressive policy.* Essentially British and Russian interests in this respect not only do not clash, but are precisely the same. (Italics mine, B. T.)

This line of argument was endorsed over the next few months by many who, in later years, were to express very different views. Perhaps most surprising of all were two speeches made within a fortnight of each other by Dean Acheson and James Byrnes in the autumn of 1945.⁵ Mr Acheson was forthright enough: 'We understand and agree with them [the Russians] that to have friendly governments along their borders is essential for the security of the Soviet Union'.

⁵ For Acheson's speech (14 November 1945) see National Council for American-Soviet Friendship pamphlet, *USA-USSR, Allies for Peace* (New York, 1945). For that of James Byrnes (31 October 1945) see *The New York Herald Tribune*, 1 November 1945.

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James Byrnes, still at that time Truman's Secretary of State, was much more explicit:

We surely cannot and will not deny to other nations the right to develop such a policy as the Monroe Doctrine. Far from opposing, we have sympathized with, for example, the effort of the Soviet Union to draw into closer and more friendly association with her Central and East European neighbours. We are fully aware of her special security interests in these countries and we have recognized these interests in the arrangements we have made for the occupation and control of the former enemy states. We can appreciate the determination of the people of the Soviet Union that never again will they tolerate the pursuit of policies in these countries deliberately directed against the Soviet Union's security and way of life.

Perhaps the most striking thing about that last sentence was not just that it failed even to mention the free elections which the United States was supposed to be insisting on. It is that Mr Byrnes refused to recognize even the possibility that eastern Europe might have views of its own on Soviet policies. And if the last four words were taken literally, it would mean that the United States was prepared to approve only communist dominated governments. Less surprising in retrospect, but hardly less significant, was the contemporary expression of precisely similar sentiments in Britain by Mr Eden, Mr Macmillan, and Mr Bevin.⁶

Finally there was the initial reaction to Soviet wartime policies by the American Defence Department, which again deserves mention in the light of later controversies. In an Armed Forces Information Bulletin published just after the Potsdam Conference the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states and parts of Finland, Rumania, and Poland was explicitly noted and equally explicitly justified on the grounds of Russia's national security.⁷

Very few of these early straws in the wind seem to have found their way into any of the revisionist works which have so far appeared, with the result that one rather obvious point has tended to go unremarked. An interval of only twelve months separated the latest of these favourable comments from the very different sentiments of the Truman Doctrine of 12 March 1947, or only

⁶ For Eden see *Hansard*, 22 November 1945 and 21 February 1946. For Macmillan and Bevin see *Hansard* 20/21 February 1946. For Bevin's view that the U S S R should have warm water ports as well, see *Report of the Labour Party Conference*, May 1945.

⁷ U.S. Armed Forces Institute *Information Bulletin*, 19 August 1945.

twelve days if one is thinking of Churchill's speech at Fulton, Missouri, on 5 March 1946; and during that time Soviet policies and the Soviet position in Europe both remained unchanged.

But perhaps the most convincing statement of the revisionist case in embryo was the long 'open letter' to Truman written by Henry Wallace on 23 July 1946.⁸ In it he attributed the deterioration in East-West relations to two causes: America's monopoly of the atom bomb, and the acquisition by the Defence Department of air bases close to the Soviet Union. These found a central place in the first of the four major revisionist works which have so far been published: P. M. S. Blackett's *Military and Political Consequences of Atomic Energy* (1948). Despite the wording of its British title (the American edition carries the title *Fear, War, and the Bomb*), and the reputation of its author as a physicist and defence expert, it is in fact a historical work of considerable political significance. Written well before the flood of later documents and diplomatic papers – some of which vindicate its conclusions to an uncanny extent – it is still the most cogently argued of the revisionist works.

