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Buying the Same Horse Twice: The U.S. Embassy in Moscow, 1944-1945

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Buying the Same Horse Twice:
The US Embassy in Moscow, 1944-1945

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History Honors/College Honors Thesis
College of the Holy Cross

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes the US Embassy in Moscow at the end of World War II by examining the experiences and perspectives of the Embassy's three major figures: Ambassador W. Averell Harriman, Charge d'Affaires George F. Kennan, and Major General John R. Deane. These men did not begin as staunch Slavophobes or anti-Communists. But from the failed Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 to the war's end in May 1945, these three men began to believe that the USSR was trying to project its influence over the rest of Eastern Europe. The US Embassy encountered great difficulty in its dealings with the Soviet Government as disagreements arose over the governance of Poland and the issue of prisoner repatriation. After the Yalta Conference, Deane, Harriman, and Kennan believed that the USSR was violating the Declaration on Liberated Europe as it attempted to dominate the political and economic affairs of Eastern European countries under its occupation. In response, these officials called for a tougher foreign policy against the USSR in order to stop it from establishing a permanent sphere of influence. By analyzing this historical narrative, this thesis helps explain why US-USSR relations began to deteriorate by the war's end, which in turn led to the Cold War.

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Preface and Acknowledgements

A little over a year ago, I never would have thought that I would have written a thesis about the US Embassy in Moscow at the closing months of World War II. When I was trying to find a thesis topic, I had wanted to research something on Russian history. However, I soon discovered that my Russian language skills were subpar and that obtaining sources from Russia would be a logistical nightmare, if not impossible. Then I decided to find a topic that would involve Russia, but coming from an American perspective. After many failed ideas and searches, Professor Noel Cary suggested I read some secondary sources so that I could find a “gap” or unexplained aspect in a historical area. Ultimately, I discovered that during the end of World War II, men like Averell Harriman and George Kennan had been early critics of the Soviet Union. Then I found out that they served together in Moscow with Major General John R. Deane, and that no historian had ever fully analyzed the story of the US Embassy from their collective perspective. Before this thesis, I had never heard of Harriman or Deane, nor had I ever taken a class on international politics or diplomacy. Nonetheless, I knew the primary sources were available and so I took a chance that I might find this fascinating, which I did.

This thesis project has been over a year in the making and many people helped me undertake such an intensive historical project. I must thank the College Honors program for the opportunity to write a thesis and for providing me with some funds to purchase a few key books. Professor Mathew Schmalz, former director of College Honors, provided me support as I began the prospectus process. The new director, Professor Suzanne Kirschner, also helped me along the way; she always took time to offer me words of encouragement as I started my senior year. At Dinand Library, Laura Hibbler helped me locate important sources and get this project started. For example, if I had not been able to use the College’s subscription to a digitized version of the Foreign Relations of the United States, I would still be doing research.

I would like to thank the History Department for all of its support and guidance. In particular I must thank the History Honors director, Professor Gwenn Miller, for her support and organization of our history colloquium. She kept me to deadlines which made this process so much more manageable even though it was difficult at first. Fellow thesis writer, Michael Barry, helped me a lot in our peer review sessions. As I got to read his thesis on Malcolm X, he read about Deane, Harriman, and Kennan.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support, encouragement, and advice that I received from my outstanding advisor and reader. I chose Professor Noel Cary as my advisor, not because he was an expert on my topic, but because he's so sharp and knowledgeable. Above all else, I trusted him. Although he taught me better grammar (no splitting infinitives), he really helped guide my analysis and offer ideas for further analysis. I will sorely miss our weekly meetings in his third floor O'Kane office. I took Professor Bruce Bunke's US Intelligence course way back in the spring of 2011. I knew all along that if I wrote a thesis that Professor Bunke would be my reader. Through all of my years at Holy Cross, he has been my mentor and dear friend. He helped me a lot during this process, but more importantly, he always supported and believed in me as I made my way through Holy Cross.

My family and friends never wavered in their support of me through the good and bad times. I must thank my friends in Figge 301, particularly James Messina and Sean Gleason. Sean was always there to listen to me as I wrote, and James took the time to edit a lot of my writing. My girlfriend Megan Fry was always there for me with love and support from the very beginning--she never lost faith in me. When I was gathering materials from Averell Harriman's public papers in the Library of Congress, my Aunt Lolly and Uncle Mo offered me a place to stay at their home in Ashburn, Virginia. When I was reading Kennan's papers at Princeton University, my Aunt Patti took me to lunch at the Triumph Brewing Company as a nice study break. My Uncle Rich and Aunt Patty also helped me a great deal along the way by buying me some books for the project. My Grandfather, Jack Dobbins, helped pay for my college education; without his generosity I might not have been able to spend so much time studying instead of working. Through thick and thin, I always had the love and support of my Mother, Father, and Dave. Without them, I would have had a harder time completing this project and seeing it through to the very end.

--John R. Dobbins
May 2014
Worcester, MA

Introduction

One Rainy Day in the USSR in 1944...

On a cold and rainy day in the Soviet Union, a 40 year old American diplomat found solace at his typewriter. The day was Thursday, July 26, 1944. This middle aged man was George F. Kennan, the Chargé d'Affaires of the US Embassy in Moscow. Kennan had confidence that the Allies were going to defeat Nazi Germany but that confidence did not offer him any peace of mind. All day long, Kennan managed the civilian affairs of the Embassy and served as the chief counselor to the Ambassador, W. Averell Harriman. Kennan preferred to write down his thoughts on US diplomacy rather than talk about it all the time. As rain came down outside, he was writing about the future prospects of Eastern Europe as the Red Army pushed back the German Wehrmacht forces. After reading the newspapers that came to the Embassy that morning, Kennan had told the Ambassador about the upcoming visit of the Polish Prime Minister to Moscow. The upcoming talks were supposed to allow the Polish Prime Minister Stanislaw Mikołajczyk, who represented the Polish Government in-exile in London, to negotiate with the Soviets for a future democratic government in Poland once the country had been liberated. Kennan doubted that Polish diplomacy with the Soviets would yield anything productive. In fact, Kennan thought that the Soviet Union intended to do whatever it wanted with any territory which it fought so valiantly to occupy. In his diary, Kennan typed down his first and most poignant point about the situation:

1. The Russians have recently had--and are still having--unparalleled success on the field of battle. They are elated and proud almost to the point of hysteria. They will be confident that they can arrange the affairs of Eastern Europe to their own liking without

great difficulty, and they will not be inclined to go far out of their way either for the Poles or for us.¹

Despite President Franklin Roosevelt's visions for a Europe free of German aggression and safe for national self-determination, Kennan did not believe that America's Soviet ally would honor such a commitment in Eastern Europe. He believed that the US would have no leverage against its ally. The problem was that the US needed friendly relations with the Soviets and therefore Kennan's skeptical view was not taken seriously. Although the Ambassador thoroughly read Kennan's memo from that morning, he questioned his chief counselor's view. Thus, he did not include any of its contents in his daily correspondence to the State Department. Harriman was not entirely convinced. Later that day, Kennan approached one of the Embassy's military officers and asked him about the chances on the Soviet Union cooperating with the US and Great Britain to find a solution for Poland's new government. The officer believed that the Soviet Union would do all that it could to cooperate since it did not want to tarnish relations with its allies. The officer's words disappointed Kennan and further proved that he was alone in his thinking that the USSR would not cooperate in the future settlement of Europe.²

The realization could not have come on a more ominous and rainy day. Unbeknownst to Kennan, in a matter of days his doubts about Soviet cooperation with Poland would come true. As the Poles in Warsaw rose up to fight the German occupational forces, the Red Army sat across the Vistula River and did little to help the Poles, or to enable the Western Allies to effectively bombard the Germans.

From that event onward, Kennan, Ambassador Harriman, and chief of the military mission, Major General John R. Deane, would never see the Soviet Union the same again. As

¹ George F. Kennan Journal, George F. Kennan Papers, July 27, 1944, Box 231:Folder 12. Also can be found in George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950* (Boston: Little Brown & Company, 1967), 206.

² Kennan, Kennan Papers, July 27, 1944, Box 231: Folder 12.

victory Europe came closer, these three men would work to convince the US Government that the Soviet Union's intentions for Eastern Europe did not correspond with its foreign policy. Since each man had a different role within the Embassy and had different matters at stake, they did not always agree. But as this thesis shall show, their views began to converge as the war in Europe continued and their view became quite similar by May 1945.

This thesis will also explain why they began to criticize US-USSR relations and how their individual views compared and contrasted. These three were situated on the forefront of US relations with the USSR. As a diplomatic unit, not one group from the US Government communicated and negotiated with the Soviet Government more than it did. Starting with the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 and ending with Victory in Europe Day in early May 1945, Soviet actions in Eastern Europe provoked Deane, Harriman, and Kennan to worry that future cooperation in post-war Europe might not work, but rather, divide Europe down the middle.

The climax of this episode came shortly after the meeting of the Big Three at the Yalta Conference where the USSR signed the Declaration on Liberated Europe. Once the Soviet Union interpreted the agreements at Yalta far differently from the United States, these men were the first to argue that something had to be done in order to show how serious the United States was about having a democratic Europe that was safe for national self-determination. In the eyes of these men, the Soviet Union was doing all that it could to lock down a permanent sphere of influence in Eastern Europe by dominating the political and economic facets of liberated countries. Whether these actions were stalling on Polish Provisional Government negotiations or using the Red Army to strip Germany clean of materials, the Embassy saw this as an indication that the US and USSR were at complete ideological and geopolitical odds.

Although they became Cold Warriors after the war, these men were not staunch anti-Communists or Slavophobes from the beginning; they saw Soviet conduct standing against the interests of the US and they reacted professionally and accordingly in order to convey their views. All three men liked each other and they respected one another, but they still had their own differences regarding what the Western Allies ought to do to assert their interests in Europe. Many of the developments that these three men saw unfolding ended up coming true once the Cold War heated up and the Iron Curtain came down over Central Europe.

The Personalities

W. Averell Harriman was born on November 15, 1891 in New York City to Edward and Mary Harriman. Harriman grew up preferring the name Averell over William and it stuck with him the rest of life. In his twenties and after his father death, besides railroad business, Harriman became a successful businessman in America. As a young businessman, he negotiated with the relatively new Soviet Union to acquire rights on a manganese mine. Harriman saw some opportunity to trade with the Bolsheviks. He even met Leon Trotsky before he was exiled by Stalin. However, Harriman did not trust Josef Stalin, and so he eventually ended his business venture with the USSR.

Despite all of Harriman's acumen for business, he became a New Deal Democrat. Under the FDR administration, Harriman worked for the National Recovery Administration and the Office of Production Management. Through his time at the Office of Production Management, Harriman worked to negotiate Lend-Lease deals with both the British and the Soviets. His success in Lend-Lease deals, especially with the Soviets, helped him become the US Ambassador to the Soviet Union where he would continue to oversee the logistics of Lend-Lease

Aid. He served as Ambassador from October 1943 until January 1946. Because of his time in Moscow, Harriman claimed that he met Stalin “more than any other foreigner has.”³ After the war, he was the Secretary of Commerce under Truman and became the Governor of New York in 1955. He died at the age of 94 on July 26, 1986 in Yorktown Heights, New York.

George F. Kennan was born on February 16, 1904 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Although not from the same privilege and wealth as Harriman, Kennan did attend Princeton University and soon after joined the Foreign Service in 1926. As a Russian expert, Kennan helped Ambassador William Bullitt establish the US Embassy in Moscow in 1933. Kennan’s reputation as a Soviet expert brought him to the attention of Harriman who had realized that his embassy in Moscow would need such an expert. After nine months of petitioning the State Department, and through some help by the President’s senior adviser, Harry Hopkins, Harriman succeeded in bringing Kennan to Moscow in 1944.⁴

In Moscow, Kennan served as the chief counselor to the Ambassador and later under Truman he became the Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Kennan became famous in the United States in 1946 after he wrote the “Long Telegram” in which he detailed the Cold War doctrine of “containment.” In 1946 he wrote “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” or the “X Article” as it became to be known after he had published it under the name X in 1947. Kennan later became the Ambassador to Yugoslavia and then lived the rest of his life as a prominent writer and political scientist. He died at the ripe old age of 101 in Princeton, New Jersey on March 17, 2005.⁵

³ Alan S. Oser, "Ex-Gov. Averell Harriman, Adviser To 4 Presidents, Dies," *The New York Times*, July 27, 1986, <http://www.nytimes.com/1986/07/27/obituaries/ex-gov-averell-harriman-adviser-to-4-presidents-dies.html?pagewanted=all>.

⁴ Elie Abel and W. Averell Harriman, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin, 1941-1946* (New York: Random House, 1975), IX.

⁵ For more biographical information on George Kennan refer to his official biography by John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011).

Major General John R. Deane was born on March 18, 1896 in San Francisco, California. Whereas scholars have written much about Harriman and Kennan, no scholars have written extensively about Deane. As a California native, he attended UC Berkeley. At the onset of American participation in World War I, Deane enlisted into the Army. After the war, he graduated from the US Army Command and General Staff School as well as from the Army War College. His path as a career military man led him to become the Secretary to the Army General Staff. He would later go on to become the Secretary to both the US Joint Chiefs of Staff and the US/UK Combined Chiefs of Staff.⁶ Through his extensive work in Great Britain he met Averell Harriman when Harriman was managing Lend-Lease Aid affairs. When Harriman was appointed Ambassador, he invited Deane to head the Embassy's "Military Mission" which would manage all "Army, Navy, Air, and lend-lease activities."⁷

As the head of the Military Mission, Deane commanded a staff of military officers and worked extensively with Harriman, and sometimes Kennan. He was America's official military liaison to the Red Army Staff and helped it coordinate military movements in Eastern Europe. After his time in Moscow, he became a liaison to the newly formed United Nations but then retired in March 1946. Shortly into his retirement, he published an account about his experiences in the Soviet Union entitled, The Strange Alliance: The Story of Our Efforts at Wartime Co-Operation with Russia. Deane died at the age of 86 on July 14, 1982 in South Carolina.

Historiography

The writers Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas made an intriguing point about Cold War studies in 1986 in their book, The Wise Men-- the "personal angle is missing." They argued that

⁶ Thomas F. Berner, "Who Won the Cold War?," *Strategic Studies Institute*, July 8, 2009, 1-2.

⁷ John R. Deane, *The Strange Alliance: The Story of Our Efforts At Wartime Co-Operation with Russia* (New York: Viking Press, 1947), 10.

so many of the most influential men that lived during the Cold War were “private men” who “abhorred publicity.” Writing history from the personal angle saves these men from being treated as purely “two-dimensional characters.”⁸ Since their publication, scholars have written biographical works about many famous Cold War figures, including Harriman and Kennan. Until people wrote biographical works, these men were their own chroniclers through their extensive memoirs. This is especially the case with Deane since no scholar has written a single major publication about his experiences. Nonetheless, the “personal angle” is helpful because it humanizes important historical actors and does save them from permanently becoming “two-dimensional.”

This thesis adopts a personal angle methodology in order to examine how the three major officials within the US Embassy in Moscow came to see the beginning of the Cold War. All three men served on the front line of American diplomacy in the USSR. What they experienced there is essential to fully understand because they saw how the Cold War started and their views influenced future US foreign policy. No scholar has written a book exclusively about the diplomatic mission in Moscow during World War II. Ironically, the people who had come the closest to such a feat were Harriman and Abel in Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin. Harriman’s observations of his own experiences and those of his staff are insightful but the observations lack the personal angle from Kennan and Deane’s perspectives. The book is useful though because it works as both a secondary and primary source. The text generally reads like a history book with added commentary from the papers and recollections of Harriman himself. There is no doubt that Harriman helped to shape the historical analysis written by Abel, but all scholars have cited this book quite frequently since its publication.

⁸ Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men: Six Friends and the World They Made : Acheson, Bohlen, Harriman, Kennan, Lovett, McCloy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 31-32.

Historians have generally agreed that the start of the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944 was the event that caused Harriman, Deane, and Kennan to reexamine Soviet motives and to begin reexamining US foreign policy. Isaacson and Thomas argued in, Wise Men, that the Warsaw Uprising was merely the catalyst that made Harriman realize that the Soviet Union was not just a “schizophrenic ally” but rather a state that had “fundamentally” different objectives and motives. They also argue that the situation gave Kennan the opportunity to influence the Ambassador directly. A month into the Uprising, Harriman needed some thoughts for a report to the State Department and so he asked Kennan to draft a cable. At this point, they both agreed that the US needed to do something to protest the Soviet Government’s actions but disagreed on the method.⁹

Kennan wanted the US to show its disapproval by freezing all aid sent to the USSR and condemning the Soviet Government.¹⁰ Harriman wanted condemnation from the State Department but that never happened. The event “sharply altered Harriman’s view of Stalin, the Soviet Union, and American policy.” Although Deane’s reaction has not been as examined as much, he too was present at the Kremlin when Molotov told Harriman that the Red Army would not help the Poles.¹¹

The Soviet Union did not support the nationalist Poles who comprised the majority of the Home Army, but the US had prioritized military operations over the importance of politics. The Soviet Union disliked the Polish nationalists but the greater enemy was still the Germans. In reaction to the Warsaw Uprising, all three men began to scrutinize Soviet motives and actions much more carefully.

⁹ Ibid., 238-39.

¹⁰ David Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 94 and Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, 183.

¹¹ Abramson, *Spanning The Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman*, 382-83.

Scholars Ellie Abel and Rudy Abramson argued that Ambassador Harriman came to Yalta mostly concerned about the wording of all the major agreements. Whenever Harriman tried to suggest to the President that a particular document was not specific enough, the President would disregard the need for such details. As long as the President thought his interpretation was correct then he did not worry about it.¹² Deane had finally got his formal prisoner of war repatriation agreement signed on the last day of Yalta.¹³ This came after Harriman and Kennan had spent several months attempting to get Soviets to cooperate on a formal agreement.

Historians have also noted that Kennan's absence from Yalta did not prevent him from learning about what happened and then commenting on it. Both David Meyers and authors, Isaacson and Thomas, highlighted that Kennan despised everything about the Yalta Conference because it continued to establish nothing concrete for the future of Europe. He called the agreement on Poland's new government "the shabbiest sort of equivocation." Furthermore, the agreements on Germany, particularly dismemberment and reparations, would only ensure that the Soviet Government would be able to do whatever it pleased on its side of Germany and in Europe.¹⁴

For several weeks, Harriman and his men were unable to do much to change US foreign policy after Yalta, but as tensions rose, the Embassy found it easier to sell their opinion to Washington. In March 1945, the Americans and British had succeeded in contacting General Karl Wolff to arrange a surrender of all German forces in Italy. This meeting was planned to take place in Berne, Switzerland. However, when the Soviet Government, particularly Stalin, discovered this, he demanded Soviet representation. Since Harriman was responsible for relaying

¹² Abramson, *Spanning The Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman*, 374-75 and Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 401, 412.

