

CONCLUSION

In concluding this study, I would like to present a very brief framework in which the major points of the previous discussion may be related to the development of the Cold War.

The central point to be made is that at no time after the Bolshevik seizure of power in Russia was there the prospect that a cold war could be averted; given the realities of the situation, the mutual suspicions and fears, the divergence of interests, there was really no chance for cooperation on a basis of mutual trust and faith. This is an observation that could be made about relations between any two sovereign states, but its significance is amplified in light of the enormous gulf which separated Soviet Russia from the West. This is not to say, however, that the manner in which the Cold War developed was inevitable. In analyzing the evolution of the Cold War, one must ask not "How could it have been averted at any given point?", but rather "How did specific events and decisions alter its contours, and what alternatives were available which might have changed the course of its development?"

As I have previously stated, the events from the Bolshevik revolution to 1936 laid the foundation on which the Cold War was subsequently waged, but their significance in understanding the development of the Cold War is limited, for there was nothing that happened in those years which made any subsequent event inevitable. In the two years following 1937, the Chamberlain Cabinet chose to pursue a policy which contributed significantly to Soviet Russia's untenable position in Europe, eventually forced Stalin into an agreement with Hitler, and had wide-ranging implications for the future contours of the Cold War.

It is true that most members of the Chamberlain Cabinet shared views on domestic and foreign policy which made appeasement the most appealing policy alternative to them. Yet each was quite aware of the alternative to appeasement, and each (with the exceptions of Eden and Duff Cooper, who resigned) consciously and, they felt, with good reason, rejected a policy of preparation for war entailing a greatly expanded armaments program and an alteration of the status quo in Europe which would have facilitated or recognized Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe. At each crucial juncture, the Cabinet, strongly influenced by Chamberlain, deliberately limited its policy options to those which entailed accepting German predominance in Central and Eastern Europe, on the assumption that Hitler could be kept from making war. Finally awakened to the imminence of war in 1939, the Cabinet sought to guarantee that England would be spared the sacrifices of war by turning Hitler's war machine toward the east, away from Western Europe. They realized that Soviet assistance would be essential in fighting Hitler, but they connived to secure the promise of such assistance at no price, that is, to commit Russia to fight for the preservation of a status quo against her interests.

By 1937 Stalin faced an extremely difficult and dangerous situation in Europe. The heart of his problem lay in the great loss of territory in Eastern Europe which Russia suffered as a result of her departure from World War I. Now Russia's western frontier was strategically indefensible, bordered by a string of states whose hostility to the Soviet Government was virtually fanatical. Stalin was powerless to take unilateral action, and for at least two years he rested his hopes on some type of partnership with Britain and France in which the three nations would recognize their common

interest in stopping Hitler and in which Russia might improve her untenable position and perhaps even regain hegemony in Eastern Europe. When Stalin offered to aid in the fight against Hitler, he made clear that he would not commit his country to war unless he could be assured that such a sacrifice would bring about a more favorable situation in Europe. Stalin probably never believed that Britain and France would be willing to grant him what he asked, but as of the summer of 1939, he had no alternative but to put his country's forces at the disposal of the West and ask what he felt to be a fitting price; he knew by mid-1939 that Britain and France were desperate for his help, whatever their motives, and this may have led him to believe that an agreement could eventually be reached. Yet, when Hitler finally offered so irresistible a deal to Stalin, the Soviet leader simply could no longer conduct his diplomacy on the same basis-- waiting for Britain and France to yield to the ever-growing pressure for a full alliance. In August 1939 Stalin got the best deal he could reasonably have expected for the time and in the circumstances.

The events of World War II and its immediate aftermath have been described in numerous studies of the Cold War, and I shall not describe them here. I hope this study, which prefaces the post-1939 years, helps the student of the Cold War to view the events of those later years in a more clear context. That there would be basic conflicts between the United States and Russia after the war was inevitable. That the Cold War would develop as it did under President Truman was not inevitable, however. Against the background of the events described in this study and the fantastic losses suffered by Russia in the war, there can be no doubt that Stalin realized his paramount aim must be to retain sufficient control of Eastern Europe so that his country would never again be placed in the position it had been. That

he would insist on keeping Eastern Europe in his grip after the war was inevitable, and his determination to do so was doubtlessly fueled by the frustrated diplomacy of 1937-1939. The manner in which he would retain this control was not inevitable, and was shaped largely in response to the degree to which his aims were opposed by the United States.

It is difficult to speak with certainty of President Roosevelt's attitudes toward postwar Russian policy, for Roosevelt had never committed himself to long-range plans, preferring to make policy according to the needs of the moment, and he died before the end of the war. He understood that the key to stability and peace after the war involved cooperation, however difficult or strained, between the United States and Russia; his policy decisions during the war suggest that he was willing to go far in achieving such cooperation. There is reason to believe that he would have been willing to accept Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe, provided that Stalin's excesses were curbed to the degree that they did not hopelessly limit Roosevelt's political maneuverability at home. Roosevelt must be understood within the highly political context in which he operated. He had to keep the Congress and the people in line if his policies were to succeed, and, unlike Woodrow Wilson (whose failures Roosevelt sought not to repeat), he was a master political manipulator and propagandist--an observation which I make without value judgement. Roosevelt's political position toward the end of the war was an extremely difficult one, for, if postwar cooperation with the Russian were to be achieved on the basis of Soviet predominance in Eastern Europe, a huge and powerful body of anti-Soviet opinion--from the public, to the Congress, to the President's own advisers--would have to be satisfied, and the democratic rhetoric which was used to justify our involvement in the war would have to be squared

away with the anti-democratic realities of the postwar world. The task was one which would have taxed the abilities of even the shrewdest politician.

Harry Truman's feelings about the Russians were quite different from Roosevelt's, and, also unlike FDR, Truman was very significantly influenced by his advisers who immediately descended upon him and successfully urged a tough line against Soviet postwar aims. Within months after becoming President, he had assumed a belligerent stand toward the Russians and destroyed virtually any political foundation at home on which a policy of cooperation might have been waged. There seems to have been a direct correlation between the vehemence with which the Truman Administration promoted anti-Soviet feelings at home and opposed Soviet policy abroad, and the degree to which Stalin increased the firmness of his control over Eastern Europe.