Blackett's contentions were fourfold. He held, first, that since the casualty figures showed that the bulk of the fighting in the war was done by the Red Army on the eastern front, Russia's sensitivity about her western land frontiers must be understood. Second, that as Japan was already thinking in terms of surrender by July 1945, and the Americans had no plans to invade before November, the haste to drop the first atom bomb (on 6 August) becomes comprehensible only in the light of Stalin's undertaking to bring the USSR into the war on 8 August – with, presumably, the intention of making the same gains in eastern Asia as he had in eastern Europe. Therefore Japan had to be induced to surrender to the Americans alone, and so 'we conclude that the dropping of the atomic bombs was not so much the last military act of the second world war, as the first act of the cold diplomatic war with Russia now in progress' (p. 127). Third, that the American (Baruch) Plan for controlling atomic weapons could never have been accepted by Russia without gravely weakening both her military and her economic position. And fourth, that the obvious Soviet answer both to America's atom bomb monopoly and to the doctrine of 'instant and condign

⁸ *The New Statesman*, 28 September 1946.

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punishment' contained in the Baruch Plan must be to advance her effective frontiers as far from Russia as possible.⁹

Implicit here are two arguments fundamental to the revisionist case. In the first place, if Russia's position in Europe in 1945 could be understood in the light of her experience of invasion from the west, her consolidation of that position after 1945 should equally be understood in the light of Hiroshima, of America's new and apparently permanent air bases, and of the Baruch Plan. And in the second place, the West's decision after Roosevelt's death not to recognize the validity of the Soviet position was the result not of any new Russian acts (during the crucial period April 1945 – January 1946) but of some new Western thoughts. In other words, what had changed was not Soviet policy but the western view of it, due possibly to the pressure of those inside the Truman administration, the State Department, the Foreign Office and elsewhere, who objected either to the Soviet Union on principle, or to Churchill's and Roosevelt's wartime attempts to conciliate her.

The advantage of contentions like these from the revisionist standpoint is that if they can be proved, Soviet behaviour at any time after 1946 becomes irrelevant – at any rate as a cause of the Cold War. Further, provided western hostility can be shown to be strong enough, such behaviour may even be attributed to it, at least in part. Thus the expulsion of non-communists from east European governments after 1946, the coups in Hungary and in Czechoslovakia, the rejection of Marshall Aid and so forth – all these were developments in a Cold War which had already been launched, and if they did not all come after the Truman Doctrine they certainly followed Hiroshima, the acquisition of bases, and the Baruch Plan.

Blackett, then, had by 1949 provided the revisionists with what is probably the strongest part of their case. What he failed to supply was motive. For if it was the West that decided not to cooperate with Russia instead of the other way round, the reasons for this decision are not immediately clear. Fear of communism might perhaps be one answer, but, as Deutscher has shown in his biography of Stalin, the Russian leader emerged in 1945 as one of the most conservative statesmen in the world, with a record of

⁹ Blackett developed some of these points in his later book *Atomic Weapons and East-West Relations* (Cambridge, 1956).

non-cooperation with Tito in Yugoslavia and Mao in China worthy of any of his opponents. The notion of Stalin *at that time* as a promoter of communism outside Russia simply falls down for lack of evidence. Even in eastern Europe his approval of the regimes in Poland, Hungary, Rumania, and Bulgaria depended on whether they were pro-Soviet, not on whether they were communist. In time the two became the same, but they were not the same in 1945. Another answer might be fear and dislike of the police state, but these existed outside the communist camp, and their number was destined to increase. As for a third possibility – fear of a Soviet attack on western Europe – it is fair to say that no one in the Truman administration or in the Attlee government took this seriously in the year 1945. So the question remains: why did the West some time in either 1945 or 1946 decide to refuse Russia a free hand in eastern Europe?