¹³ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 416.

¹⁴ Isaacson and Thomas, *The Wise Men*, 246 and Meyers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy*, 96-97.

all information between the Kremlin and Washington, he was privy to everything that was happening. The Ambassador, in light of all the problems the Soviet Union had caused since the Yalta Conference, lobbied that the US deny the Soviet Union representation at the talks in Berne.¹⁵

Abramson has argued that Harriman and Deane both took this as an opportunity to deny the Soviets something they had wanted. Deane helped convince the US Joint Chiefs of Staff to concur that Soviet representation was not necessary since the talks only regarded military issues. No separate peace was being conducted with the Germans. They had been jointly advocating a tougher stance against the Soviets and now they had the chance to be heard by Washington.¹⁶

Both Gaddis and the scholars Isaacson and Thomas have argued that as Harriman became more concerned about Soviet ambitions, he had a difficult time voicing his opinions during the beginning of 1945 while FDR was still alive. Isaacson and Thomas said, “Roosevelt’s death would finally give Harriman a chance to return to Washington and firm up the nebulous consensus on how to handle the Russian bear.”¹⁷ In his recent book about George Kennan, Gaddis provided a brief commentary about Harriman which also agreed with the analysis by Isaacson and Thomas. In order to change American policy, Gaddis argued that Harriman realized he needed to persuade FDR personally. The problem was that “Roosevelt’s declining health” was not making him very receptive to radically different ideas.¹⁸ This understanding about Harriman’s difficulty with affecting foreign policy in the beginning of 1945 further reinforces the theme that FDR’s death marked a major transition for many officials who found it easier to help Truman than to help FDR.

¹⁵ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War, 1941-1947* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 92.

¹⁶ Abramson, *Spanning The Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman*, 392-93.

¹⁷ Isaacson and Thomas, *The Wise Men*, 250.

¹⁸ Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 191.

The death of President Roosevelt created a power vacuum within the Presidency since Vice President Harry Truman was inexperienced with diplomacy and had not been greatly involved with US foreign policy. Historians have generally agreed that this sudden death caused a shakeup in the roles of advisers to the White House. Political scientist Athan Theoharis described the shakeup as a phenomenon where many people went from “policy advisers” to “policy makers.”¹⁹

Historians agree that once Harry Truman became President in April of 1945, Harriman, Deane, and Kennan were able to voice their opinions to a much greater effect. In his book from 1972, Gaddis said, “No one did more to shape Truman’s views than Harriman himself.” For example, after Truman’s meeting with Soviet diplomat Vyacheslav Molotov, where Truman demanded that Molotov get the Soviet Union to adhere to the Yalta agreement, Harriman went to UN conference in San Francisco to persuade the American delegation that the Soviets wanted to take over Eastern Europe.²⁰ Although historians have often focused more on Harriman, when he did return to Washington after FDR’s death, Deane accompanied him and expressed the need for a tougher stance against the Soviet Union.

A claim that Isaacson and Thomas make which goes beyond most historians was that FDR crafted his own foreign policy “with little heed to the Cassandras in the State Department.”²¹ Their characterization of Harriman and Kennan as prophetic “Cassandras” illustrates that some people viewed them as important officials who saw through everything the Soviet Union was trying to do in Europe.

¹⁹ Athan Theoharis, "Roosevelt and Truman on Yalta: The Origins of the Cold War," *Political Science Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (June 1972): 213, accessed September 11, 2013, JSTOR.

²⁰ Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, 201, 227.

²¹ Isaacson and Thomas, *The Wise Men*, 19.

Not all scholars agree that these three men were so great for the United States. In particular, historian Frank Costigliola wrote a revisionist history book entitled, Roosevelt's Lost Alliances, where he greatly elevated FDR's personal diplomacy and slammed those who tried to steer him toward a tougher stance against the Soviet Union. In his introduction, Costigliola argued that since the Soviet Union had isolated and frustrated men with good intentions, like Deane, Harriman, and Kennan, their experiences "conditioned" them to view the Soviets unfavorably and not to trust them. He said that they lacked "empathy for the cultural insecurity, military exigencies, and political imperatives of Soviet leaders," and held a strong view of American "exceptionalism."²² For this reason, these people were not reliable public officials. What Costigliola failed to explain was why Harriman, Kennan, and Deane were so "conditioned" to criticize the Soviet Union. He constantly chose to extrapolate isolated pieces of evidence to express why these men were dangerous to FDR's plans for diplomacy with the Soviet Union.

Costigliola belittled every reaction that the US Embassy had during the war. He argued that both Harriman and Deane had become far too emotionally compromised by the problems that they had with Poland and prisoner of war repatriation. He defended Stalin by claiming he might have known that British Special Operations agents were "already smuggling anti-Soviet agents in and out of Poland disguised as ex-POWs." Somehow Costigliola connected this possible instance to the entire operation the Americans had planned to extract their POWs from camps all over Poland. So when Stalin refused such a plan, Harriman and Deane got angry. Costigliola also did not empathize with the fact that Harriman and Deane were constantly hearing horror stories from POWs that had been evacuated from Poland. American POWs suffered mistreatment under Soviet authority as they waited to be evacuated. However, he

²² Frank Costigliola, *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 6-7.

credited Roosevelt for not letting the POW issue compromise his “bigger picture of postwar collaboration.”²³

Costigliola failed to mention the fact that Soviet mistreatment of prisoners and refusal to allow air sorties to evacuate them was a violation of Yalta. Deane and Harriman had thought that they had successfully negotiated with the Soviets for many months leading to Yalta where the agreement was signed. Nonetheless, Costigliola portrayed these two men as spoiled children who did not have the vision to see the bigger issues at stake like Roosevelt. He did not entertain the notion that perhaps this issue was connected to much larger issues with the Soviet Union.

With regard to the Warsaw Uprising and fate of Poland under Soviet occupation, Costigliola said this about Harriman: “The budding Cold Warrior might have dealt more productively with the Russians had he possessed the perspicacity and emotional self-control to realize the extent to which self-absorbed, insecure pride shaped Soviet attitudes and actions.”²⁴ Once again, Costigliola failed to better understand the context and situation that Harriman was faced with as the Ambassador the United States. Harriman was a professional and a friend of the White House.

Costigliola never tried to account for why FDR himself would have not seen such poor qualities in Harriman as an effective ambassador. The President could have just as easily placed someone in Moscow who would have not complained or been angered by Soviet actions as much. Yet, that did not happen. So when FDR died, Costigliola lamented that, “The unfortunate contingency of Roosevelt’s death unleashed those bent on changing U.S. policy.” He also claimed that “Harriman’s emotional belief” that the US needed a tougher foreign policy towards the Soviets greatly influenced Truman. He categorized Truman as someone “prone to hasty [and]

²³ Ibid., 307, 309.

²⁴ Ibid., 293.

emotional judgments.” Costigliola blamed the combination of both factors as one of the main causes which caused the Soviets to shove back when the US did adopt a tougher stance. He concluded that this “shoving match” led to the Cold War.²⁵

Costigliola’s analysis favors Roosevelt and his personal diplomacy far too much for his analysis to be considered thoughtful. His harsh criticism of those who advised FDR might have served as a useful means to explain why FDR’s diplomacy ultimately failed after his death, but his arguments are not convincing. Costigliola did not account for all of the reasons why the Moscow Embassy was so angry with the Soviet Union. All other historians account for the fact that these men were entrusted to negotiate with the most powerful people in the Soviet Union, America’s greatest ally in the fight against Germany. A greater examination of the primary sources from these three men illustrates that they were professionals and that they genuinely cared about their duties. Where Costigliola belittled their reactions to major events in Europe, other scholars attempted to explain how these events shaped their points of view. After all, all of these men were human and not automatons.

²⁵ Ibid., 15, 311.

Chapter One: The Warsaw Uprising and the Aftermath, July to December 1944

“This was a gauntlet thrown down, in a spirit of malicious glee, before the Western Powers.”²⁶

Introduction

From July 1944 until the beginning of 1945, Deane, Harriman, and Kennan began to see the Soviet Union as more of an international bully than a committed ally in Europe. The Soviets' lack of support for the Poles in the Warsaw Uprising shocked the Embassy and caused the men to question what the Soviets' intentions were in Eastern Europe once the Germans were defeated. Furthermore, the difficulty that Deane encountered trying to orchestrate the evacuation of American POWs from Eastern Europe further illustrated that Soviet territory was becoming locked off from the Western Allies. This chapter also highlights the initial differences between Kennan and Harriman. Whereas Kennan believed Eastern Europe was already lost to the Soviets' control, Harriman believed that more could be done to negotiate with the Soviet Union. Harriman was optimistic that matters could improve, but as winter came this view started to erode bit by bit. This time period marked the beginning of the Embassy's belief that the US needed to get tougher with the USSR by having more of a quid pro quo relationship in order to ensure that the US's interests for the future of a free and democratic Europe were not compromised.

The Gauntlet Thrown Down in Poland

Within sight of victory over Germany, Kennan perceived the situation with a more scrutinizing political lens, particularly as the Red Army began to occupy vast swaths of formerly controlled German territory. In his diary on July 27, 1944, Kennan reasoned that America should

²⁶ Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, 211.

have no “high hopes” with regard to the upcoming visit of Stanislaw Mikołajczyk, the head of the Polish Government in exile in London (also known as the London Poles). He described the Red Army as such: “They are elated and proud almost to the point of hysteria.” This air of confidence only strengthened the Soviets’ intentions to “...arrange the affairs of Eastern Europe to their own liking without great difficulty...” Furthermore, the Kremlin had already placed its backing with the “pro-Soviet” Polish Committee of Liberation and would ultimately make joining a post-war Polish government difficult for Mikołajczyk. Twice Kennan recorded the feelings of his American colleagues. When talking to Harriman, Kennan noted that he had some concerns about the situation with Poland but “...decided to wire nothing at all [to the State Department].” Kennan concluded that military successes and a desire for control over Eastern Europe were going to result in a potential conflict over the affairs of Poland once it was liberated from German occupation.²⁷

Harriman and Kennan exhibited varying degrees of skepticism about Soviet policy and conduct even before American-Soviet tensions increased later during the war. For example, in Kennan’s own memoir, he commented that he never forgot what the Soviets had done to Poland during their “Nonaggression Pact period” with the Germans. Referring to the infamous Katyn Forest Massacre, Kennan always believed that the Soviets, not the Germans, had murdered the thousands of Polish officers. Not until the early 1990’s did Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev reveal a top secret government file which incriminated Stalin, Molotov and other high ranking Party members.²⁸

²⁷ Kennan Journal, Kennan Papers, July 27, 1944, Box 231:Folder 12 and Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, 206-07.

²⁸ Nikolai Yermolovich, "Katyn Was an Atrocity Committed by the Bolsheviks' Party Top Leadership," *Izvestia* (Moscow), October 15, 1992, Current Digest of the Russian Press.

Kennan never had solid proof other than his intuition about the situation. All he had was an “intuitive idea...based on experience...and limited evidence.”²⁹ However, this “intuitive idea” compelled him to believe that the Soviets were capable of brutal acts against their neighbors even four years later. In contrast, Harriman had been impressed by the Soviet investigation on the Katyn Massacre which blamed the Germans.³⁰

The comparison of their views illustrates how Kennan and Harriman were not always on the same level with their views about the Soviets. Harriman, perhaps as a result of his closer professional relationship with the Soviets, especially the highest ranking officials, was more inclined to believe the official Soviet line. However, Kennan did not have as close ties to the Soviet elites. Kennan always relied on his understanding of history and his experiences to analyze any given situation. In an official capacity, he always fell in line with Harriman since he was directed by the President and the State Department. Within his own private writings, he was free to think and believe whatever he chose.

Regardless of the interpretations of Katyn, Kennan, Harriman, and Deane faced a wartime crisis in Poland that rattled their optimism about Soviet war aims in the liberation of Eastern Europe. Five days later on August 1, 1944, the Warsaw Uprising against the Germans began which also coincided with the Red Army’s arrival to the outskirts of the Polish capital city. The Soviet military management of this conflict incited the anger of not just Kennan, but Harriman and Deane as well. In his memoir, Kennan had this to say:

This [the Warsaw Uprising], more than anything that had occurred to that point, brought the Western governments face to face with what they were up against in Stalin’s Polish Policy. For if the inactivity of the Red army forces as they sat, passive, on the other side of the river and

²⁹ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, 207-08.

³⁰ John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan: An American Life* (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 182. Also see how Harriman’s wife investigated the Soviet demonstration at Katyn in Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin*, 302, 349.

watched the slaughter by the Germans of the Polish heroes of the rebellion was not yet eloquent enough as an expression of Soviet attitude, then the insolent denial by Stalin and Molotov to Ambassador Harriman of permission for the use of the American shuttle base in the Ukraine to facilitate the dropping of arms and supplies to the beleaguered Poles, and the significant demand...that we withdraw the shuttle bases entirely, *left no room for misunderstanding*...I can recall the appearance of the ambassador and General Deane as they returned...shattered by the experience...This was a gauntlet thrown down, in a spirit of malicious glee before the Western powers.³¹

The aftermath of the Warsaw Uprising, and the latter communications with Stalin and Molotov, had a profound effect upon Harriman's views towards America's wartime ally. Exactly two weeks after the fighting in Warsaw had erupted, Harriman cabled a telegraph to both FDR and Secretary of State Cordell Hull. He began the message by writing, "For the first time since coming to Moscow I am gravely concerned by the attitude of the Soviet Government in its refusal to permit us to assist the Poles in Warsaw as well as in its own policy of apparent inactivity."³²

Both Kennan's bleaker outlook about Soviet relations and the development of the Warsaw Uprising influenced Harriman to be more vocal about his reservations with the Soviet government. Scholars Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas described this transition as a turning point for Harriman. They argue that he went from viewing the USSR as a "somewhat schizophrenic ally" who was still a "partner in the cause of peace" to something more problematic--a wartime partner whose "aims and motives" were incompatible with "the West."³³ Formally, the Allies wanted to support all enemies that waged war against the Axis Powers regardless of politics or past history in order to establish a free European continent founded on

³¹Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, 210-11.

³² US Ambassador to the Soviet Union W. Averell Harriman to the Secretary of State Cordell Hull and President Franklin D. Roosevelt, August 15, 1944, *Foreign Relations of the United States 1944 Vol. III*, 1376.

³³ Isaacson and Thomas, *The Wise Men*, 238.

the principles of self-determination. When the Embassy leaders in Moscow realized what the Red Army was doing by stopping its own advance, they also realized that the Soviet elite had never intended to cast aside geopolitics in Poland.

As the “fog of war” over the Warsaw Uprising started to dissipate, evidence came to the American Embassy that raised suspicions about the Kremlin’s motives. In a revelatory telegraph, the British ambassador to the Soviet Union, Archibald Clark Kerr, told Harriman that the Soviets might have agitated the start of the uprising. Clark Kerr reported that radio broadcasts from the Soviets had been encouraging the Poles to fight the German occupation force. Just three days before the uprising, Moscow had relayed a radio address from the Union of Polish Patriots. The Union affirmed that the “...hour of action...had already arrived for Warsaw” and that a “direct active struggle” would help save lives and prevent the Germans from razing the city. The Union of Polish Patriots was part of an earlier Polish political organization that was “sympathetic to Communism” and had formal contacts with the Kremlin.³⁴

This evidence implicated the USSR as an agitator in the uprising. Therefore, in the eyes of both ambassadors, the evidence indicated that these Soviet-backed Poles, encouraged by Moscow, urged their compatriots to arms in advance of the Red Army’s arrival. Taking the Polish capital would be difficult, but an uprising might soften the German forces for an offensive by the Red Army

For the sake of maintaining positive relations with the USSR, Harriman was told by Washington to stand down against Molotov and Stalin. Secretary of State Cordell Hull stated that since the Soviets “...would not object to independent British and American action in furnishing supplies...” that there was no need to escalate the situation since the Soviets had not banned all

³⁴ Harriman to Hull and FDR, August 17, 1944, *FRUS 1944 Vol. III*, 1378. For Union of Polish Patriots view footnote 93 on the same page in *FRUS 1944 Vol. III*.

Allied support for the “Polish Underground.” Hull did not forbid Harriman from further negotiation for more support, such as use of Soviet landing strips for bombing runs, but admonished Harriman not to jeopardize relations. In conclusion, Hull said, “While we share your views as to the motives and character of the Soviet attitude, we feel that since the Soviets are not attempting to prevent our independent actions in this matter our chief purpose has already been achieved as a result of your representations.”³⁵

Harriman expressed his distaste for Hull’s appraisal of the situation because the Soviet Government’s strong stance was too significant to pass over without an objection. Two days later, Harriman bluntly said, “I find it difficult to see how it can be considered that our ‘chief purpose’ has already been achieved...I feel strongly that the Russians should be made to realize our dissatisfaction with their behavior.”³⁶ As a true professional civil servant, Harriman did not attempt to compromise the relations between the two nations, but his past responses illustrated that he was surprised by the Soviet stance toward the Warsaw Uprising. He was also not pleased with the State Department’s hesitation to condemn the Soviet Union.

As mentioned before, once Stalin and Molotov formally expressed their views, Kennan recalled how both Harriman and Deane appeared “shattered” by this news. Taken to another degree, Kennan believed that this should have been the definitive turning point in American-Soviet relations-- a “full-fledged and realistic political showdown” should have ensued in order to secure a future for Eastern Europe.³⁷ Despite his feelings, a political showdown would never come to fruition in late 1944.

By the end of August, while the Warsaw Uprising raged on, Molotov stated in a meeting with Harriman and Clark Kerr that the uprising was “...started by a band of adventurers...” and

³⁵ Hull to Harriman, August 19, 1944, *FRUS 1944 Vol. III*, 1381-82.

³⁶ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 342.

³⁷ Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, 211.

ultimately a ploy by the Polish Government in exile in London. This was the national government of the Polish Republic that had had to flee Poland upon the start of World War II in 1939. From London, these “London Poles” had worked to orchestrate Polish underground resistance against the Germans through the “Armia Krajowa” or the Polish Home Army. Clark Kerr admitted that the Poles might have chosen to strike at an inappropriate time but that the British government was certain that Soviet radio transmissions had coerced the start of the uprising. When Harriman pressed for answers over the radio transmissions, Molotov remained “evasive and noncommittal.” The USSR refused to partake in an insurgency caused by “adventurers” unfriendly to the USSR. Additionally, Molotov acted indifferently to Harriman’s issue about the use of Soviet airbases. Without Soviet airbases American aircraft would not have fighter plane escorts, a circumstance that posed a huge risk to American airmen.³⁸

Between British sources from Clark Kerr and Molotov’s ambiguous attitude, Harriman found himself in an uncomfortable position. In an unsent telegram to Secretary of State Hull, Harriman asserted that the Soviets coerced the Warsaw Uprising in order to let the Germans crush the Polish underground leaders and forces in effort to prevent them from getting “credit for the liberation of Warsaw.” Despite the bleak situation with Soviet-American relations because of Poland, he still believed that something could be done to make the Soviets have “a change of attitude.”³⁹

While Harriman waged a campaign of words against the Kremlin, Deane was planning a large effort to extricate American prisoners of war (POWs) from Eastern Europe. As the Red Army raced across Eastern Europe towards the German Reich, German military prisoner camps

³⁸ For London Poles see Amos Perlmutter, *FDR & Stalin: A Not So Grand Alliance, 1943-1945* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 113. For Harriman’s remarks from Molotov meeting see, Harriman to Hull, August 22, 1944, *FRUS 1944 Vol. III*, 1386-89.