One group of revisionist writers has tried to answer this question by backdating the Cold War to 1918, the year of western intervention against the early Bolshevik regime. The intention was to link Russia's anxiety over her western land frontiers with concern for her position after 1917 as the sole communist power. Clearly this position was threatened not only by Hitler in 1941 but by the war of intervention itself, when miscellaneous detachments from a dozen states attempted, in Churchill's phrase, 'to strangle the Bolshevik baby in its cradle'. As a result, it is argued, Hitler's invasion was seen by Russia not as a repetition of the events of 1812 or of 1914 but as a renewal of western intervention, with the Hitler of the Anti-Comintern Pact as the leading anti-Bolshevik. So on this analysis Russia's strategic interest in eastern Europe after the war would depend on her assessment of the chances of another attempt at intervention, which in 1945 would be clearly influenced by America's possession of bases and the atom bomb, as well as by the chances of achieving the complete disarmament of Germany. The essence of this argument, therefore, is that the Cold War really began in 1918, to be resumed in earnest in 1945 after a brief and uneasy interval of forced alliance.

This view underlies two large revisionist works which were begun at the time Blackett's book was published: K. Zilliacus's *I Choose Peace* (1949), and D.F. Fleming's *The Cold War and Its Origins 1917–1960* (1961). Both were written by historians of the

League of Nations, one of whom was secretary to Arthur Henderson and later a Labour M.P., and the other Professor of International Relations at Vanderbilt University, Tennessee; both were written by 'committed' historians concerned less with interpreting the world than with changing it; and both were written from the same radical-liberal point of view. Of the two, Professor Fleming's will probably be regarded as the most comprehensive of the revisionist works to appear so far, for *I Choose Peace*, described as the fattest Penguin ever to waddle on to the bookstalls, had no hard cover edition (and no index). But they supplement each other in a very curious way. While, like Blackett, both attribute Russia's consolidation of her position in eastern Europe to American hostility at the time of Hiroshima or even earlier, Zilliacus awards a special role to Churchill, Bevin, and the Foreign Office, while Fleming concentrates his fire on Truman and the State Department.

Each supplies a different motive for this apparent hostility. For Zilliacus it is the threat to the structure of capitalist power. This would not be news to any readers of the pre-war writings of 'Vigilantes', which were published while the author was a member of the Secretariat of the League of Nations. For *I Choose Peace* was conceived as a sequel to the author's *Mirror of the Past* (1944) which had long been the standard synthesis of the left-wing view that the first World War was not the exploding rivalry of two groups of powers but the inevitable result of international anarchy, of imperialism, the armaments race and the capitalist economic system. From this viewpoint both the League of Nations and the Russian Revolution presented a common threat to the system and a common solution to the problem; and to Zilliacus the success of the one depended on the survival of the other.

To those who adopted this position an explanation of Munich and appeasement lay ready to hand. The League was destroyed by the simple expedient of encouraging the aggressor to go east instead of west, and so the conservative forces attempted to dispose of two enemies at the same time – the Soviet Union which they detested and the League in which they had no faith. To this Stalin could have but one answer, which he presented in two instalments: first – after Munich but before Hitler's attack – the stopgap of the German-Soviet pact; and second – after the attack had been beaten off – determination to preserve the 1941 frontiers. Any

western opposition to this would naturally revive the Cold War, and since its origins lay in the same mixture of international anarchy and private capitalism which had caused both world wars, the change of government in Britain in 1940 and again in 1945 made not the slightest difference. For the new Prime Minister of 1940 was the interventionist-in-chief of 1918. Not surprisingly therefore – and here Zilliacus anticipates Chester Wilmot – Churchill's overall strategy from about 1942 and his activities in Greece and Italy from about 1943 were based as much on anti-Soviet as on anti-German considerations.