³⁹ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 343-44.

were only weeks away from being liberated by the Soviets. In June 1944, before the Warsaw Uprising, Deane gathered intelligence from the Red Army General Staff in order to find out about American prisoners in Romania and Hungary. However, Deane needed Soviet assistance in these rescue operations because of a tricky move the Germans had committed. When Germans captured combatants, they placed them in prisons "...as far from the countries of which they [soldiers] were nationals as possible." Therefore, most of the Soviet POWs were in Western Europe while British and American prisoners remained in Eastern Europe. By August 29th, the Red Army had liberated American POWs. Given the southerly location of Romania, Deane coordinated with Army command in the Mediterranean which picked up prisoners from September 1st to 3rd. The operation in Romania moved so quickly that the Soviet occupation forces did not have the means to cause a hindrance even though some "commanders [acted] without prior reference to Moscow."⁴⁰

Unfortunately for Deane, the success in Romania proved to be an exception and not the standard result. When the Soviets reached Poland they liberated many Americans, but now Poland was at the center of a political and military disagreement among the Allies. On August 30, 1944, Deane communicated an Allied POW proposal to General Aleksei Antonov. He also instructed Harriman to give the proposal to Molotov. Neither of them received a response the Soviet Government. The Soviets did not make any accommodations for the Western Allies at that time. Deane believed that the "strained relations with Russia over the Polish political situation" was the main reason for the Soviets' unwillingness to cooperate with POW repatriation.⁴¹ The Kremlin had now hindered Deane from both securing shuttle bases for the US

⁴⁰ Deane, *The Strange Alliance*, 183-85, 188-89. Sources often spelled Romania as "Rumania" which is just a dated form of spelling. I will use the present day spelling when writing but will keep the old spelling when quoting primary sources.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 185, 188-89.

military in Ukraine and from saving American soldiers trapped in Eastern Europe. From his diplomatic position in Moscow, Deane was incapable of doing anything more to help his soldiers and airmen.

In the beginning of September, Harriman telegraphed FDR's "Special Assistant," Harry Hopkins, with more analyses about the rising tensions with the Soviets. He reported Molotov's sentiments about the Warsaw Uprising where the Soviet minister affirmed that Moscow would only help those who "recognize the Soviet position."⁴² This was a more polite manner of saying that USSR would not aid anybody against their influence and popularity in Eastern Europe.

Furthermore, Harriman commented on overall Soviet-American relations by saying, "I have evidence that they have misinterpreted our generous attitude toward them as a sign of weakness, and acceptance of their policies." Therefore, the US was enabling the Soviets to become a "world bully" unless there was a change in attitude toward them. Harriman proposed the following remedy: "I am disappointed but not discouraged...I am not going to propose any drastic action but a firm but friendly *quid pro quo* attitude. In some cases where it has been possible for us to show a firm hand we have been making definite progress." He then asked to return to Washington to speak personally with the President about the rising tensions.⁴³ Two days later, Hopkins telegraphed back to Harriman that he was not to leave Moscow until Washington ordered it, but that he had the full attention of himself and FDR.⁴⁴

Harriman saw the Soviets' attitude in Poland as a direct result of them believing that the US would not retaliate in any effective way to protest such actions. He believed that America had been too kind in the past as a wartime partner. America had quite generously through Lend-Lease Aid and military support. Meanwhile, the USSR had done everything it could to benefit

⁴² Harriman to Special Assistant to the President Harry L. Hopkins, September 10, 1944, *FRUS 1944 Vol. IV*, 988.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 989-90. Emphasis original.

⁴⁴ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin*, 345.

itself without much care for American interests despite the America's material support. Harriman thought the problem could be solved by toughening America's rhetoric and actions toward the Soviet Union. By advocating a quid pro quo relationship, he believed that it would prevent either side from taking advantage of the other in future actions and planning.

The Harriman and Kennan Divide

On September 18th Kennan wrote two significant documents: one was a diary entry and another was a memo to Harriman which illustrated Kennan's insistence that the US needed to change its foreign policy now or risk losing the peace entirely. As a result of the war, the Soviets had set themselves up for an "extensive sphere of influence" in both Europe and Asia. Military victories translated into boosted confidence when dealing with the West. Kennan had already expressed this sentiment in late July. Kennan offered a remedy which would look eerily similar to what the Iron Curtain became after World War II. To check Soviet influence in Europe, Kennan argued:

We must reconcile ourselves to the fact the Russians will insist on having...a certain sphere of interest along their western border... We must determine in conjunction with the British the limit of our common vital interests on the Continent, i.e., the line beyond which we cannot afford to permit the Russians to exercise unchallenged power or take purely unilateral action. We must make it plain to the Russians in practical ways and in a friendly but firm manner where this line lies."⁴⁵

By "drawing line in the sand" of Europe, Kennan argued that the peace could be saved because recognition of Soviet dominance in certain countries as a result of their victory would be a realistic policy. He argued that "broad generalities such as 'collaboration' or 'democracy' have different meanings for the Russians than us."⁴⁶ Kennan's comparison for this "realistic" policy

⁴⁵ Kennan Journal, September 18, 1944, Kennan Papers, Box 231: Folder 12.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

was a shot at the rhetoric of the Grand Alliance. The Soviet Union was ideologically different than both the United States and Great Britain. However, Prime Minister Winston Churchill and FDR publicly believed in the ideals and goals of the “Atlantic Charter” which they had put forth on August 14, 1941. The Charter stated goals to create a world safe for national self-determination and safe from countries making territorial gains from the war.⁴⁷ Yet, they wanted to form a grand peace with a wartime partner that did not share the same ideological values. Kennan’s idea would be an attempt to reconcile the differences by having an agreed upon “line.” With both sides satisfied, then there was a stronger prospect for peace.

Kennan’s memo to Harriman did not outline his more extreme proposal for an agreed upon “line” of demarcation in Europe. Echoing his journal entry Kennan wrote, “. . .as far as border states are concerned the Soviet Government has never ceased to think in terms of spheres of interest.”⁴⁸ While Kennan argued that both he and Harriman had realized this, he worried that the US government had kept the American people behind an “illusion” which permitted them “to hope” that the US would work in harmony with the Soviet Union in “an international security organization with truly universal power to prevent aggression.” Kennan feared public outcry if suddenly the Soviets did something to ruin this “illusion” and it caused “domestic political repercussions.” The best way would be to gradually make the American public realize that Soviet actions and attitude had been sabotaging the international community’s effort to secure post-war peace in Europe. “It would be futile and would only lead to further trouble for us to attempt to conceal the Russian position from our people. . .”⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Franklin Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, “The Atlantic Charter”, August 14, 1941, cited from the Avalon Project, Lillian Goldman Library, University of Yale Law School.

⁴⁸ Kennan uses the phrase “sphere of interest” which is another form of “sphere of influence.” Kennan used these terms interchangeably with no evidence to suggest it meant anything different.

⁴⁹ Kennan to Harriman, September 18, 1944, Kennan Papers, Box 140: Folder 6. “International security organization” is a reference to the future United Nations Organization at that time being setup.

Harriman did not fully agree with Kennan's view the situation in Europe. In fact, some of the material from Kennan's journal entry made it to a draft telegram for the State Department which Harriman rejected according to Isaacson and Thomas. Harriman did not want to abandon Eastern Europe.⁵⁰ The emphasis of the memo to Harriman was the need for government transparency with the public. He argued that the Americans had a right to know how the Soviets had acted in Europe. Kennan's recommendation to reveal foreign policy problems gradually, in order to avoid public outrage, suggests that the American public favored its Soviet wartime partner. Nonetheless, Kennan's more radical policy did not appeal to Harriman. He was not prepared to tell Washington that the US needed to broker a spheres of influence agreement in Europe.

Kennan's concern for the American public's perception of the USSR was not unique among significant policy makers. James V. Forrestal, the Secretary of the Navy and an old friend of Harriman, commented on the American public in a letter in confidence to a close friend on September 2, 1944. He said:

I find that whenever any American suggests that we act in accordance with the needs of our own security he is apt to be called a god-damned fascist or imperialist, while if Uncle Joe [Stalin] suggests that he needs the Baltic Provinces, half of Poland, all of Bessarabia and access to the Mediterranean, all hands agree that he is a fine, frank, candid and generally delightful fellow who is very easy to deal with because he is so explicit in what he wants.⁵¹

Forrestal's sarcastic analysis illustrates that some officials, like Kennan, had become frustrated by America's lack of a concrete foreign policy plan for post-war Europe. Forrestal implied that because Stalin and the Soviets were "so explicit," they just got what they desired, because the Western Allies had no concrete aim in Europe. Kennan too was worried about

⁵⁰ Kennan's September 18, 1944 entry was placed in Princeton's "Diaries" section. However, Isaacson and Thomas quoted similar phrases in a rejected draft written on the same day.

⁵¹ James Forrestal, *The Forrestal Diaries*, ed. Walter Millis (New York: Viking Press, 1951), 14.

America's "fluctuating foreign policy" which resulted from the "momentary fancies of public opinion in the United States."⁵² Even from Washington, Forrester was frustrated that anything he might advocate would be construed as "imperialist" or "fascist" just because he cared about the interests of his country. However, the aura of positive public opinion for the USSR irritated both of them because in some way the expectation of the public was stopping the US from being tougher on "Uncle Joe."

A few days after Harriman received Kennan's memo, he cabled a message to Hull which emphasized Soviet desires for a sphere of influence and their insistence to interpret political concepts and agreements differently from the Americans and British. In the post-war world, Harriman worried that the USSR interpreted the concept "friendly governments" as having all of its "neighboring countries" in "subservience to the Moscow will" through a "sphere of influence." His analysis of Soviet intent was speculation but he bluntly said, "What frightens me however is that when a country begins to extend its influence by strong arm methods beyond its borders under the guise of security it is difficult to see how a line can be drawn." Furthermore, when he had spoken with Molotov over the fate of Poland as the summer progressed, he claimed that Molotov and the Soviet Government did not understand why the Western Allies were not supportive of the Soviet desire for a "friendly government" in Poland. Despite his litany of reservations, Harriman still had faith in a positive American-Soviet relationship. He believed that the USSR was not just "one mind" because there was not just Stalin but also his counselors at the upper echelons of government. Even further, Harriman hung much hope on the fact that the Soviet people wanted a relationship with the US and that "the principal men in Government hold the same view."⁵³

⁵² Kennan entry, July 27, 1944, Kennan Papers, Box 231: Folder 12.

⁵³ Harriman to Hull, September 20, 1944, *FRUS 1944 Vol. IV*, 993-998.

Harriman's optimism had not been entirely shaken despite his growing skepticism. A critical comparison between him and Kennan was that they both believed a "line" should be drawn but disagreed on the implementation. Kennan wanted an actual line of division in Europe whereas Harriman wanted a distinct line in foreign policy. Strangely, Harriman believed that a country that was willing to "strong arm" its neighbors was also a country that was willing to follow the will of the people who wanted to cooperate with the US. He viewed the aims and goals of the high ranking inner circles of Soviet government as entirely compatible with the masses' wants. When tensions with Poland flared up, Harriman did not factor the will of the Soviet people when he was angered by both Molotov and Stalin. One might argue that with a litany of foreign policy issues with the Soviets, Harriman was doing all that he could to find any positives to work with in the future.

Kennan and Harriman wrote their analyses in September even though Stalin had changed his decision about Warsaw and had enlisted the aid of the Red Army to fight for the city on September 9th. Out of nowhere, Harriman reported to Hull a conversation with Stalin and Clark Kerr on September 23rd where Stalin admitted that he had misjudged the situation in Warsaw. In August, Stalin and Molotov bitterly lambasted the Polish underground forces for having attacked at the wrong time. Now according to Stalin, intelligence sources discovered that the Germans had begun a massive deportation effort of all male Warsaw inhabitants as the Red Army inched closer to the city. Therefore, the insurgents had no choice but to begin their surprise offensive. "Stalin showed none of his vindictiveness towards the Poles in Warsaw previously evidenced."⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Harriman to Hull, September 25, 1944, *FRUS 1944 Vol. III*, 1397-98

Yet, Harriman struggled to understand Stalin's position. The only reasonable explanation, besides that Stalin disliked the Polish Home Army, was that Molotov, the NKVD⁵⁵, or both had "misinformed" or inaccurately reported the situation to him. Harriman was unable to "excuse his [Stalin's] outrageous denial for help..." Harriman's hope that there had been a miscommunication at the top levels of the Kremlin was the only thing he could conjecture that went wrong. His previous cables still illustrated his opinion that the Soviets were attempting to dominate the Balkans and Eastern Europe. Nonetheless, the Germans crushed the uprising on October 2, 1944 resulting in the deaths of 250,000 Poles while the Germans suffered 19,000 casualties with several thousand more missing in action.⁵⁶ The Soviets did not take Warsaw until January 17, 1945.

Together with Deane, Harriman had begun to test his own policy of "firm but friendly" with the different departments of the Soviet Government. By the end of September, he reported some success with an increase in speedy responses to Embassy communications from the Kremlin. Now the Embassy and the US Military Mission were receiving answers from their Soviet counterparts right away rather than waiting days or weeks. Harriman was not convinced that his "firmer and more uncompromising" attitude had fixed all of their problems but that the attitude helped yield immediate results. In conclusion he said, "I am reporting this to you as it is our feeling that more satisfactory results of the last few weeks is an indication of what might result from the general adoption of the above policy."⁵⁷

The memo represents the first time Harriman independently implemented his new foreign policy doctrine of "firm but friendly" and applied it against the Soviets in tandem with Deane.

⁵⁵ "NKVD" was the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs in the U.S.S.R., the government's secret-police organization from 1934 to 1946. NKVD.

⁵⁶ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 349.

⁵⁷ Harriman to Hull and FDR, September 29, 1944, *FRUS Vol. IV*, 1001-02.

By the end of September he felt confident to report back to Washington that his little doctrine had begun to work in Moscow. The question that remained would be whether or not this new attitude would continue to work as tensions escalated between the US and USSR.

Kennan had used the term “friendly but firm” when he spoke of enforcing a dividing line in Europe, but now Harriman had used it as a way for the Embassy to toughen itself against the Soviet Government. Harriman did not appropriate the term from Kennan, but at this point the fact they both used the term in different contexts demonstrated how they could not agree on what it meant to be tougher with the USSR.

Sometime in September Kennan wrote a meticulous essay on the USSR called “Russia--Seven Years Later”, where he “used the past [of Russia] in order to see the future” of what the country might do at the brink of victory. Within the “twenty single-spaced legal sized typed pages”, Kennan wrote about Russian history, culture, society, economy, and its leaders in order to assess the present day stance of Stalin and the USSR towards the rest of the world.⁵⁸ “The Russian people,” he wrote, had driven back “the greatest military force in history” an achievement that had bolstered “national self-confidence.”⁵⁹

In the recent collective memory of the Soviet Union, Kennan argued that the main concern for the Soviet Union once again was the security of the nation. The Soviets’ wartime allies were also part of the interventionist forces that had tried to ruin the Soviet state as it struggled to survive the Russian Civil War in the early 1920’s. The need to fight a common enemy in the Nazis gave the Soviets much needed assistance from the Western Allies which came at the cost of agreeing to “naïve” and “unreal” terms such as “collective security” and “international collaboration.” Future territorial gains by the Red Army would become legally

⁵⁸ Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, 187.

⁵⁹ Kennan, “Russia--Seven Years Later (September 1944),” in *Memoirs 1925-1950*, 504.

protected if the Soviets could place themselves at the international table of world collaboration and security.⁶⁰

Thus, Kennan argued, Soviets had no “need for excessive delicacy” once the Western Allies established a second front because now they could consolidate their “spheres of interest” in Eastern and Central Europe. These spheres were not a question of “communism or capitalism” but a matter of power relationships for the immediate time being. The only issue that mattered was Soviet assurances of border security through the domination of friendly neighboring countries, despite the Soviets’ “past promises” to the “vague program” envisioned by “Western statesmen”--the idea of “collaboration.”⁶¹

At this point in time, Stalin and other elites were concerned about which neighboring countries they could dominate. The Soviet Union needed to be the “invincible” base to support worldwide revolution but this end could also be achieved through the increased domination of neighboring countries. The historians Constantine Pleshakov and Vladislav Zubok call this the “revolutionary-imperial paradigm,” which guided Soviet foreign policy.⁶² A country could be democratic at first and still friendly to the USSR. The immediate main emphasis at that time was power and security which would then be strengthened by the establishment of Communist states. Kennan realized this emphasis in Soviet foreign policy.

The essay was the culmination of Kennan’s innermost thoughts on the USSR, which he chose not to send to the State Department. As a professional diplomat, he gave the essay to Harriman and let him decide what to do with it. To Kennan’s great disappointment, Harriman “returned it...without comment.” Harriman did keep a copy with him and when he left for

⁶⁰ Ibid., 516-17, 521-22.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 13.

Washington in October of 1944 he brought it with him. Kennan was surprised to find that part of his work was later published in the Foreign Relations of the United States. But at the time, Kennan felt “puzzled and moderately disappointed...over his [Harriman’s] failure to react.” Kennan realistically knew that Harriman was probably uncomfortable and not at liberty “to comment on the political content of the document.”⁶³

What Kennan did not realize was that Harriman had in fact read the document on his way to Washington. The document impressed Harriman enough to make sure that both Harry Hopkins and Assistant to the Secretary of State Charles Bohlen (also a friend of Kennan’s) received copies of the essay.⁶⁴ Through Harriman, Kennan’s opinions were reaching out to other important policy advisors in Washington. Kennan’s lament was that he never received any immediate praise or comment for the lengthy critique. Since Kennan knew Harriman’s precarious position as an ambassador did not afford him the opportunity to say whatever he wanted, there was no expectation that this essay was going to redefine American foreign policy with the Soviets. For the time it was written, Kennan’s views were too extreme for the US government to follow.

Harriman and the “Percentages Agreement”

Over the course of a few days in early October, Harriman found himself facing Kennan’s spheres of influence idea but through different people. Harriman eventually learned of Stalin and Churchill’s “Percentages Agreement” which had occurred during the Fourth Moscow Conference. FDR did not authorize Harriman to speak on behalf of the US since the President

⁶³ Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, 230.