Nor did the fact that Churchill after 1945 was no longer Prime Minister alter the situation; for in Zilliacus's view the Fulton speech of March 1946 spelt out the foreign policy of both the Attlee government and the Truman administration. As for the new Labour Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, he was simply 'Lord Palmerston in a Keir Hardie cap', the foremost defender of Churchill's policy in Greece in 1944, and a bitter anti-communist who found it hard to 'distinguish between the Soviet Union and a breakaway from the Transport and General Workers Union' (p. 113). On this analysis the personalities and power of both Churchill and Bevin were contributory causes of the resumption of the Cold War after 1945. Both did much to make agreement with the Russians impossible, and, equally serious, they helped to speed up 'the disastrous triumph of the "be tough with Russia" school in the United States' (p. 131).¹⁰

It is here that Professor Fleming complements Zilliacus. Both presuppose a basic pre-war hostility towards Russia which stems from the failure of the war of intervention. But while the accession of Churchill or Bevin makes no difference to the Zilliacus thesis, Truman's sudden accession to the presidency so soon after Yalta matters a great deal to Professor Fleming. His book is the standard rebuttal of the thesis of W.H. Chamberlin, Chester Wilmot and others, that Roosevelt gave too much away at Yalta.¹¹ It was Hitler's aggression, not Roosevelt's weakness, which made Stalin insist on a sphere of influence west of his 1939 frontiers. This is a point, incidentally, which has now been confirmed by Eden, who

¹⁰ *I Choose Peace*; Zilliacus developed these views in his forthcoming *Challenge to Fear*, completed just before his death in July 1967.

¹¹ W.H. Chamberlin, *America's Second Crusade* (New York, 1950); Chester Wilmot, *The Struggle for Europe* (London, 1952).

writes that Stalin asked for recognition of his June 1941 frontiers as early as the following December; and a good idea of the general touchiness of Anglo-Soviet relations at that time can be gleaned from Eden's recital. Not only was this recognition refused, but the very fact that Stalin made the request at all drew from Eden the surprising conclusion that 'with the best will in the world, it was impossible to work with these people'.¹² The revisionists would seem to have been provided here with some valuable ammunition.

Three years later, ironically enough, the Churchill-Stalin agreement gave Russia far more than this, and Fleming is at pains to point out that it was Churchill who made the offer and Stalin who accepted, so that any blame for the fact that Stalin in later years was able to 'play the hand' in Rumania, Bulgaria, and Hungary (the phrase is Churchill's) can hardly be laid upon Roosevelt. This point is of some importance, given the school of thought which holds that the Cold War really began with the changes imposed by the Russians on the Rumanian government in February 1945. In the light of the Churchill-Stalin agreement it is difficult to hold that Stalin's activities in Rumania in 1945 had much less justification than Churchill's in Greece in 1944.¹³ In giving prominence to the Churchill-Stalin agreement Fleming does not suggest that Zilliacus was wrong in portraying an anti-Soviet Churchill; he accepts Wilmot's view that Churchill's motive throughout was to keep the Russians out of Greece. Fleming's point is that at Yalta Roosevelt was faced with a *fait accompli*: the surrender had already been made. The difference between the two leaders was that Roosevelt was thinking in terms of cooperating with Stalin, Churchill in terms of holding him back.

So Roosevelt's death on 12 April 1945 is clearly of great importance for Fleming, who argues that his successor had no intention of approving either the original Churchill-Stalin agreement or any of its Yalta refinements; the Cold War which had its origins in 1918 begins in earnest on Truman's accession. It finds expression first in the famous 'dressing down' of Molotov which took place on 23 April 1945 and receives its formal codification in the

¹² Lord Avon, *The Reckoning* (London, 1965), 297.

¹³ For a full discussion of this agreement see Herz, *Beginnings of the Cold War* (Indiana, 1966), 112-52.

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Truman Doctrine of 12 March 1947, a doctrine which Fleming believes was first conceived during the Foreign Ministers Conference in September 1945.