⁶⁴ Isaacson and Thomas, *The Wise Men*, 240-41. This is a significant point because copies were not easy to make back then. Harriman’s dispersal of Kennan’s work showed he was impressed by it.

wanted all major talks to take place at a future war conference. FDR did not want to commit the US to any agreements or promises made in Moscow between Stalin and Churchill.⁶⁵

One night, Stalin and Churchill had a private meeting, without Harriman present, and Churchill deemed the evening “apt for business.” Churchill wrote on a slip of paper the countries within British and Soviet interests: Romania, Greece, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Bulgaria. Next to these names, Churchill allotted percentages of British or Soviet control in each one. For example, in Romania, he gave the USSR 90% and the British 10%. In Greece, the percentages were flipped in Britain’s favor. But then in other countries, such as Yugoslavia and Hungary, the percentage was a 50% split. Stalin “made a large tick upon it [the paper]” in agreement. Churchill said to Stalin, “Might it not be thought rather cynical if it seemed we had disposed of these issues, so fateful to millions of people, in such an offhand manner? Let us burn the paper.” Stalin replied, “No, you keep it.” Churchill said this was only a matter of dealing with “immediate war-time arrangements.” Churchill believed that the Allies could not afford to have civil wars break out in the Balkans and this was what he told Roosevelt the next day. He did not mention the percentages.⁶⁶

Harriman learned of this whole affair in tidbits over the course of a few days during the conference. FDR learned about this alleged “spheres of influence” arrangement from Harriman as Churchill revealed more details about what happened. At a lunch, Stalin indicated the agreement was not a “sphere-of-influence arrangement” and so he requested Churchill change the wording of his draft to FDR. Harriman agreed with Stalin since the President wanted matters

⁶⁵ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin*, 356.

⁶⁶ Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War: Triumph and Tragedy*, vol. 6 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1983), 227-29.

to be settled when he was present. Stalin agreed with Harriman and “reaching behind the Prime Minister’s back, shook my hand.”⁶⁷

The next day, Harriman discovered that “percentages had been committed to paper” and so he confronted Churchill and his Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden. According to Harriman’s recollection, Churchill was in bed dictating his letter to Stalin as to ensure they fully understood their percentages agreement. Harriman heard the numbers and told Churchill that he “was certain both Roosevelt and Hull would repudiate the letter, if it was sent.” Churchill said, “Anthony, Averell doesn’t think that we should send this letter to Stalin.” The letter was never sent. At Yalta, the percentages agreement, or even a similar concept, was not brought to discussion.⁶⁸ This evidence further emphasizes that Harriman still did not believe that Europe should be divided into formal spheres of influence.

Perhaps because Harriman stopped Churchill from sending the letter, the issue never caused any serious tension. FDR did not allow Harriman to speak so that the US could not be involved with any such agreements. According to historian Herbert Feis, FDR probably agreed that some measure of influence was needed in the Balkans to avert civil war and unrest. He did not condemn the joint letter Stalin and Churchill sent him regarding the basic idea that war should be averted in the Balkans. Feis also argued that FDR would not have allowed this understanding to mean that the Soviets and British could have a free hand in the Balkans. Both FDR and the State Department believed that “principle should govern European postwar settlements, not proximity or political affiliation or power.”⁶⁹ To the US, the defeat of Germany

⁶⁷ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 357-58.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 357-58.

⁶⁹ Herbert Feis, *Churchill Roosevelt Stalin: The War They Waged and the Peace They Sought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), 451.

was more important than political considerations at the moment. In contrast to the British and Soviets, this was not the case because both sides were already jockeying for territorial influence.

The POW Roadblock

In November, Deane approached a roadblock with Soviet relations over the matter of American and Soviet POWs. At the end of August, neither Harriman nor Deane had heard from the Kremlin about a formalized agreement on the repatriation of POWs. Harriman had left for Washington in October so for the time being Kennan in charge of the Embassy. On November 6, 1944, Deane worked with Kennan to get a response from Molotov to the letter that was sent in August. He sent another letter to Lieutenant General N.V. Slavin to find an answer.⁷⁰

Shortly thereafter, Deane received a response from Slavin that stated that the Red Army was doing all it could for the lives of American POWs but that there were reports that the Americans in Western Europe were mistreating Soviet prisoners. Slavin himself had no details about these reported complaints. Deane responded that if such reports were true, it gave both sides more reason to have an official POW agreement. Deane did not believe Slavin because of his personal communications with General Dwight D. Eisenhower and his staff. The Major General saw this unfounded accusation as “an attack typical of the Russians when they fully realized the insecurity of their own position.” Unlike the Red Army, said Deane, Eisenhower’s staff hosted Soviet officers working there to oversee operations in Western Europe such as POW repatriation and they were “afforded every facility” to perform their duties. The Soviets had not extended the same courtesy to Deane and his staff in Moscow.⁷¹ This disagreement only created more tension for Deane because now his own fellow countrymen were stuck in Eastern Europe and politics were keeping him from solving the issue quickly.

⁷⁰ Lt. Gen. N.V. Slavin was Deane’s liaison officer to the Red Army General Staff.

⁷¹ Deane, *The Strange Alliance*, 186.

Lack of Soviet cooperation also stemmed from a rather embarrassing incident with its own POWs. Deane had learned that since the D-Day Invasion of Normandy, the Allies had captured 28,000 “Russians in German uniform” which were treated as German POWs because of the POW protocol from the Geneva Convention. The Soviets wanted their citizens in German uniform to be “segregated and given preferential treatment” from the German soldiers. Even worse for the USSR, according to Deane, “those taken in German uniforms objected, almost without exception, to being returned to Russian custody for the fear of the retribution which would await them.”⁷²

The implication was that these Soviets had defected to the German military and were not keen on returning to the country which they had renounced. Since most of the 28,000 “almost without exception” wanted to be treated as German POWs, this was a crisis for the USSR’s image abroad. Former Soviet citizens despised their own country so much that they had chosen to take up arms against it. For the Soviets this was a huge embarrassment and it undermined their image as the land of equality and liberty under socialism.

In an act of damage control, the Soviet newspaper Pravda⁷³ published an article written by Colonel General Filip Golikov which elaborated on the complaints registered by Slavin. In contradiction to American reports, Golikov claimed that Soviet men “had been forced into German uniform” and that many “had escaped to assist the French Partisans” or immediately joined up with the Western Allies. Therefore, there were not any Soviets who had defected to the Germans and thus the Americans and British were keeping real Red Army soldiers imprisoned with actual German soldiers.⁷⁴ Since Pravda was government controlled, Deane knew that since

⁷²Ibid., 186-87.

⁷³ Soviet government controlled newspaper and one of the most popular in the USSR. Translation in English means “Truth.”

⁷⁴ Deane, *The Strange Alliance*, 187-88.

Golikov wrote the article, it was therefore sanctioned by the government. Rather than privately respond to Deane a detailed list of grievances, the Soviet government used the press to harm the Western Allies' image as a wartime partner.

In a top secret report to the Chief of Staff of the Army George Marshall on December 2nd, Deane furnished a thorough analysis of Soviet attitudes and policies which advocated a strict "quid pro quo" relationship with the USSR. Harriman formally endorsed the entire document. The Major General called for a reexamination of American foreign policy by criticizing American military aid. He offered this blunt critique:

When the Red Army was back on its heels, it was right for us to give them all possible assistance with no questions asked. It was right to bolster their morale in every way we could. However, they are no longer back on their heels; and, if there is one thing they have plenty of, it's self-confidence. *The situation has changed, but our policy has not.* We still meet their requests to the limit of our ability, and they meet ours to the minimum that will keep us sweet.⁷⁵

Since victory was in sight, Deane urged for a change in both material assistance and the manner in which the US cooperated with the Soviet Government. Unless requested assistance was for the war effort, Deane recommended that all assistance should be repaid with a "quid pro quo" understanding in return. By using this phrase to frame how the US should cooperate with the USSR, he was adopting the same language that Harriman had already used repeatedly. All "proposals for collaboration" should be offered up and then acted upon unilaterally if no response was given "after a reasonable time." Deane wanted this different method of communicating in order to "make the Soviet authorities come to us." In conclusion Deane stated, "If the procedure I suggest above were to be followed, there would be a period in which our

⁷⁵ Major General John Deane to the Chief of Staff of the United States Army George Marshall, December 2, 1944, *FRUS 1944: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, (Washington, GPO, 1955), 448. Emphasis added.

interests would suffer. However, I feel certain that we must be tougher if we are to gain their respect and be able to work with them in the future.”⁷⁶

Deane’s problems with the Soviet Union did not stem exclusively from POW issues. Like Harriman, he believed that the US needed to have a “tougher” foreign policy so that the USSR would not continue to take advantage of US’ generous aid. When Deane noted the issue of Soviet “self-confidence”, he also repeated the concerns that Kennan wrote about in late July 1944 before the Warsaw Uprising. This means that all three men believed that Red Army victories were boosting Soviet confidence to the point of blatant callousness toward the United States.

Conclusion

From the end of July until the end of 1944, the fallout from the failed Warsaw Uprising severely damaged the US Embassy’s relations with the Kremlin. Eastern Europe was becoming a closed off place to the rest of the world as the Red Army marched toward Germany. The failed uprising in Warsaw demonstrated that the Soviets planned to do whatever they pleased in their part of the war regardless of the Western Allies’ protests or concerns. The fate of Poland as a political issue quickly affected other parts of American-Soviet relations. POW evacuation in a wartime situation should have been a completely apolitical issue for the Allies. But now, the Soviets seemed to be expressing their power over Eastern European lands by not helping Deane save his soldiers. Harriman had still remained optimistic, despite Kennan’s pessimism, but so far the diplomatic relations had failed to get any better.

Since neither the State Department nor the President had anything constructive to offer the Embassy, Harriman believed the Embassy’s only course of action was to adopt a “firm but

⁷⁶ Ibid., 449.

friendly” attitude towards the Soviets. He was not specific when he said that the Embassy had seen some results from using such an attitude. However, Deane’s proposal to General Marshall to cut back on Lend Lease aid might suggest that the Embassy was considering bolder plans to protest Soviet conduct. The end of 1944 was a period of personal evolution for all three men as they reacted to Soviet actions in Europe. The beginning of 1945 and the Big Three Conference at Yalta would only increase their skepticism and sharpen their criticism of the Soviet Union.

Chapter Two: The Turning Point after Yalta, January to February 1945

“The nearer we come to vanquishing our enemies the more we inevitably become conscious of differences among the victors.”⁷⁷

Introduction

From January 1945 until the end of February, diplomatic tensions only increased between the Embassy and the Kremlin despite all of the negotiations that had happened at the Yalta Conference. At the center of the conflict was the future of Poland and how its government would be reorganized. Poland would become a juncture for many problems. The US wanted a reorganized and democratic government in Poland while the Soviets were committed to supporting a provisional government operated by the pro-Kremlin Lublin Poles.⁷⁸ Although the Yalta Conference held great promise to solve the Polish problem and makes plans for post-war Europe, the Embassy heads did not hold their breaths. The agreements made at Yalta and evidence of Soviet domination in Eastern Europe caused the Embassy to believe that the Soviets had broken their promises.

The period after Yalta signaled the turning point within the Embassy. Harriman's optimism began to give way to the idea that the US needed to flex its influence in European affairs or it would be too late to stop the Soviet Union from doing as it pleased. Kennan finally proposed for a formal spheres of influence arrangement since he believed no amount of talks or conferences would stop the Soviet Union from establishing its own sphere in Eastern Europe. Although Deane would sign a formal POW repatriation agreement at Yalta, he would soon

⁷⁷ President Franklin D. Roosevelt from his State of the Union Address, January 6, 1945.

⁷⁸ The Polish Committee of National Liberation, or “Lublin Poles,” claimed themselves the legitimate government of Poland and strongly contested the Government of the Republic of Poland in-exile, the “London Poles,” who represented Polish nationalists. The London Poles were the political face to the Polish underground army that had been fighting the Germans.

discover that signed agreements with the Soviets never guaranteed anything would go as planned.

The Weeks before the Yalta Conference

January 1945 did not usher in a clean diplomatic slate between the US and USSR. President Roosevelt spoke these words exactly one day after the Soviet Government officially endorsed the Lublin Committee's ascendency to power as the new Provisional Government of Poland without conferring with the Allies on January 5th 1945.⁷⁹ The USSR favored the "Lublin Poles" because they were sympathetic to communism and maintained strong ties with the Kremlin. The Soviets could depend on a future government operated by the Lublin Committee whereas the London Poles were not willing to accept the domination of Soviet influence in an independent Polish state. As mentioned before, the failed Warsaw Uprising benefited the USSR because most of the patriots who died fighting were aligned with Polish Home Army and the political platform of the London Poles.

By supporting the installation of the Lublin controlled provisional government, the Soviet Union had made a significant gain toward ensuring that Poland would remain within its sphere of influence. The USSR knew that the US and Great Britain did not support this government, yet it sanctioned its rise to power anyway. The USSR went beyond just having a different view on the organization of Poland; it committed itself to unilateral action. With the Yalta Conference just five weeks away, the difference among victors was becoming a stark reality.

Ambassador Harriman wrote a lengthy interpretive report on Soviet actions in Eastern Europe based upon media reports coming out of the area. Like Kennan, who had previously written that battlefield victories were bolstering Red Army morale, Harriman believed that these

⁷⁹ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin*, 373.

military gains were creating an opportunity for the Soviets to accomplish their “political objectives” in newly liberated territories. Harriman did not believe the USSR was attempting to annex these parts of Eastern Europe, but rather that it was trying to ensure that all liberated countries would become “puppet regimes” controlled by “groups responsive to all suggestions emanating from the Kremlin.” Harriman argued that this subversion was possible because the Soviets had been using the following means: “occupation troops, secret police, local communist parties, labor unions, sympathetic leftist organizations, sponsored cultural societies, and economic pressure...”⁸⁰

The Ambassador also boldly proclaimed, “The overriding consideration in Soviet policy is the preoccupation with ‘security’, as Moscow sees it.” Furthermore, the Lublin controlled Provisional Government had already begun land reforms in areas mostly controlled by the peasantry. Harriman believed that this move would help influence the more agrarian areas to give their support to the Lublin government since the peasant countryside lacked “the Communist industrial element.” Also, the USSR was making moves to influence which political powers would come to control the governments of Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary.⁸¹

All of these observations are noteworthy because they ultimately came true during the Cold War. Harriman described the methods and strategies which the Soviet Union used to develop what became the satellite nations of the Soviet bloc behind the Iron Curtain. So even before the Yalta Conference, where many people believe the fate of the free world was decided by the Big Three, Harriman already found cause to believe that the Soviet Government was making strategic moves to create “security” for itself by dominating the affairs of Eastern Europe.

⁸⁰ Harriman to the Secretary of State Edward Stettinius, Jr., January 10, 1945, *FRUS 1944: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 450-453.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Deane had come to see Harriman as one of the best assets that the United States had in dealing with the Soviet Union. Although published in Harriman and Abel's book, a secret message between Deane and General Marshall demonstrated how much Deane valued the skills and attitude of Harriman. British Air Chief Marshal Arthur Tedder thought Stalin would be more approachable if he went to meet him without Harriman. So Harriman honored the request and did not interfere with the meeting, but he did send Deane to the meeting. Deane believed that Tedder had been too polite and open when speaking with Stalin when discussing the new winter offensives, such as the details of the timing. Deane believed Harriman's absence was a complete mistake. He said:

Harriman has constituted our only direct contact with Stalin on all military matters. He had seen Stalin more than any other Britisher or American. Experience in dealing with the Soviets is invaluable and yet at this conference our most experienced individual was left out...Harriman is persistent and tenacious and has passed the stage of having inhibitions when talking to Stalin.⁸²

Just as Marshall entrusted Deane to negotiate on Eisenhower's behalf with the Red Army, he also trusted Harriman as an important military adviser in his capacity as ambassador. According to Harriman's biographer, Rudy Abramson, Marshall allowed Harriman "to have routine access to the military mission's communications system..."⁸³ In this regard, Deane did not work under the gaze of an ambassador who was not privy to any important military information. Instead, both of these men had access to the same military information. This explains how Harriman was able to see a top-secret document sent to Marshall from Deane which lauded his skills as an ambassador to Stalin. Furthermore, in Harriman's public papers in

⁸² Deane to Marshall, January 17, 1945, as excerpted from Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin*, 381. Also, "Britisher" is an informal term for a Briton.

⁸³ Rudy Abramson, *Spanning the Century: The Life of W. Averell Harriman, 1891-1986* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992), 351.

the Library of Congress, any military memo or letter that was sent through to his embassy ended up on his desk. Harriman's papers contained hundreds of copies of sensitive military messages and most of them had nothing personally to do with him.

Unlike his colleagues, George Kennan by the end of January 1945 was so stressed out because of his job and situation in Europe that he wanted to resign from the Foreign Service. As a diplomat without much of a voice in Washington, Kennan typed a letter to his friend, the Assistant to the Secretary of State Charles "Chip" Bohlen on January 26th, 1945. Kennan discussed both his desire to resign and his extreme dislike for US foreign policy. It was no coincidence that Bohlen was going to be at the Yalta Conference and function as FDR's official interpreter.⁸⁴

In the eight page letter to Bohlen, Kennan methodically argued for why the United States needed to change its foreign policy toward the Soviet Union. In a similar way to Harriman, Kennan too saw the USSR's main concern revolving around its own security. Kennan believed that the Soviets wanted Europe devoid "...of cohesion, of balance, [and] of harmony..." because they feared any element on the continent that they could not manage. Remaining consistent with his analyses in late 1944, Kennan did not play the "communism card" to gain attention. Instead, he still continued to believe that the USSR was more concerned with control of neighboring areas than "seeking the immediate introduction of communism anywhere."⁸⁵

Although he lauded the Soviet Union's ability to effectively wage such a massive war, he nonetheless believed that the country was a "jealous Eurasian land power" that would only achieve any sense of true national security until it pushed itself out to the Atlantic Ocean. He

⁸⁴ Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, 188.

⁸⁵ Kennan to Charles "Chip" Bohlen, January 26, 1945, Kennan Papers Box 140: Folder 5. Historian John Gaddis claimed that Kennan destroyed his own copy of the letter; however, I found one in Kennan's papers. This might have been his secretary's copy since Gaddis did say that the secretary kept one.

continued, “We have refused to name any limit for Russian expansion and Russian responsibilities... We have refused to face political issues... We have silently allowed the Russians to bruit about plans for a settlement of Germany’s eastern frontier...” He argued that all of these foolish mistakes were being made because of faith in the “prospects of some future ‘wider collaboration.’” He claimed that the Soviets were freely doing whatever they wanted in liberated territories along with “using our futile missions and representatives” to pretend that the US sanctioned their actions. Kennan also asked the question, “Why could we not make a decent and definite compromise with it [the situation in Europe]--divide Europe frankly into spheres of influence--keep out of the Russian sphere and keep the Russians out of ours?”⁸⁶

Unlike Harriman, Kennan outright called for a spheres of influence agreement. He did not want the US to be seen as a partner in sanctioning the actions of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. He felt compelled to write about such a plan since the US lacked a concrete plan on the governance of countries in Europe during the course of the war. The US needed to decide what its sphere in Europe was and then commit to it. Otherwise, the US would be wasting its time trying to influence affairs in Europe where it had absolutely no influence or physical control.

Anticipating that Bohlen would demand “constructive suggestions,” Kennan declared what the US ought to do if it were to have any chance of controlling the post war settlement of Europe. He began, “We should gather together at once into our hands all the cards we hold and begin to play them for their full value.” Kennan called for an abandonment of “Wilsonian idealism and universalist conceptions of world collaboration.” He advocated for a more pragmatic foreign policy where the US would consolidate its connections to territories it influenced and then be wary of places where the Red Army had control. Moreover, Kennan said,

⁸⁶ Ibid.

“Where the Russians hold power, there our world stops; beyond that line we should not try to lift our voices unless we mean business.”⁸⁷

Kennan admitted that he did not anticipate agreement from Bohlen. In closing he realized that Bohlen might interpret the letter to suggest that Kennan was completely finished with Soviet cooperation. So in the postscript Kennan said, “Russian cooperation will be fruitful, and deserves the name, only when we have made ourselves as independent of it, in our foreign policy structure, as the Russians have made themselves independent of the cooperation of the United States in theirs.”⁸⁸

Kennan’s proposal was remarkably “Churchillian,” because like the Prime Minister, he believed that now was the time to consolidate influence in Europe and not after Germany’s defeat. Churchill wanted a balance of power on the Continent which would mean keeping France and “defeated Germany” strong in order to check the power of the Soviet Union in the east.⁸⁹ Churchill’s bid for a spheres of influence arrangement was the way by which he came to Stalin, and played his “cards...for their full value.” The British were willing to make deals in Europe. Kennan believed the US had enough power and influence to gain a better position in Europe before the war ended. Otherwise, the Soviet Union would have more control and influence once hostilities ceased. Both men wanted their foreign policies to be based upon *realpolitik*. Ideology and written accords could not guarantee Central and Eastern Europe’s safety from Soviet encroachment.

In light of what Kennan wrote before and after the Warsaw Uprising, his postscript further revealed his bitterness toward US foreign policy. Kennan, Harriman, and Deane had been constantly working to open up lines of communication and enhance cooperation. Unlike the

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 395.

Soviet military and diplomatic representatives they worked with daily, these three always had to consider how to enhance cooperative efforts even when their counterparts frustrated and stonewalled them in meetings and correspondence. Since he implied that the Soviet Union was already more “independent” of American considerations, his closing thought was that the US needed to do as it desired with the war and the peace settlement. While Harriman and Deane preferred a “quid pro quo” relationship because they acknowledged that the differences between both nations was great, Kennan had chosen to believe that peaceful coexistence behind territorial lines was really the best case scenario in Europe.

In Chip Bohlen’s memoir, he published his response to Kennan’s letter which he received when he arrived at the Yalta Conference; he did not agree with Kennan’s plan but he did acknowledge that the US was undertaking a great “risk.” Bohlen bluntly stated:

The ‘constructive’ suggestions that you make are frankly naïve to a degree. They may well be the optimum from an abstract point of view. But as practical suggestions they are utterly impossible. Foreign policy of that kind cannot be made in a democracy. Only totalitarian states can make and carry out such policies...But what is clear is that the Soyuz [Soviet Union] is here to stay, as one of the major factors of the world. Quarrelling with them would be so easy, but we can always come to that.⁹⁰

In his memoir, Bohlen recalled that he understood Kennan’s point of view but that Kennan did not understand politics. Bohlen knew that FDR was a “political animal” who went to Yalta “keenly aware of American public opinion.” Thus, FDR wanted assurances that the USSR would help in the Pacific theater of the war and support the creation of a world security organization. Bohlen plainly stated that “...foreign policy in a democracy must take into account

⁹⁰ Charles E. Bohlen, *Witness to History, 1929-1969*, ed. Robert H. Phelps (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1973), 176.

the emotions, beliefs, and goals of the people.”⁹¹ Bohlen almost seemed fatalistic because even if he wanted to agree with Kennan, there was nothing he could do to override America’s public opinion.

Kennan’s solution required a democratic state to implement a “totalitarian” form of foreign policy in order to check the power of a true totalitarian state. In a way, Bohlen criticized Kennan by stating that only such a plan of his could work in the kind of country which he wanted to thwart. Both men saw the other as being too theoretical and not pragmatic enough; Kennan did not value politics enough and Bohlen placed too much faith in Soviet cooperation.

The Yalta Conference

While Kennan remained in Moscow, Harriman and Deane traveled to the Crimea to attend the Yalta Conference from February 4th to 11th. From the start of the conference, both men were annoyed that once again the President and his delegation would have to risk crossing the globe to meet with the shadowy leader of the USSR.

From prior frustrated attempts to hold conferences with the Red Army, Deane had grown tired of being the one who always had to propose a meeting in order to enhance Allied cooperation. In an emotionally charged reminiscence, Deane had this to say about the conference: “No single event of the war irritated me more than seeing the President of the United States lifted from wheel chair to automobile, to ship, to shore, and to aircraft, in order to go halfway around the world as the only possible means of meeting J.V. Stalin.”⁹² The President was ailing in health and because he had polio it was much more difficult for him to travel. However, Stalin’s health excuse somehow trumped Roosevelt’s ailments. According to his

⁹¹ Ibid., 177.

⁹² Deane, *The Strange Alliance*, 160.

physician, Stalin was advised not to leave the Soviet Union. He also had declined meeting at halfway points in locations such as Athens, Cyprus, Malta, and Scotland.⁹³

For the beginning of the Yalta Conference, Kennan published a report on the nature of Soviet civil servants for Secretary of State, Edward Stettinius, Jr. In the report, Kennan highlighted several general rules to be aware of when negotiating with Soviet civil servants. The emphasis was that the Soviet official was unlike any Western official. Soviet officials could not be influenced by friendly conversation or favors since they were bound to the official stance of the Soviet Government. They were expected to “remain impervious to the personal qualities of foreigners” and to never express their own individual opinion on a situation.⁹⁴

In his explanation of each of these rules, Kennan wanted to convey that the US could not negotiate with Soviet officials the same way as with other officials because of the collectivized nature of the Soviet government; officials were just extensions of the state’s view and receivers for foreigners’ points of view. Since almost all officials were Communist Party members and the Party dictated foreign policy, then the officials all espoused the same policies and beliefs. Kennan explained that for anyone to try to curry favor with foreigners was unacceptable by the government. The Soviet Government placed an extremely high emphasis on preventing penetration or influence on its officials by isolating them abroad and changing their identities. Unlike other officials, they were “not influenced by golf or invitations to dinner.” Personal rapport would not work with anyone except with “Stalin himself.”⁹⁵

At Livadia Palace, the former summer home of Tsar Nicholas II, the Big Three came to many different agreements on the future of Europe and planning for the rest of the war.

Roosevelt obtained some of his key goals which were the first scheduled meeting of the United

⁹³ Abramson, *Spanning the Century*, 369-70.

⁹⁴ Kennan to Stettinius, February 2, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 176.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Nations and Soviet assurance that it would enter the Pacific war after the defeat of Germany. The Big Three signed the “Declaration of Liberated Europe” which called for Allied cooperation in the economic rebuilding and political restructuring of the Continent. This aimed to preserve democratic principles, rights to national self-determination, and temporary Allied trusteeship over countries that were unable to function due to lack of a formal government. In particular, the agreement called for the dismemberment of Germany, the creation of an Allied reparations committee in Moscow, and the prosecution of all German war criminals. On Poland, the Big Three decided that the current Provisional Government should be “reorganized on a broader democratic basis with the inclusion of democratic leaders from Poland itself and from Poles abroad.” Further planning on the implementation was to be completed by Molotov, Harriman, and Clark Kerr. Furthermore, the document’s commitment to the ideals of the Atlantic Charter was to ensure that democracy and national self-determination, along with Allied aid, would help Europe destroy “the last vestiges of Nazism and Fascism” in order to have peace for the future.⁹⁶

Harriman left Yalta hopeful that the agreements would be carried out but was cognizant of the fact that FDR and his colleagues had been too receptive about the wording. Harriman feared that misinterpretation from the Soviet side would undermine the future plans for Europe. Harriman recalled, “Roosevelt never was much of a stickler for language...as long as he could put his own interpretation on the language, he did not care much what interpretation other people put on it.” Even the Joint Chiefs of Staff approved the drafts despite Harriman’s protest. The Ambassador did regret not coaxing the President more to reconsider the wording regarding the government of Poland. Stalin wanted the current Provisional Government to be “reorganized” rather than commit to the creation of a “new Polish government.” Unfortunately for Harriman,

⁹⁶ “Communique Issued at the End of the Conference,” February 12, 1945, *FRUS 1944: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 968-74.

“no names were mentioned” and the agreement lacked a “detailed discussion of the kind of government to be established.”⁹⁷

The historian Vladislav Zubok argued that Stalin was just as inclined as Roosevelt to make his own interpretation of the Declaration. He argued that the document served Roosevelt in that it helped the President appease “domestic critics” who disapproved of his collaboration with Stalin in European affairs. Zubok claimed that the agreement might have been used to prevent “more blatant Soviet aggression.” However from Stalin’s point of view, the Declaration gave the Soviets a right to a sphere of influence in Eastern Europe.⁹⁸ Therefore, lack of specific wording and terms enabled each side to see what it wanted in the agreements.

Along with concern about wording, Harriman also realistically believed that the accords made at Yalta were just a foundation for talks to continue as the Allies liberated Europe. In his book, Harriman said:

There was an expression we used at the embassy at the time--*that trading with the Russians you had to buy the same horse twice*...I had that feeling about the Polish agreement and said as much to Bohlen. He agreed that the whole negotiation we had just completed at Yalta would have to be developed again from the ground up. We had established nothing more than the machinery for renegotiation.⁹⁹

When Kennan read about the agreements made at Yalta he feared that US foreign policy was going to ruin any hopes for political stability in Europe.¹⁰⁰ He worried that a divided Germany, riddled with reparations, would only benefit the USSR in its ability to exert more influence over the rest of Europe. He said, “Since we ourselves have no constructive ideas for the

⁹⁷ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin*, 399, 413.

⁹⁸ Vladislav M. Zubok, *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 22.

⁹⁹ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 412. Emphasis added.

¹⁰⁰ Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy*, 96-7.

future of Germany, our influence can only be negative. And without our support the British can do nothing. The result is that the Russians will do as they please, first within their own zones and then, in increasing measure, in ours.”¹⁰¹

Furthermore, Kennan called the Yalta Declaration “the shabbiest sort of equivocation, certainly not calculated to pull the wool over the eyes of the Western public but bound to have this effect.” In particular, he despised the ambiguous and lofty language of the agreement, such as, “[forming a new Polish government] on a broader democratic basis,” and “free and unfettered elections.”¹⁰² Not only did he hate the wording and the concepts of the agreement, his old friend Chip Bohlen helped draft much of the writing.¹⁰³ As an outsider to the Conference, even with his friendly influence on Bohlen as both FDR’s chief interpreter and advisor, Kennan failed to persuade anyone that current US foreign policy was not going to be effective.

Deane’s Problem with the Repatriation Agreement

On the last day of Yalta, Major General Deane finally succeeded in getting the Soviet Government to sign an official agreement regarding the repatriation of Allied soldiers and civilians. In the closing of 1944, Deane had been unable to have any substantive talks with anyone from the Red Army to make an agreement on POW repatriation. Through the persistent lobbying of Kennan and Harriman, Deane had a conference with General K.D. Golubev who was the deputy administrator of the Soviet Repatriation Commission. But, the agreement was not formally recognized until February 11, 1945.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Kennan as quoted in Mayers, *George Kennan and the Dilemmas of US Foreign Policy*, 96-7. Originally from Kennan, “Comments On the Results of the Crimea Conference as Set Forth in the Published Communique,” February 14, 1945, Kennan Papers, Box 23.

¹⁰² Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, 211-12.

¹⁰³ Isaacson and Thomas, *The Wise Men*, 246.

¹⁰⁴ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin*, 416.

The spirit of the agreement was that both countries would be able to evacuate their citizens as quickly as possible from concentration points and also provide all necessary aid for their citizens without delay. As long as communications were relayed through the proper channels, both American and Soviet personnel would be allowed to access each other's territory in order to contact these "camps" or "points of concentration." Nothing in the agreement specified that either the US or the USSR would have to negotiate with the governments of liberated countries.¹⁰⁵

The Soviet Government's violation of the repatriation agreements signed by Deane demonstrated its commitment to dominate all matters and affairs in Eastern Europe no matter what issue was at stake. To Deane's utter dismay and astonishment, Harriman's saying became a reality on February 17, 1945, only days after the Yalta Conference had concluded. Three American POWs showed up by themselves at the door of the American Military Mission in Moscow. Captain Ernest M. Gruenberg, Second Lieutenant Frank H. Colley, and Second Lieutenant John N. Dimmling, Jr., had left their German prison camp, due to Red Army advances, and wandered across Eastern Europe all the way to Moscow.¹⁰⁶

As they crossed Poland, they met Soviet officers who did nothing to help them. Captain Gruenberg worked in a Soviet field hospital for a few days which gave the three men a chance to temporarily rest. They also ran into scores of liberated American POWs who had no idea where to go as the Red Army advanced past them. At a Soviet camp in Wegheim, Poland, the three soldiers "escaped" because the local commander did not know what to do with them or other American soldiers. The three officers claimed that many lost Americans "avoided forming large

¹⁰⁵ Also, for more information about the specific wording of the agreement please refer to, "Agreement Relating to Prisoners of War and Civilians Liberated by Forces Operating under Soviet Command and Forces Operating under United States of America Command," February 11, 1945, *FRUS: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 985-87.

¹⁰⁶ Deane, *The Strange Alliance*, 190-92.

groups” because they all had heard about the terrible conditions at Rembertow-- the largest camp where American POWs were being held. The Americans felt safer living with local Poles and staying on the move than they going to wait for evacuation in the squalor of a Soviet camp. They only found the military mission while in Moscow because a Soviet soldier gave them directions from the train depot.¹⁰⁷

In his memoir, Deane said, “The fact that these three officers could have made their way across Poland and Russia without being taken into custody by the N.K.V.D. was one of the freakish incidents of the war that defy explanation.”¹⁰⁸ Needless to say, Deane was outraged that his own officers had to come find him in order to get help. The officers’ eyewitness account from their odyssey proved that the Red Army had not seriously followed through the repatriation agreement signed at Yalta. Like most agreements at Yalta, once they were signed they were active immediately.

Since the closing months of 1944, the Americans had been providing for Soviet POWs in France despite their continuous efforts to advance further toward Germany. The Soviets did not show any good faith by failing to quickly enact a protocol to save other Allied soldiers in Poland. The US was powerless to do anything about it since it was all happening in Eastern Europe which was becoming more and more a Soviet sphere of influence.

The same day three American officers strolled into the military mission, Deane and his colleagues had a tense debate with General Slavin over the implementation of the repatriation agreement. The argument was documented in a classified copy of the meeting minutes. Slavin wanted to register a complaint against the US claiming that “Soviet ex-prisoners of war were being mistreated by the American authorities,” in particular, that the Americans had been

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 190-92.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 191.

housing Soviet soldiers with German POW's. Deane asked for a clarification on the claim but Slavin replied that "he did not have any specific instances at hand, but that a list of complaints would be furnished in the next few days." Slavin also reiterated that the Soviet Government was doing all that it could to provide for the Americans and that he had no complaints from them.¹⁰⁹

Immediately, Deane stated four grievances he had against the Soviet Government: first, insufficient contact with liberated prisoners in Soviet territory; second, no Soviet reporting on the whereabouts of the ex-prisoners; third, no permission for Americans to use their own transports; fourth, denied the right to bring aid and supplies to servicemen. Slavin responded by saying that Deane would have to compile a report. Not bending to Soviet stonewalling, Deane responded that "he had no intention of rendering a report to General Slavin..." The Major General reminded Slavin that the USSR already had observers attached to General Eisenhower's office and that if they had a problem they should be brought to Eisenhower or General McNarney in the Mediterranean theater of operations. Deane stated that "he did not wish to discuss the matter further with General Slavin..." Furthermore, Deane suggested a "new and more effective agreement be worked out between the governments."¹¹⁰

Deane's POW problem greatly influenced the Embassy's attitudes towards the Soviets. Although the issue did not affect the future affairs of Europe, the issue undermined the legitimacy of the Yalta accords. Since the Allies needed coordinated efforts to win the war, they also needed cooperation when implementing agreements. The Soviets had no influence in Western Europe and vice versa for the Western Allies in Eastern Europe. When it came to evacuating soldiers, there should have been no political stonewalling involved. Deane had been denied every opportunity to send in contact officers and supplies. It had become quite clear that

¹⁰⁹ "Meeting at OVS" (minutes), February 17, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

¹¹⁰ "Meeting at OVS" (minutes), February 17, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

the Soviets did not want any foreign intrusions into Poland. In many ways, Kennan's analysis had been correct. The US had no leverage in Eastern European affairs and the Soviet Government was determined to secure all border regions which it had liberated.

More Signs of Soviet Domination in Eastern Europe

On February 20, 1945, General Cortlandt Schuyler, who was the American representative on the Allied Control Commission (ACC) in Romania, wrote a startling telegram to Harriman. Schuyler believed that the Soviet Union was trying to completely take over or reign in Romania. Harriman had been aware at Yalta of Soviet ambitions to influence Hungary, Bulgaria, and Romania.¹¹¹ However, the Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe sanctioned national self-determination.¹¹² From Schuyler's short time stationed in Romania, he claimed that the Soviets were trying to foster the growth "an extreme left-wing government" through the "disintegration of the historic Rumanian political parties."¹¹³

Furthermore, Schuyler stated that the USSR had two obvious goals in Romania: the "incorporation of the country into the Soviet Union" or the creation of "an independent communist state...friendly to the Soviet Union." He supported his claim with several detailed points. There had been an emergence of "strict censorship" in the press with leftist media unscathed. Soviet influence on the ACC was preventing the "entry of British and American correspondents into Rumania." Not even Schuyler had been able to get a reporter into Romania. In tandem with media censorship, the "Russian and local communist press" continued to attack

¹¹¹ Harriman to Stettinius, Jr., January 10, 1945, *FRUS 1944: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 450-453.

¹¹² "Declaration on Liberated Europe," February 11, 1945, *FRUS 1944: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta*, 972.

¹¹³ "Paraphrase of Army Cable from General Schuyler," February 20, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

the Romanian conservative party. Also, the Soviets were using the ACC to diminish Romanian “home forces” which would limit the country’s ability to manage any outburst of social unrest.¹¹⁴

The report indicates that Schuyler was unable to do much from his position on the ACC which in principle was supposed to be a cooperative system where all representatives from the Allies could help govern liberated European countries. Taking into consideration how soon after Yalta this report was written, the evidence indicates that the Soviets had not changed much of their foreign policy at all.