With one exception, none of the more recent revisionist writers has added substantially to the joint Fleming-Zilliagus thesis. Kenneth Ingram's studiously moderate but essentially revisionist summary¹⁴ points to the abrupt termination of Lend-Lease in 1945 and to the winding-up of UNRRA in 1947 as contributory causes of the Cold War, and concludes that the western case against Russia really rests on three counts: the Czech coup, the Berlin blockade, and the Korean War – all of which took place after the Cold War had begun. J.P. Morray expands Blackett's thesis that the Baruch Plan for the control of atomic energy was unfair and unacceptable.¹⁵ He refutes at some length the notion that Stalin's election speech of 9 February 1946 was a kind of 'Fulton in reverse', and takes the trouble to append the speech in full. From the revisionist standpoint this is well worth doing, for it was after this speech that the first of George Kennan's influential analyses of Soviet intentions was sent to the State Department. It was, moreover, a speech which was widely misunderstood. While much less friendly in tone than the interview with Alexander Werth eight months later (*The Times*, 25 September 1946), its substance was by no means dissimilar.

The book by David Horowitz, although described by its publisher as 'the first full scale study of American foreign policy in the Cold War', adds nothing except motive to Fleming's view of the Cold War's origins, and is one of a number of left-wing books which clearly show the Nashville professor's influence.¹⁶ Ideologically, however, it stands closer to *I Choose Peace* in its view of America's Cold War policy as a clear and consistent whole. Whereas Fleming would describe such a policy 'as a long series of confused, if often determined and mistaken, reactions to the rise of communism and the Soviet Union',¹⁷ Horowitz, like Arnold

¹⁴ *History of the Cold War* (London, 1955).

¹⁵ *From Yalta to Disarmament: Cold War Debate* (New York, 1961).

¹⁶ *The Free World Colossus* (London, 1965). See also D.N. Pritt, *The Labour Government* (London, 1962) and W.N. Warbey, *Vietnam – The Truth* (London, 1965).

¹⁷ *The Listener*, 17 November 1966, in reply to the present writer's 'The Cold War and Henry Wallace,' *ibid.*, 15 September 1966.

Toynbee in his *America and the World Revolution*, sees the United States as the centre of counter-revolution all over the world, fighting social change everywhere on the basis of the Zilliacus equation: social change equals communism; communism equals Soviet aggression. But Horowitz does not follow Zilliacus uncritically; for him the Cold War begins with the 'sudden shift' of policy eleven days after Truman's accession: to wit, the Molotov interview. He admits that America was not counter-revolutionary to begin with, but 'counter-expansionary'. Only when communism showed signs of spreading into areas without the aid of the Red Army – Greece, China, Korea, Guatemala, Cuba – did the counter-revolutionary element begin to predominate.

This was how the revisionist case stood in the summer of 1965. Then, twenty years after Hiroshima, came a book designed to show up that explosion in a very different light. Gar Alperovitz's *Atomic Diplomacy – Hiroshima and Potsdam*, gives a radical reinterpretation of the events of those crucial months following the death of Roosevelt.

In a television documentary on 5 January 1965 Byrnes admitted that details of the atom bomb were withheld from Stalin at the Potsdam Conference because he and Truman did not want to encourage the Russians to join in the war against Japan. At the same time he took the decision not to collaborate with them in the early stages of nuclear development. These admissions certainly go some way to support the revisionist contention that the policies which culminated in the Truman Doctrine and the North Atlantic Treaty were launched before Soviet aggressiveness was proved, before, in fact, Stalin had done anything except use the Yalta decisions to buttress his spheres-of-influence agreement with Churchill.

Alperovitz, who documents almost every line of his argument, attempts to give chapter and verse for this proposition. Agreeing with Fleming that the death of Roosevelt marked the end of an era, however brief, in East-West relations, he challenges throughout the view of Feis, Woodward, and others – and indeed of Truman himself – that the President had any intention of continuing Roosevelt's policies.¹⁸ Again like Fleming, he regards the inter-

¹⁸ H. Feis, *Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin* (Princeton, 1957), 599; L. Woodward, *British Foreign Policy in the Second World War* (London, 1962), 519; H.S. Truman, *Year of Decisions* (New York, 1955), 75–6.

view with Molotov as the curtain-raiser for the new policy, but in all else he wears the mantle not of Fleming but of Blackett. Concerned to explain the vacillations of Truman's policy between April and August 1945, he finds the answer in the atom bomb. Using material not available to Blackett, Alperovitz is able to show fairly conclusively that as 'from any rational military point of view, Japan was already defeated' (p. 106), and actively seeking surrender terms, the atom bombs were dropped not for any military reason but with an eye to their effect on the Soviet Union. He attempts to answer the question which Blackett was forced to overlook: if all Truman wanted was to ensure that Japan surrendered to the Americans alone, why did he ignore – and tell Stalin to ignore – her early peace offers? After all, these began in April, long before the Russians could have intervened. It could hardly be because of Japan's insistence on retaining the monarchy, for this condition was accepted by the Americans after the bombs had been dropped.

The answer apparently lies not in Asia but in Europe. Determined to undo the Churchill-Stalin agreement but unable to do so with either hard words (the Molotov interview) or soft (the Hopkins mission), or even by cutting Lend-Lease, Truman was obliged to wait until the atom bomb had been properly tested to add weight to his diplomacy. Then, in his own words, 'If it explodes, as I think it will, I'll certainly have a hammer on those boys!' As a result he refused all Churchill's requests for another Big Three meeting until as near the bomb's testing time as possible, and when in the end the Potsdam Conference could be postponed no longer all the important decisions on eastern Europe were left for the foreign ministers to take – after the bombs had been dropped. Armed, in Truman's words, with 'an entirely new feeling of confidence', the bomb, as Byrnes said, 'might well put us in a position to dictate our own terms' and 'make Russia more manageable in Europe' (pp. 227, 229).

It did not, of course. And whatever the truth in the rest of Alperovitz's analysis it is important to acknowledge one point: that the replacement of non-communist premiers in east European governments, and the general tightening up of Stalinist control which culminated in the expulsion of Tito from the Cominform in 1948 – all this followed the era of atomic diplomacy which Alperovitz describes. Even the changes imposed on the Rumanian government in February 1945 are no exception; neither the new

premier, Groza, nor his deputy, Tatarescu, was a communist. But the free elections which the Soviet Union permitted in Hungary as late as the autumn of 1945 were never repeated. If Alperovitz is right in believing that atomic diplomacy did not just precede but actually influenced these changes, then there may well be substance in Blackett's earlier contention that the bomb was a major cause of Russia's extension of her effective frontiers *after* 1945.

These, then, are some of the main propositions which make up the revisionist case on the origins of the Cold War, as advanced by some of its leading writers. Even in summary its most serious weakness is apparent. With the partial exception of Zilliacus, none of the writers mentioned has paid more than perfunctory attention to Soviet sources. Both communist ideology and Soviet foreign policy have been almost entirely neglected.

To some extent this is excusable. The works of Alperovitz and Horowitz, for example, do not pretend to be anything more than studies of American foreign policy. And if the blame for the Cold War can be safely laid at the door of President Truman, it is arguable that to dress up Stalin's obvious reactions in terms of communist ideology is a sheer waste of time. But to those like Fleming who seek to trace the roots of the Cold War back to the Russian Revolution the omission is much more serious.

Not surprisingly, therefore, it is often implied that the proper study and evaluation of Soviet doctrine is fatal to the revisionist case, just as it is sometimes said that the proper study of *Mein Kampf* makes nonsense of A. J. P. Taylor's view of Hitler. But this need not be so. It is often forgotten that, in contrast to nazi Germany, nearly all Soviet doctrine on relations with other social systems was formulated after the revolutionary struggle for power had succeeded. Even the single exception, Lenin's statement of August 1915 committing a future Soviet state to 'raising revolts against the capitalists, and coming out even with armed force if necessary' – almost exactly the Truman Doctrine in reverse – was profoundly modified by Stalin in December 1924, and again in January 1926.¹⁹

For the rest, Lenin's oft-quoted declaration: 'We are living not merely in a state, but in a system of states, and the existence of the

¹⁹ Lenin, *Works* (3rd Russian edition), XVIII, 232; Stalin, *Problems of Leninism* (11th edition), 123, 125, 128, 144, 146, 147, 195.