Conclusion

The main problem continuing into March for Harriman, Deane, and Kennan would be how to handle this growing tension which was now becoming quite obvious. How many times could they continue to “buy the same horse” from the Soviets before it would be too late to save Europe from unchecked Soviet influence?

The whole problem harkens back to the words of the President himself. As the Allies squeezed Germany closer to defeat, their collective differences were becoming much more apparent. Although Kennan believed he had the most pragmatic solution for dealing with the Soviet Union in Europe, Bohlen thought that such a solution was just not practical because of politics. Even though Deane thought he had got what he wanted, an agreement of repatriation, his feeling of success was short lived. Harriman was tasked by the President to make the best of a bad situation, but the Ambassador realized that the Soviets might try undercutting the goals of the West by interpreting Yalta as they saw fit. Deane’s inability to get American contact officers and supplies into Poland for POWs and Schuyler’s observations of Soviet domination in

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

Romania demonstrated that the Soviets were not going to yield in Eastern Europe. As the historian Zubok argued, Stalin would not yield because “security and regime-building...were two sides of the same coin.”¹¹⁵

The more land the Red Army liberated, the more the Soviet Union could project itself outward toward Germany and Southeastern Europe. Harriman and others might have thought immediately after Yalta that they had just renegotiated to “buy the same horse” but in fact it seemed that there was just no horse for sale anymore. The “differences among the victors” was beginning to unravel the Grand Alliance.

¹¹⁵ Zubok, *A Failed Empire*, 21.

Chapter Three: The “Barbarian Invasion,” March to V-E Day

“Unless we wish to accept the 20th Century barbarian invasion of Europe, with repercussions extending further and in the East as well, we must find ways to arrest the Soviet domineering policy. I still believe we have the power and ability to temper the situation if we adopt a well considered and forceful policy.”¹¹⁶

Introduction

From the perspective of the Embassy by March 1945, the agreements at Yalta failed to foster more diplomatic cooperation and respect between the US and the USSR as the Third Reich retreated further towards Berlin. The fate of Europe would rest in the hands of both the American and Soviet governments once hostilities ceased. As the Allies liberated more territory, the stakes grew higher as to who would have the advantage in deciding how to control that area temporarily. With far more countries in Eastern Europe and a much larger offensive than the western front, the Soviets were constantly overrunning more countries than the Western Allies.

The Declaration on Liberated Europe sought to establish a guiding principle for self-determination and democracy in a post-war Europe but it lacked concrete specifics. As Henry Kissinger argued, the United States’ foreign policy at the time did not focus on political arrangements since the war needed to be won first. For Stalin and the Soviet Union this opened up an opportunity to make gains through war. The longer the Red Army kept fighting and taking ground, the more “bargaining chips” Stalin could have when the time came to negotiate a comprehensive political settlement at the peace.¹¹⁷

Although Harriman, Kennan, and Deane had their own responsibilities and nuanced views on US foreign policy, the end of the war in Europe influenced them to see US-USSR relations in a similar manner. From March to V-E Day in May, tensions between the US and

¹¹⁶ Harriman to Stettinius, March 21, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

¹¹⁷ Kissinger, *Diplomacy*, 409.

USSR heightened to the point where even Harriman began to call for the protection of Western Europe from Soviet influence through immediate economic reconstruction. The heightened tensions and the death of FDR created a situation where people like Harriman and Deane could become part of foreign policy. President Truman would need all the advice he could get in order to be prepared to finish the war and start the peace process. Although Deane, Harriman, and Kennan never held the same exact view, by the end of the war they all agreed that the Soviet Union was not planning on leaving Eastern Europe and that this jeopardized the future of the entire European continent.

The Repatriation Problem in Poland

On March 2nd, both Harriman and Deane reported to their respective supervisors about Soviet intractability in Poland. In a telegraph to General Eisenhower, Deane criticized the USSR for having repeatedly refused requests to transport sick and wounded American personnel out of Poland. Soviet diplomat Andrei Vyshinski had reported to Harriman that all American POWs “had been evacuated.” However, an eyewitness report from an American reporter indicated that the many men were still stranded in the country. Since Deane had been unable to send air transport to Poland, he had no sense of the situation. Furthermore, American contact officers were incapable of locating men because the Soviets kept them “restricted” to the areas where the contact officers had landed.¹¹⁸

Likewise, Harriman wrote a scathing report to Undersecretary of State Joseph Grew on his negotiations over the reorganization of the Polish Provisional Government. Despite the agreement at Yalta to recreate the provisional government on a “broader democratic basis,” neither Harriman nor Clark Kerr were able to convince Molotov to allow more people from the

¹¹⁸ Deane to General Eisenhower, March 2, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

London Poles, such as Mikołajczyk, the head of the government in-exile.¹¹⁹ Harriman stated that communications with Molotov had indicated to him “that they do not (repeat not) accept the spirit of the Crimea decisions.” Harriman claimed he was not completely downtrodden about this one meeting but did believe that he and Clark Kerr were being treated to “the usual Russian tactics of attempting to wear us down.”¹²⁰

Both POW repatriation and talks to reorganize the Provisional Government illustrate how Poland was gradually becoming isolated under Soviet occupation. The US and UK had limited and tightly controlled access to Poland despite the agreements both to reorganize the provisional government and to conduct POW evacuations.

Shortly after the news on Romania, Deane and Harriman continued to struggle with soldier evacuation out of Poland. In two separate letters to FDR, Harriman spoke on behalf of himself and Deane in expressing his immense frustration over the stalemate in Poland. On March 8th, Harriman reported that the intelligence from evacuated officers indicated that there were thousands more soldiers still stranded and in need of medical attention. The Soviets had devised a plan to take all soldiers and evacuate them to Odessa where the US could then extricate them. Harriman had no issue with this, but he said “I am outraged...that the Soviet Government has declined to carry out the agreement signed at Yalta...” By this he meant that the US was still unable to travel to different parts of Poland and evacuate the sick and wounded. Nor had contact officers been allowed to travel to soldier rally points.¹²¹ Harriman also argued in his second letter that he the Soviets denied Deane permission to travel to Poland on the basis that no more

Americans were in Poland. Harriman conjectured that the Soviets had “been attempting to stall

¹¹⁹ “Declaration on Liberated Europe,” February 11, 1945, *FRUS 1944: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta*, 973-74.

¹²⁰ Harriman to Undersecretary Joseph Grew, March 2, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177. Due to the overseas commitments of Secretary Stettinius, Grew was also referred to as the “Acting Secretary of State” when Stettinius was not in Washington.

¹²¹ Harriman to Roosevelt, March 8, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 1074-75.

us” so that no American personnel would have any need to enter Poland. Harriman urged the President to appeal directly to Stalin.¹²²

The POW agreement at Yalta had not legislated authority to any provisional governments in Europe when it came to repatriation transfers. Yet according to the Soviets, the US needed permission from both the Polish Provisional Government and the USSR to enter Poland. In a telegraph to the State Department, Harriman said, “The Soviet Government, I feel, is trying to use our liberated prisoners of war as a club to induce us to give increased prestige to the Polish Provisional Government by dealing with it in this connection...” Harriman added to his own speculation by prescribing retaliation which he and Deane had agreed to. Eisenhower should “restrict the movement of Soviet contact officers in France” just like the Soviets were doing to US contact officers in certain Polish locations. There should be a suspension of Lend-Lease aid to the USSR that was not vital to the war effort. Also, the US ought to let rescued POWs criticize the USSR in the press.¹²³ Since the US had not recognized the Lublin Government still in power, the US would not recognize that it needed authority from a government that was not jointly endorsed by the Allies. Now in the POW situation, Harriman and Deane had decided the best course of action should be to demand a “friendly but firm quid pro quo” policy like the one Harriman had prescribed back in September.

Historian Frank Costigliola argued in his book, Roosevelt’s Lost Alliances, that Americans had “mythicized and ennobled war captives” since the nation’s beginning. His analysis argues that this “mythicized” view of POWs contributed to why Deane and Harriman were “appalled” by the situation in Poland. Furthermore, he credits Stalin for suspecting that the West was using the POW evacuations as a mean to “smuggle anti-Soviet agents.” Also, he

¹²² Harriman to Roosevelt, March 11, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

¹²³ Harriman to the State Department, March 14, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

contends that FDR “rebuffed” Harriman and chose not to retaliate for Soviet violations of the agreement.¹²⁴

The problem with Costigliola’s analysis is that he belittles human emotion and thinking by relegating the cause for Harriman and Deane’s frustration as purely a product of storied myths about American POWs. In reality, the POW issue was a huge problem. Deane’s main task in Europe was to secure the safe passage of American ex-prisoners out of Soviet occupied territory. Since Harriman was the closest man to all of the major personalities in the Kremlin, he too had a responsibility to do everything he could to help Deane. In the many top secret documents that Harriman or Deane wrote, none show any concern for secret operations to bring in anti-Soviet agents. This does not mean that no such plans ever existed, but the overwhelming majority of archival evidence demonstrates that both men, and presumably Kennan, did in fact care about evacuating their fellow compatriots from Europe.

The politics of the matter were that the Soviets had violated the repatriation agreement at Yalta. The envisioned plan was that rally points across Eastern Europe would enable the Americans to fly in to evacuate the wounded and deliver needed supplies for them. Most importantly, the agreement emphasized that all operations revolved around the “places agreed upon between those authorities.” Furthermore the agreement stated that “The contracting parties will give the fullest possible effect to the foregoing provisions of the Agreement...”¹²⁵ The USSR decided not to confer with the US on any of these operations. Where the US wanted to fly to several rally points, the Soviets decided to use major concentration points to funnel all Americans to Odessa. Geographically, Odessa is several hundreds of miles away from the

¹²⁴ Frank Costigliola, *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances: How Personal Politics Helped Start the Cold War* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 307,309.

¹²⁵ “Agreement Relating to Prisoners of War and Civilians Liberated by Forces Operating Under Soviet Command and Forces Operating under United States of American Command,” February 11, 1945, *FRUS: The Conferences at Malta and Yalta, 1945*, 985-87.

southern border of Poland. The US could do little to help its own servicemen when they were being moved to one place and then being completely taken out of the country where they were supposed to be waiting for evacuation.

FDR did not adopt Harriman and Deane's plan for retaliation, but he did not rebuff them entirely as Costigliola suggested, because he wrote an appeal to Stalin; the problem was that Stalin only offered excuses for an agreement the signing of which he had authorized at Yalta. FDR stated his concerns about the great numbers of Americans, especially the sick and wounded, who were still stuck or wandering in Poland. He also said, "Frankly I cannot understand your reluctance to permit American officers and means to assist their own people in this matter. This Government has done everything to meet each of your requests."¹²⁶

Stalin rebutted FDR's letter by denying that many POWs were still in Poland. Stalin cited that there were "only 17 sick Americans" left in Poland. Then he continued to say that he could not burden his officers with having American officers attached to their units as they fought to secure the front and rear lines. He did not want any non-essential military personnel interfering with his military operations. Raising the same objections as Molotov in late 1944, Stalin also insisted that the US had been wrongfully placing Soviet citizens together with German captives. He even claimed that Soviet treatment for Americans was better than the ones provided for Soviets in France.¹²⁷ This report on Soviet treatment of American POWs contradicted a report made by Harriman which complained that American soldiers were not entirely provided food and clothing, because American aid transports were forbidden from entering Poland.¹²⁸

Acting Secretary of State Grew wrote to Soviet Ambassador Andrei Gromyko explaining the complexity of the Soviet POW situation in France. The issue was that there was still a great

¹²⁶ Roosevelt to Stalin, March 17, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 1082.

¹²⁷ Stalin to Roosevelt, March 22, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 1082-83.

¹²⁸ Harriman to Grew, March 14, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 1080.

number of Soviets captured in German uniform who demanded their rights under the Geneva Prisoners of War Convention. Under international law these soldiers had the right to be treated as German nationals. Additionally, the US Government was concerned at the time that if the US did not abide by this law, the Germans might retaliate with measures against American POWs.¹²⁹

This problem continued to bother the Soviets even after a formal repatriation agreement. Stalin's reply to FDR can be interpreted as an admission of failure because he did not try to deny American claims but just offered excuses. Regardless, the American view point, especially in the Moscow embassy, was that the Soviets had signed a contract and that they were fully expected to comply with the terms agreed upon at the signing.

Romania Falling Under Soviet Domination

The issue of joint occupational governance in Romania flared again in light of the accords stated within the Yalta Declaration. In response to Molotov's insistence that his representatives on the ACC needed only to inform the other Allied representatives on developments in Romania, Acting Secretary Grew confirmed to Harriman that this arrangement was not acceptable. The Yalta Declaration superseded the original "Armistice Agreement" on Romania. He stated this view on behalf of the entire State Department and not just himself. Furthermore, Grew received reports from General Schuyler that the Soviets had "not even kept [him] informed of action taken...by the Soviet Government." Grew also acknowledged that Romania's national unrest had most likely been caused by Soviet influence within the country.¹³⁰

In addition to Grew's telegraph, Kennan expressed more concern over Romania and the future of the Balkan countries. Kennan recalled, "I fussed, fumed, and plagued Averell" because

¹²⁹ Grew to Ambassador Andrei Gromyko, March 23, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 1083-84.

¹³⁰ Grew to Harriman, March 3, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 495-96.

the Embassy had learned that the Soviets had gone to “American-owned oilfields” and “impudently set about to haul away to the Caucasus...the movable American property.” This happened regardless of the fact that they had been ordered “to protect” oilfield equipment. More reports indicated that the NKVD continued “to isolate” Western Allied officials attached to their respective ACCs “from the population.”¹³¹

As the situation in Eastern Europe became clearer, Harriman finally told Molotov: “I wish to stress once more the importance my Government attaches to agreement among the three allied governments on a solution of the Rumanian crisis in harmony with the Crimea Declaration.”¹³² The situation in Romania, as told by both Schuyler and Kennan, illustrated that anything which the Soviets occupied--they kept. The process only continued as the war went on into the spring months.

Harriman had failed to realize that the Western Allies had already set a precedent in 1943 with the capitulation of Italy when they did not include the USSR in Italy’s occupational control. Both historians Gaddis and Theoharis agree that by excluding the Soviet Union from joint-control in Italy, this precedent enabled the Soviets to do as they pleased with occupational control in Eastern Europe. Gaddis argued that this precedent allowed the Soviets “to deny the Americans and British any meaningful role in in the occupation of Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary when the Red Army moved into those territories in 1944-45.”¹³³ In his memoir, Kennan claimed that he had realized this would happen. At the time he said he did not understand why

¹³¹ Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, 235.

¹³² Harriman to Molotov, March 7, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 501.

¹³³ John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 19-20 and Athan Theoharis, “Roosevelt and Truman on Yalta: The Origins of the Cold War,” 216.

the US insisted it should have equal representation on the ACCs in Eastern Europe because of the precedent set in Italy.¹³⁴

The Berne Incident

Amidst all of the disagreements on Eastern Europe and prisoner repatriation, word that the Germans might surrender in northern Italy to the Western Allies jostled the alliance with the USSR. Unbeknownst to the Soviets, the US Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the British had been secretly negotiating with S.S. officials to have a meeting to end hostilities in northern Italy.¹³⁵ The meeting was known as “Operation Sunrise.”

However, before Harriman told Molotov about the meeting, the US had already discussed how the meeting should be handled. In a formal report endorsed by the entire United States Chiefs of Staff, Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, and Secretary of War Henry Stimson, the US Chiefs of Staff argued to the US/UK Combined Chiefs of Staff that the negotiation talks at Berne, Switzerland, were legitimate and underway. Furthermore, the Chiefs of Staff accepted the reasons submitted by Harriman, as well as Deane, that the Soviets had “no justification” to become part of the negotiations with their representatives. Since Italy had been part of a Western Allied front, the Soviets did not need to be present and Harriman reportedly told the Chiefs of Staff that allowing the Soviets representation would be seen “as a sign of weakness.”¹³⁶

Deane stated on the same day, in a telegraph to General Marshall, that Soviet participation in this surrender would be analogous to US participation in the surrender of German

¹³⁴ Kennan, *Memoirs: 1925-1950*, 235.

¹³⁵ Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, 92.

¹³⁶ United States Chiefs of Staff to the Combined Chiefs of Staff, March 13, 1945, *FRUS Vol. III*, 727-28. The Combined Chiefs of Staff (CCS) was the military leadership of the Western Allies which combined the British Chiefs of Staff Committee with the American Joint Chiefs of Staff.

divisions trapped in Latvia.¹³⁷ To Harriman and Deane, there was no precedent for the Soviet Union to demand participation in surrender where no political agreements were to be discussed. As arrangement for Soviet participation would only delay the negotiations.

The next day, Molotov expressed the Soviet Government's frustration that it was not being included in the preliminary meeting at Berne. When Molotov received the Combined Joint Chiefs message from Harriman, he was not pleased. He stated that if the USSR was not going to have representatives present at this preliminary meeting that the USSR would insist that "negotiations already begun...be broken off." Molotov saw this as unacceptable because it involved a major negotiation with the "third Allied power ruled out."¹³⁸

Harriman postulated why the Soviet Government would be so angry and bitter about its exclusion from the Berne meetings. He listed some possible reasons: "they [Soviets] are suspicious of us," "with Germany they have some undisclosed motives or plans," "it's a matter of general prestige," or "they do not believe us." Since the Red Army had fought and sacrificed the most in the European theater, the Soviets felt they ought to be part of any "major surrender" in Europe.¹³⁹

Historian John Gaddis argued that Moscow's reactions were the ultimate result of Stalin fearing that "his capitalist allies might make a deal with Hitler." Regardless of the Normandy Invasion and "Roosevelt's efforts at personal diplomacy" there still lacked "a basis of mutual trust."¹⁴⁰ Gaddis's argument also fits with historian Vojtech Mastny's argument that Stalin and

¹³⁷ Deane to Marshall, March 13, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

¹³⁸ Excerpts of Molotov's response cited from Harriman to Stettinius, March 16, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol III*, 732.

¹³⁹ Harriman to State Department, March 17, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

¹⁴⁰ Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, 92-3.

the Red Army feared that Germany might cease fighting all together in Western Europe so that it could solely focus on fighting the Soviets.¹⁴¹

In Harriman and Deane's thinking, the relationship had no longer been a fair relationship of mutual trust since the Yalta Conference. Harriman believed, "...Berne meeting confirms the growing impression that General Deane and I have received, particularly since the Crimea Conference, that the Soviet leaders have come to believe that they can force their will on us on any issue." He and Deane also categorized Soviet conduct as a "domineering attitude." Harriman argued that the Soviet Union had "placed their own interpretation on the Yalta agreements" with regard to Poland, prisoner repatriation, and control over Romania. What confused Harriman was that only a few days ago, Molotov had raised no objections to the Western Allies participation in the Berne meeting. Harriman recommended that the US "face the issue" and in dialogue to remain "firm but friendly."¹⁴²

Harriman and Deane seemed to view Molotov's demands as the point where the USSR had crossed the line. How the Soviets had interpreted Yalta was one matter, but now Molotov's response reflected this new "domineering attitude" which influenced Harriman and Deane to believe the Soviet Union was trying to force its agenda on all issues. By comparison, the US had not tried to impede surrenders in Eastern Europe by demanding participation in them since that was within its own theater of the war. The situation seemed to be that the USSR was trying to dictate Western Allied military policy.