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Soviet Republic side by side with imperialist states for a long time is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end. And before that end comes, a series of frightful collisions between the Soviet Republic and bourgeois states will be inevitable',²⁰ is far less portentous than it sounds once it is recalled that it was uttered in March 1919, in the middle of the war of intervention, when Lenin was speaking against a proposed reduction in the size of the Red Army. It is in fact rather surprising that revisionists fail to use this quotation, as nothing indicates more clearly Lenin's belief that intervention would be renewed. But as the years passed and it was not, the Soviet outlook began to be modified. Lenin's 1920 forecast of 'a certain equilibrium, in the highest degree unstable' had become 'a whole period of respite' by 1925. By 1927 Stalin was able to say that the 'inevitable' intervention might be postponed until either the capitalists fought each other or a few more revolutions took place; but by 1930 the absence of war seemed to point to coexistence indefinitely;²¹ and in the relative security of 1936 Stalin was able to say to Roy Howard: 'We Marxists believe that a revolution will also take place in other countries. But it will take place only when the revolutionaries in those countries think it possible or necessary. The export of revolution is nonsense. Every country will make its own revolution if it wants to, and if it does not want to there will be no revolution.'²²

It is therefore foolish to talk of Soviet doctrines on revolution or coexistence as a primary cause of the Cold War when such doctrines have been so clearly and continually shaped by western policies; and books written on the theme of a 'Soviet master plan', usually by popularisers of the 'communist menace' at crisis points of the Cold War, have now largely ceased to appear.

To try to assess the influence of the revisionist school, when so much evidence on the origins of the Cold War remains to be uncovered, is a difficult task. My own view is that it has been considerable, due less perhaps to the persuasiveness of its writers than to

²⁰ Lenin, *Works*, XXIV, 122.

²¹ Lenin, *Works*, XXVII, 117; Stalin, *Report to XIV Party Congress, CPSU* (18 December 1925); Stalin to Walter Duranty, November 1930. See W. Duranty, *Russia Reported* (New York, 1934), 205.

²² Cited in Palme Dutt, *World Politics 1918-1936* (London 1936), 313; and G.M. Malenkov, *Report to the XIX Party Congress CPSU*, 5 October 1952.

the flood of memoirs and diplomatic papers which have been published during the past fifteen years. A great deal of this, particularly the parts which throw light on British and American attitudes to the Soviet Union during and just after the Second World War, has tended to support revisionist conclusions. Apart from the spectacular case of George Kennan, it is necessary only to glance at the latest volume of the orthodox school to see how far opinion has moved during the past ten years.²³ As a result, it is no longer possible to state, with the earlier writers, that the containment policies applied by the West were defensive measures reluctantly begun as late as 1947. Any assessment of Soviet policies and intentions must take into account the twin factors of the Hiroshima explosion and the Churchill-Stalin agreement on eastern Europe.

But, more than this, by refusing to treat Soviet acts in isolation the revisionists have focussed attention on a Cold War chronology which was long overlooked. From now on it should be difficult, if not impossible, to discuss Soviet references to 'inevitable' war in 1919 without mention of the failure of intervention in 1918; or the German-Soviet pact without the Munich Agreement; or Stalin's insistence on his 1941 frontiers and his acceptance of a sphere of influence without reference to the German invasion. In the same way Stalin's intervention in Rumania in 1945 should no longer be isolated from Churchill's intervention in Greece in 1944; or Stalin's consolidation of his empire in 1947 from America's acquisition of bases and atom bombs two years before; any more than his opposition to Marshall Aid should be divorced from the clear terms of the Truman Doctrine. It is the 'marriage' of each of these 'pairs' which sums up the work of the revisionists.

²³ Compare L.J. Halle, *The Cold War as History* (London, 1967), with J.W. Spanier, *American Foreign Policy since World War II* (New York, 1960).