¹⁴¹ Vojtech Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War: Diplomacy, Warfare, and the Politics of Communism, 1941-1945* (New York: Columbia University Press), 270. Gaddis cited Mastny in his book, *The Cold War: A New History*, 20.

¹⁴² Harriman to Stettinius, March 17, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. 3*, 732-33.

Back in Washington, Secretary of the Navy Forrestal wrote down in his diary that the Soviets were “raising a complete tempest in a teapot.”¹⁴³ The general American attitude in Washington seemed to reflect that the USSR was upset over nothing because there was no conspiracy to make a separate pact with Hitler. This idea was supported by the fact that Roosevelt had been espousing the doctrine of “unconditional surrender” since the Casablanca Conference.

Deane wrote in his memoir that “there may have been an underlying note of vindictiveness in my recommendation to General Marshall.” For months, and especially after Yalta, Deane had no real positive results from Soviet cooperation. All embassy intelligence indicated that there were still American servicemen stuck in Eastern Europe. For Deane to question his “vindictiveness” might have been purely a result from the fact that he wrote his memoir a year after his struggles in Moscow. Deane did conclude that the Berne affair, despite the “severe strain” it placed on relations, had a positive effect on foreign policy. He said, “It marked a distinct turn in the attitude of the United States toward the Soviet Union and gave notice that we were not to be pushed around.”¹⁴⁴

Deane’s outlook on the matter illustrated exactly what both he and Harriman had wanted all along--not to “be pushed around.” As Harriman had said before, the USSR had been behaving like a “bully” on the continent and had shown a “domineering attitude” toward the US. Both men believed in what the author shall call, “The Harriman Doctrine,” which advocated “a firm but friendly quid pro quo attitude” toward the Soviet Union on all diplomatic matters. Yet neither Harriman nor Deane realized that such a stance might give the Soviets’ more justification to do as they pleased in Eastern Europe.

¹⁴³ Forrestal, *The Forrestal Diaries*, 36.

¹⁴⁴ Deane, *The Strange Alliance*, 164-65.

Harriman's Unsent Telegram

Perhaps one of the most revealing insights into the mind of Harriman at this time can be viewed by an unsent telegram labeled "PERSONAL AND TOPSECRET FOR THE SECRETARY ONLY FROM HARRIMAN." On March 21st, Harriman typed an eight page draft which outlined both his general opinion of American-Soviet relations and what the US should do to make the most of a deteriorating situation. The opinions and plans proposed in this draft make it worth analyzing in full.

Harriman started the draft by arguing that the USSR had been getting whatever it wanted because it had held a "firm policy" towards the US by reinterpreting every agreement. He echoed similar concerns that Kennan had had in 1944 about unchecked Soviet domination on the battlefields of Europe. Harriman characterized unchecked Soviet influence in the post war period as the "20th century barbarian invasion of Europe." Harriman argued that all of the problems with prisoner repatriation were part of a political ploy to force the US into recognizing the Lublin controlled Polish provisional government. Also like Poland, he insisted that in Romania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria, that the Soviets continued to push their agenda in order "to wear us down step by step." Harriman went on to say, "I now feel that we have sufficient proof that to conclude that these signs of friendliness have been interpreted by the Soviets as a sign of weakness..."¹⁴⁵

As Harriman had noted before in earlier messages, Deane was unable to get men out of Poland due in part to the Soviet Union's insistence that the US seek permission from the Polish provisional government to enter its territory. By forcing the US to work with this Soviet backed government, this would force the US to recognize it as the ruling power in Poland. However, no

¹⁴⁵ Harriman to Stettinius (unsent), March 21, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

such permissions were ever required in the repatriation agreement because all of Europe was either under Allied occupation, neutral, or under German occupation.

Harriman mostly wrote about what the US should do in Europe with regard to the Soviet Union. According to the Ambassador, the Soviets were capitalizing on civilian hardships in places like France and Belgium in order to “minimize the prestige” of the Western Allies by claiming that conditions in Red Army controlled territory were far more favorable. The Soviets were capable of doing this since they could cover up how bad conditions were and they had influence through Communist party assets in these countries. Therefore, Harriman proposed measures to aid “civilian populations in our rear.” Harriman resented the fact that so much Lend Lease aid was going to a country that did not show a favorable attitude to the US. He suggested using Lend Lease as a way to aid civilians and a means towards “winning the peace.” However Harriman then wrote:

I am not proposing the concept of spheres of influence but a forceful policy of supporting those people that have the same general outlook towards and concept of life that we do. Stalin himself told me once that communist revolution finds fertile seed in capitalistic economic breakdowns. When once communist dictatorship, backed by secret police, gets hold, personal liberties and democracy as we understand the word ends. There is no turning back.¹⁴⁶

This is arguably the first moment where Harriman professed a fear of a Soviet takeover of Europe if the US and Great Britain did not act soon enough. So much of Harriman’s concerns had been focused on diplomatic relations and the state of the affairs in Eastern Europe. Out of the three men, Kennan had already believed that the USSR wanted to dominate Eastern and Central Europe but not even he explicitly wrote about this influence crossing over into places like

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Belgium, France, Spain, and Italy. Kennan also believed that this would be done through “real power relationships” and not communist revolutions.¹⁴⁷ Harriman echoed a similar belief by stating that the Soviets wanted “one party popular front systems” friendly to their nation. He surmised that Europe would require “healthy democratic allies” in order to prevent such governments from forming.¹⁴⁸

Harriman’s fear of the spread of communism was not simply paranoia. As the historian Mastny argued, “the geographic distribution of Communist strength was very uneven” in Europe. Communist strength did not radiate from Moscow. Instead, places such as France and Italy had strong Communist parties and left-leaning political establishments. Whereas in Poland, Communism had been extremely unpopular despite the fact that Poland was closer in proximity to the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁹

Harriman advocated for a restored balance of power in Europe to combat the growth of Soviet influence. Although he said he was not proposing a spheres of influence plan, Harriman did want France to be restored as a major continental power in tandem with the British. He said, “We should not accept [Great Britain’s] willingness to adopt the concept of spheres of influence.” Harriman’s plan consisted of “obstruct[ing] the invasion of Soviet ideas in western democracies” and to pressure the USSR to allow greater “democratic principles in Eastern Europe.”¹⁵⁰

The problem with Harriman’s idea was that it was spheres of influence of plan by design. The strengthening of strong democratic France was intended to serve as a counter to the strength of Soviet communism in Eastern Europe. This balance of power system is a division between

¹⁴⁷ Refer back to Kennan, “Russia--Seven Years Later (September 1944),” in *Memoirs 1925-1950*, 521.

¹⁴⁸ Harriman to Secretary of State (unsent), March 21, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

¹⁴⁹ Mastny, *Russia's Road to the Cold War*, 86-87.

¹⁵⁰ Harriman to Secretary of State (unsent), March 21, 1945, Harriman Papers, Box 177.

East and West. Therefore, he was advocating a form of a spheres of influence plan despite his insistence that he did not want such an arrangement. Harriman's disapproval of Great Britain's sphere of influence plan must have been related to his prior disapproval of Churchill's "Percentages Agreement" in October 1944. Churchill's plan with percentages definitely blurred the lines within a sphere of influence arrangement because the percentages split whole countries. Harriman must have thought such an agreement would not be workable in the future. Instead, Harriman explained why his plan would be the best course of action.

Harriman proposed the use of Lend Lease aid and post-war loans to influence actions in Europe which would also create a spheres of influence arrangement. Harriman started his proposal by saying, "Our Lend Lease policy and post war reconstruction loans are one weapon." Harriman did not resent the aid that the US provided because it was essential to the Soviet Union's fight against the German military. Harriman had reason to believe that the USSR was starting to use much of its aid to begin reconstruction. He specifically cited the current rebuilding of new factories as evidence that not all aid materials were being implemented for the war effort. He also had evidence that the Soviets had been using aid equipment to mine vast gold reserves which could be used after the war for financing reconstruction. Due to the USSR's relative stability in this regard, Harriman believed that US aid should prioritize stabilizing the civilian populations and economies of Western Europe which he believed could be justified as a "war measure" in order to preserve the peace.¹⁵¹

In December 1944, Harriman held a similar sentiment when he endorsed Deane's briefing letter to General Marshall. Deane had complained that the USSR no longer needed Lend-Lease aid and that the Soviets had not reciprocated in kind by being more cooperative with important issues, like Poland and prisoner repatriation.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

The situation from three months ago was now quite different. Harriman believed the Soviets had abandoned the Yalta agreements. Whereas Deane did not propose an alternative use for Lend-Lease aid, Harriman was now offering one. If Harriman applied his “quid pro quo” policy to the situation, then the Soviets should receive no more aid since they have refused to cooperate. The Berne incident exacerbated the issue more since it made Harriman believe that the Soviets did not trust the Americans, despite all the good will, such as Lend-Lease aid. So Harriman argued that the aid should be used to help the countries which the US had liberated instead. Just like strengthening France, using aid to exclusively build up Western European countries would also set the stage for a spheres of influence setup. If the US only aided the countries within its influence and the USSR did the same as well, then the result would be the creation of two political blocs in Europe.

Harriman proposed that the US needed to be “much more precise in the wordings of our agreements with the Soviet Union.” Citing the Yalta Declaration as the main genesis of the problems with interpretation on agreements, he warned that only more problems would continue to arise if the US did not “spell out in greater care the meaning we have in mind” and continued to make “concessions in language.” All of these things would have to be combined with a general change in overall foreign policy which Harriman characterized, as he always did, as a “firm and well considered program, but always maintaining a friendly attitude.” He realized that this tougher stance might cause backlash in diplomatic relations but argued that such a stance would not change the Soviets’ outlook on the entire war. Such a tougher stance would not make the Soviet Union stop fighting Germany, or take back their promise to fight Japan. In summation,

Harriman said, “If we don’t face these issues squarely now history will record the period of the next generation as the Soviet Age.”¹⁵²

In context of the Berne meeting, Poland’s political dilemma, prisoner repatriation, and Soviet domineering in Eastern Europe, this telegram represents a breaking point in Harriman’s personal view of the situation in Europe. The scholars Isaacson and Thomas wrote that this message was one of several telegrams that Harriman wrote but chose not to send.¹⁵³ This letter seemed to be the origin of the term “barbarian invasion of Europe.” Harriman would eventually use this phrase when he was briefing the new President, Harry Truman.¹⁵⁴

Harriman did not speak of this unsent message in his memoir. Regardless, he took the time to write this well thought out proposal for the Secretary of State to read and still chose not to send it. So far, none of Harriman or Deane’s recommendations for US foreign policy had been implemented. Even in March, Harriman continued to lobby for a more “firm” but “friendly” policy toward the Soviets. Perhaps Harriman felt at the time that no one in Washington would listen to his point of view despite the fact that he was not advocating a breakup of the Grand Alliance. Although not an official message, the fact is that Harriman wrote the message and marked in red with a pencil the words “Not Sent.” If he had not meant it, he could have just as easily thrown it away. However, he did keep it and some phrases and ideas that were presented in this message did come up later in memos and conversations.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Isaacson and Thomas, *The Wise Men*, 247.

¹⁵⁴ For a possible reference to some of the content from the unsent telegram refer to Gaddis, *Kennan*, 192 and *FRUS 1945 Vol.V*, 232-33.

Poland, Lend-Lease, and Prisoner Repatriation Frustrations

Problems with Poland came to the forefront again after the initial drama regarding the Western Allied meeting with the German military officials in Berne. Soon, the US was going to host the San Francisco Conference which would be a world summit aimed at establishing Roosevelt's desired security council, the United Nations. The question at the end of March was whether or not the Western Allies would allow the Lublin controlled Polish government representation at the conference. The Soviet Embassy indicated to Washington that if a new provisional government could not be reorganized in time, the current Lublin controlled government should be allowed to represent Poland. The Soviets rationale was that it had "the support of the Polish people."¹⁵⁵

Since the end of the Yalta Conference, attempts to reorganize the government had completely failed. Harriman and the British ambassador Clark Kerr were unable to convince Molotov to accept politicians from the London Poles as members of a new provisional government. Almost a month later, diplomacy had accomplished nothing and with over a month until the San Francisco Conference at the end of April, the Soviet Union was already trying to ascertain the United States' temperament on the issue. The Soviet Union was determined to have the provisional government it supported to represent the Polish nation. Otherwise, the Soviet Union risked the Polish nationalists coming to power since they had broader support across the country.

Harriman and Deane had more evidence that the Soviets were attempting to consolidate their influence within Poland. A recent report regarding Lend Lease operations for the Soviet Union revealed to Harriman that the Soviets were beginning to ship Lend Lease aid to other countries as gifts. In response, Harriman urged the Secretary of State to make the Soviets

¹⁵⁵ The Soviet Embassy to the State Department, March 22, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. I*, 147-48.

accountable for all of their shipments to “third countries” by providing the US with detailed information and justification. Reports specified some of the transactions that had recently happened. Stalin gave the Provisional Government of Poland “500 motor trucks.” The city of Lodz had received “1,000 trucks...as a gift from the Red Army for transporting coal from Silesia...” Harriman noted that the USSR had already taken other Lend Lease aid, such as sugar and flour, and had given it to other countries such as Finland and Poland. Also, the Soviet Government had given “radio station equipment for the Warsaw radio.”¹⁵⁶

Harriman raised his complaints at this abuse of US aid and he demanded that he get to do what he wanted when speaking with the Soviet Union. He said to Stettinius:

I do not, however, wish to take this matter up with the Foreign Office unless I obtain full assurance that the United States Government will stop shipments of some definite items such as sugar and flour in the event the Soviet Government does not comply with our requirements. I believe that if I am authorized to take this action it will have a salutary effect on our relations with the Soviet Government, although we may find unpleasant immediate repercussions. General Deane concurs.¹⁵⁷

What appeared to be happening was that the Soviet Government was using surplus goods it did not need to consolidate favors and influence with border countries that it currently occupied. The telegram illustrates Harriman’s dismay but more importantly it shows that the Ambassador was tired of going to a meeting without any leverage against the Soviets. He and Deane had been advocating a tougher stance toward the Soviets since the Warsaw Uprising. Harriman did not outright say he would refuse to speak on the matter without the proper authorization to curtail Lend Lease aid, but he did insist that he have the means to have his way.

¹⁵⁶Harriman to Stettinius, March 22, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 990.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

The end of the telegram further underlined his strong belief, as well as Deane's belief, that taking a tougher stance would benefit diplomatic relations despite some short term consequences.

With regard to prisoner repatriation, Harriman appealed to FDR for support. Harriman told FDR that the personal appeal the President had made to Stalin had yielded no change in Soviet cooperation. He told FDR that Stalin's entire assessment of the POW situation was "far from the truth." Sources coming from Poland, such as the Polish Red Cross, indicated that there were far more than just "17 sick" soldiers which Stalin had referred to back at the end February. In addition, all of the conditions at the rally points and camps for American soldiers had been atrocious. The conditions were "ameliorated" by the efforts of the Polish Red Cross and the few supplies the US was allowed to fly into Poland. After discussing the terrible conditions, Harriman expressed anger toward the USSR by dismissing Stalin's claim that the Red Army could not afford to support American contact officers. In view of all the Lend Lease aid that the US had provided, Harriman believed Stalin's view to be completely "preposterous" since the US was not asking for a tremendous favor. He urged the President to instruct General Eisenhower, who had given much freedom to Soviet contact officers in France, that Eisenhower should "limit the movements of Russian contact officers in France to several camps...far to the rear."¹⁵⁸

Despite the issues he raised and the advice he offered, Harriman did not get what he wanted from either the President or the War Department, to whom the President had forwarded Harriman's advice regarding Soviet contact officers. Harriman believed that Washington and US military officials were hesitant to adopt his "firm but friendly quid pro quo attitude" because the Soviet Union might retaliate by making a separate peace treaty with the Germans or pull their

¹⁵⁸ Harriman to Roosevelt, March 24, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 1085-86.

support to enter the Pacific against Japan.¹⁵⁹ The month of March started and ended as a stalemate for Harriman and his Moscow embassy.

Harriman's Bolder Proposal

Although Harriman never sent that one telegram in March to the Secretary of State, he did send one on April 4th that shared a lot of the same views about the dire situation in Europe. Harriman started his analysis of the situation by saying, "...we now have ample proof that the Soviet Government views all matters from the standpoint of their own selfish interests." He then explained a litany of issues. The Soviets had been using the devastation of Western European countries as a platform to raise Red Army prestige where they alleged conditions were much more favorable to the civilian populations. He argued that they had been successful in this lie because Soviet Government still continued to censor all Western media correspondents. Furthermore, the ruins of Western Europe offered a way for foreign Communist parties and "associates" to extol the values of communism. He said the aim of the USSR sending off their aid to other countries was "to give the appearance of generosity."¹⁶⁰

Harriman's solution to "Soviet penetration" was a comprehensive economic assistance program in order to deny communism from rising out of the ashes of Western Europe. Harriman advocated a new plan where the US and Great Britain first ensure the security and stability of "our western Allies and other areas under our responsibility." Mindful of what he might be implying with exclusive economic aid to Western Europe, he said, "I am in no sense suggesting that this policy should have as its objective the development of a political bloc or a sphere of influence by the British or ourselves, but that we should, through such economic aid as we can

¹⁵⁹ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 422.

¹⁶⁰ Harriman to Stettinius, April 4, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 818-20.

give to our western Allies...” Whereas the West wanted to establish democracies in Europe, “...the Soviet program is the establishment of totalitarianism, ending personal liberty and democracy as we know it.” He feared that unused Lend Lease aid and the Soviets’ willingness to “ruthlessly strip the enemy countries they have occupied” would devastate Eastern Europe. In summation, Harriman encouraged “the development of friendly relations and cooperation both political and economic, but always on a *quid pro quo* basis.”¹⁶¹

Harriman’s insistence that what he wanted was not a spheres of influence arrangement illustrated his recognition that the Roosevelt Administration was not committed to having such a bold arrangement. Harriman was optimistic that diplomacy might still work but he did not believe that diplomacy was going to all the sudden change Soviet ideology. He may have believed that such “spheres” might not last for long, but it is unlikely that he truly believed what he was advocating was somehow not a spheres of influence setup. The great pains he went to say it was not such a setup shows that he was aware of the State Department’s aversion to such post-war arrangements. After all, Churchill’s own spheres of influence proposal, “Percentages Agreement,” was never endorsed explicitly endorsed by Roosevelt or brought up at Yalta.

Although Harriman still believed in diplomacy with the Soviet Union, his optimism was far outweighed by his effort to promote safety measures in the event that Soviet influence dominated Europe. Harriman’s idea became reality through the Marshall Plan in 1947. However, whereas Kennan wanted to have a more formal political spheres of influence arrangement, Harriman’s willingness to provide economic assistance exclusively to “our western Allies” would create a scenario where it would be the West tending to all the lands it liberated and vice versa with the Soviet Union in Eastern and Central Europe.

¹⁶¹ Ibid. Source emphasis.

Since Harriman was much more politically minded than Kennan, he must have been trying to make his proposals sound less severe than a full blown spheres of influence arrangement. Kennan had thought all along that the Roosevelt Administration was too Wilsonian for its own good. Harriman must have seen this as well. Harriman's plan did not sound as extreme but both of their plans would ultimately lead to the same division of Europe. Harriman asked the State Department on April 6th to allow him to return to Washington so that he could make a full in-depth report about the diplomatic situation with the Soviet Union.¹⁶² However, Stettinius ordered Harriman to stay in Moscow so that he could receive Stalin's answers to the President regarding the Berne meeting and the issues on Poland.¹⁶³

The Aftermath of the Berne Incident

From the end of March and just before the President's untimely death, Stalin and FDR exchanged a series of heated correspondence about the Berne meeting and the possible surrender of all German divisions in northern Italy. FDR wanted the German divisions to unconditionally surrender to the US and Great Britain as quickly as possible. The President did not want to compromise any more lives in fighting by waiting for a Soviet delegation to reach the meeting. He made the analogy that a Soviet presence at a German surrender on the western front would be like the Americans demanding representation at the surrender of German divisions "in Danzig or Koenigsberg."¹⁶⁴ Stalin bitterly refuted and criticized FDR's analogy by claiming that the Soviets would suffer as a result of surrender in Italy. He reasoned that talks of this surrender had

¹⁶² Harriman to Stettinius, April 6, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 822.

¹⁶³ Stettinius to Harriman, April 7, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 822.

¹⁶⁴ Roosevelt to Stalin, March 24, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. III*, 737-39.

enabled the Germans to move forces out of Italy so that they could then continue to resist the Red Army's advance.¹⁶⁵

FDR did not back down. He replied that the meeting at Berne was for British Field Marshal Harold Alexander to make contact with German command in Italy and then formalize the surrender of all Germans at a signing in Caserta, Italy. The Soviets would have representation in Italy. FDR boldly criticized Stalin's accusation about German division movements from Italy to Germany citing information that the divisions that did move out had already moved weeks before the talks of a possible surrender. The President regretted all of the "apprehension and mistrust." He reaffirmed that no special surrender had ever been discussed.¹⁶⁶

Stalin accused FDR and the Western Allies of trying to form a separate truce with the Germans in northern Italy. He was convinced that the Americans and British were trying to negotiate a conditional surrender to end fighting on the western front so that they could advance further east into Europe.¹⁶⁷

Again, FDR rebutted Stalin's claims and responded:

...It would be one of the greatest tragedies of history if at the very moment of victory, now within our grasp, such distrust, such lack of faith, should prejudice the entire undertaking after the colossal losses of life, materiel and treasure involved...Frankly I cannot avoid a feeling of bitter resentment toward your informers...for such vile misrepresentations of my actions or those of my trusted subordinates.¹⁶⁸

The only admission that Stalin made in response was that he never personally doubted the character of either Roosevelt or Churchill. He was frustrated by the fact that the Germans continued to vehemently fight the Soviets whereas the Americans and British seemed to have

¹⁶⁵ Stalin to Roosevelt, March 29, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. III*, 739-40.

¹⁶⁶ Roosevelt to Stalin, March 31, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. III*, 740-41.

¹⁶⁷ Stalin to Roosevelt, April 3, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. III*, 742.

¹⁶⁸ Roosevelt to Stalin, April 4, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. III*, 745-46.

had no trouble advancing eastward. For this reason he was convinced some negotiation had occurred.¹⁶⁹

On the eastern front and in Germany especially, Red Army soldiers had begun looting and committing mass rape on an enormous scale.¹⁷⁰ The Red Army, in comparison to the Anglo-American soldiers, was seen as an advancing monster that showed no mercy. The American and British were also quite effective with their campaigns in France and Italy, especially the aerial bombardment of Germany, but the Germans definitely feared the onslaught of the Red Army much more.

The atmosphere of suspicion, accusations of deceit, and lack of cooperation greatly bothered FDR, but Stalin's attitude came as no surprise to Harriman and Deane. In his book, Harriman said the following:

The whole incident showed the depth of Stalin's suspicious nature...He had been schooled to believe in the inevitability of a clash between the Soviet Union and what he used to call 'capitalist imperialism.' He did not trust us and he could not believe that we trusted or would deal fairly with him...The telegram he sent to Roosevelt was the most bitter, and the most insulting, I had ever seen...And it jarred Roosevelt into recognizing that the postwar period was going to be far less pleasant than he had imagined...Stalin's reaction was less disturbing to those of us who had worked in Moscow...Stalin's suspicion of our motives always stood in the way of our getting things done.¹⁷¹

The Berne meeting never amounted to anything significant, but Harriman did not want the President to let such disrespect go without warning. The Berne meeting amounted to nothing

¹⁶⁹ Stalin to Roosevelt, April 7, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. III*, 749-51.

¹⁷⁰ Gaddis, *The Cold War: A New History*, 22-24.

¹⁷¹ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 438.

because German command tried to negotiate additional terms, which violated the concept of an unconditional surrender, and so Field Marshal Alexander ended the talks entirely.¹⁷²

FDR sent a telegram to Stalin, via Harriman, in an effort to come to some understanding over the conflict. Although a short message, Roosevelt said, “There must not, in any event, be mutual mistrust, and *minor misunderstandings* of this character should not arise in the future.”¹⁷³

Harriman, who had been constantly lobbying for more careful wording when dealing with the Soviet Union, disliked the tone of FDR’s message. Harriman immediately replied to FDR at his vacation home in Warm Springs, Georgia. He wrote:

If you are prepared to reconsider the wording of your message may I respectfully [*respectfully?*] suggest that the word ‘minor’ as a qualification of ‘misunderstandings’ be eliminated. I must confess that the misunderstanding appeared to me to be of a major character and the use of the word ‘minor’ might well be misinterpreted here.¹⁷⁴

Despite Harriman’s suggestion, FDR quickly replied, “I do not wish to delete the word ‘minor’ as it is my desire to consider the Berne misunderstanding a minor incident.”¹⁷⁵

Shortly after the Berne incident arose, FDR reportedly said aloud: “Averell is right. We can’t do business with Stalin. He has broken every one of the promises he made at Yalta.”¹⁷⁶

There is no question that FDR’s exchanges with Stalin bothered him. Harriman tried to use this conflict to influence the President into adopting a firmer stance toward Stalin. Yet the President refused to escalate the situation further while the war was still being fought. From the start of the Embassy’s concerns about Soviet conduct in Europe in 1944, FDR consistently attempted to deescalate situations and alleviate tensions. However, Harriman had run out of time to convince

¹⁷² Ibid., 439.

¹⁷³ Roosevelt to Stalin, April 12, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. III*, 756. Emphasis added.

¹⁷⁴ Harriman to Roosevelt, April 12, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. III*, 756.

¹⁷⁵ Roosevelt to Harriman, April 12, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. III*, 757.

¹⁷⁶ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 444. Abel and Harriman cited the quote in their own book but scholars have said that it was Anna Rosenberg of the War Manpower Commission who reported what FDR said.

FDR of any other course of action. In the afternoon on that same day, FDR unexpectedly died from a stroke. Later than evening Vice President Harry S. Truman became the President of the United States.

Harriman and Deane Persuade President Truman

For Harriman and Deane, the death of FDR and the ascension of Truman created a situation where Washington went into a frenzy because Truman needed help transitioning into FDR's shoes. Truman realized he was not well informed and he never fancied himself as an intellectual like his predecessor. When Truman became President, he once said, "I may not have much in the way of brains...but I do have enough brains to get a hold of people who are responsible and give them a chance to carry out responsibility."¹⁷⁷

Since Truman intended to end the war and settle the peace as FDR would have wanted, he sought out FDR's top officials and advisers with regard to Europe and the Soviet Union. During the war, FDR had come to embody the art of personal diplomacy. He conducted conferences and personal correspondence with both Churchill and Stalin. Truman represented a different style of diplomacy and he wanted to run an administration where he had trusted people to rely on for decisions. The political scientist Athan Theoharis argued that in effect the transition from Roosevelt to Truman made important officials evolve from primarily "policy advisers" to "policy makers."¹⁷⁸ Thus, for all of the times when Harriman, and sometimes concurrently Deane, had offered advice or insight to a situation, it seldom had had any effect on FDR or the State Department. Harriman now had someone who was willing to listen to anybody who could claim expertise in a particular field or on a particular problem.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas and Isaacson, *The Wise Men*, 256.

¹⁷⁸Theoharis, "Roosevelt and Truman on Yalta: The Origins of the Cold War," 213.

When Harriman first met with a visibly upset and shaken Stalin over the death of FDR, he was able to convince Stalin to arrange for Molotov to arrive for a few days of talks in Washington. Harriman also reassured Stalin that President Truman intended to honor FDR's policies and wishes. He reassured the Soviets that the change in administration would not change US and USSR cooperative efforts.¹⁷⁹ A few days later, Harriman and Deane left Moscow for Washington, which consequently left Kennan in charge of the embassy. Although Harriman had been denied by the State Department permission to return to America to see FDR, now he had to attend FDR's funeral and advise the inexperienced Truman on foreign policy issues.

Without any haste, Harriman offered his expertise and opinion on all matters regarding the Soviet Union while he was in Washington. At a Secretary of State Committee Meeting, Harriman provided a report for Truman and Undersecretary Grew on the Soviet Union with Chip Bohlen recording the conversation memorandum. Harriman expressed that the USSR was trying to do two things: cooperate with the US and Great Britain and trying to consolidate influence in the rest of Eastern Europe. Harriman called the crisis a "barbarian invasion of Europe" which would result in the "extension of the Soviet system" and not just the political and economic dominance of surrounding countries. Truman said he was "not afraid of the Russians" and that "he intended to be firm but fair." Both Harriman and Truman agreed that the US needed to defend the agreements made at Yalta but that this would require a change in attitude toward the Soviets. Bohlen recorded that Truman said, "...we could not...expect to get 100 percent of what we wanted but that on important matters we should be able to get 85 percent."¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ Harriman to Stettinius, April 13, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. I*, 289-90 and "Memorandum of the Conversation by the Ambassador in the Soviet Union (Harriman)," April 13, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 826-29.

¹⁸⁰ "Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Assistant to the Secretary of State," April 20, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 231-33.

This first meeting demonstrates that Truman was much more blunt and straight forward than FDR. Almost immediately he seemed to be quite receptive to Harriman's opinion of the situation in Europe. In turn, Truman's negative view of the Soviets increased as well.

At a White House meeting with the Secretaries of State, War, and Navy, members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Harriman, and Deane, Truman listened to all the reports given about the situation with the USSR. Bohlen recorded at the meeting that Truman said, "...he felt that our agreements with the Soviet Union so far had been a one way street and that could not continue; it was now or never...if the Russians did not wish to join us they could go to hell." When Harriman spoke he reasserted the need for a tough stance against the Soviet Union, especially over matters such as Poland. Deane generally agreed with Harriman and called for firmness when enforcing the agreements with the Soviets.¹⁸¹

Truman demonstrated just how serious he was about upholding the Yalta Declaration when he verbally reprimanded Molotov and accused the Soviet Union of failure to hold to its agreements. There are two versions of what happened but they do not necessarily contradict one another. In the official memorandum, Chip Bohlen wrote, "The President...said all that he was asking was that the Soviet Government carry out the Crimean decision on Poland." Then Molotov replied that "...as an advocate of the Crimean decisions his Government stood by them and that it was a matter of honor for them..." Then Bohlen wrote, "The President replied with great firmness that an agreement had been reached on Poland and that it only remained for Marshal Stalin to carry it out in accordance with his word."¹⁸²

¹⁸¹ "Memorandum by Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Assistant Secretary of State, of a Meeting at the White House, April 23, 1945, 2 p.m.," *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 252-55.

¹⁸² "Memorandum of Conversation, by Mr. Charles E. Bohlen, Assistant to the Secretary of State," April 23, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 257.

Harriman was present at this meeting with some other high ranking American and Soviet officials. Harriman recalled that Truman continued to speak to Molotov, “with rising sharpness of tone,” that adhering to the “Yalta agreements” required “mutual observance” and was “not a one-way street.” Molotov then blurted, “I have never been talked to like that in my life.” Truman replied, “Carry out your agreements, and you won’t get talked to like that.”¹⁸³

Truman’s confrontation of Molotov illustrated the effect that Deane, and especially Harriman, had on the President’s mindset toward the Soviets. Harriman and Deane’s influenced frightened some people, like Secretary of War Henry Stimson, who felt that Harriman and Deane held too much animosity towards the Soviets because they had been mistreated in Moscow for so long.¹⁸⁴ Secretary of Navy James Forrestal agreed with Harriman and Deane on their view that the Soviets wanted to dominate Eastern Europe. Fleet Admiral William Leahy, an advisor to FDR, tended to agree with Harriman and Deane’s view on Poland as well.¹⁸⁵ Nonetheless, Harriman recalled that he had not seen this confrontation as a personal victory for himself. He said:

I was a little taken aback, frankly, when the President attacked Molotov so vigorously...Molotov had talked just as bluntly to other people...I did regret that Truman went at it so hard because his behavior gave Molotov an excuse to tell Stalin that the Roosevelt policy was being abandoned...I think it was a mistake, though not a decisive mistake.¹⁸⁶

Harriman and Deane’s presence in Washington certainly influenced the new President. With all of the meetings that Truman had with top officials and aides, Harriman and Deane were

¹⁸³ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 453.

¹⁸⁴ Henry L. Stimson, as excerpted in Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 452. Excerpt originally from the Henry Lewis Stimson Diaries, Yale University Library, New Haven, Vol. LI, 63.

¹⁸⁵ Abel and Harriman, *Special Envoy*, 452.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 453-54.

not the only ones had an influence on the new president. The historian John Gaddis argues that Truman's rhetoric and style were definitely a departure from FDR's rhetoric but that his intention to work with the Soviet Union in Europe was not a departure.¹⁸⁷

Truman and Roosevelt each dealt with people in their own different ways. Even Harriman was not trying to subvert the legacy of FDR when he spoke to Truman because all of his messages and reports constantly reiterated his strange sense of optimism that somehow matters could be worked out with the Soviet Union. Harriman had not intended for Truman to verbally berate Molotov in the manner he did. Truman was known to speak bluntly and talk straightforward. After Truman confronted Molotov, he wrote to Stalin and said that the Soviet Government had to comply with the Yalta agreements and that a failure to comply would jeopardize the unity of the Grand Alliance.¹⁸⁸

The Bitter Sweet Taste of Victory in Europe

While Harriman and Deane lobbied for a tougher stance against the Soviet Union, Kennan remained in Moscow where he continued to update the State Department on the Soviet Union's activities. Historian John Gaddis listed many of Kennan's following observations:

April 23: Words mean different things to the Russians than they do to us... In official Soviet terminology the Warsaw Provisional Government and even Soviet Estonia are "free."

April 27: All information reaching Embassy indicates that Russians are seizing and transporting to Soviet Union without compunction any German materials, equipment or supplies which they could be of us to them.

¹⁸⁷ Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War*, 204.

¹⁸⁸ Truman to Stalin, April 23, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 259.

April 30: It is now established Russian practice to seek as a first and major objective in all areas where they wish to exercise dominant influence, control of the internal administrative and police apparatus, particularly the secret police...[A]ll other manifestations of public life, including elections, can eventually be shaped by this authority.

May 3: If we feign ignorance or disbelief of a situation [the unilateral transfer of German territory to Poland] which...is common knowledge to every sparrow in eastern Europe,...[this] could mean to the Russians that we are eager to sanction their unilateral action but we are afraid to admit this frankly to our own public.¹⁸⁹

As the Third Reich began its death throes, Kennan received information on several occasions that the Soviets were doing all that they could to loot, seize, and control all the territory which the Red Army occupied. Meanwhile, the Grand Alliance had been holding preliminary talks over the fate of Germany and how reparations ought to be carried out against it. Harriman had warned that the Soviets were using Lend Lease equipment to start rebuilding their own industries rather than using them for the war effort. Now as Germany was falling, the Red Army was taking no chances on the fate of a formal reparations process. Kennan was told by an American observer that in addition to personal looting, the Soviet state itself appeared to be appropriating goods. The Soviets were taking almost anything useful. They took “farm wagons,” “steel rails and bars,” and even “Italian rolling stock” which do not even fit on Soviet railroad tracks.¹⁹⁰

On May 8th, Germany surrendered to the Allies, although the surrender was not official in Moscow until May 9th, after the Kremlin had announced the victory. Although demonstrations and parades were held at a later time, immediate celebration broke out in front of the US

¹⁸⁹Selections of George Kennan's reports as excerpted in Gaddis, *George F. Kennan*, 193.

¹⁹⁰Kennan to Stettinius, April 27, 1945, *FRUS Vol. III*, 1200.

Embassy. Kennan ordered a staff member to fetch a Soviet flag so that the Embassy could hang it together with the American flag. Kennan described the crowd as numbering in the thousands. Kennan tried speaking from the balcony but could not be heard so he went downstairs and stepped outside. In his memoir Kennan recalled the following:

I shouted to them in Russian: ‘Congratulations on the day of victory. All honor to the Soviet allies’...At this, roaring with appreciation, they hoisted up a Soviet soldier on their hands to the point where he could reach the pedestal. He pulled himself up into our company, kissed and embraced the startled sergeant, and pulled him relentlessly down to the waiting arms of the crowd.¹⁹¹

In a telegram to Secretary of State Stettinius, Kennan wrote that Soviet jubilation was so great that “American and British military personnel...have been mercilessly tossed into the air.”¹⁹²

The celebration would carry on in Moscow for days to come with victorious parades and important speeches. Although the war in Europe was finally over, the peace settlement in Europe was far from completed. The greatest adversary in Europe had been the Nazi Third Reich and the Axis forces. The existence of a common enemy bound the US and the USSR together. Now nothing stood between them in deciding the fate of Europe.

¹⁹¹ Kennan, *Memoirs 1925-1950*, 241-42.

¹⁹² Kennan to Stettinius, May 9, 1945, *FRUS 1945 Vol. V*, 849.

Conclusion

Nobody interacted with the Soviet Union during the latter half of the Second World War more than Deane, Harriman, and Kennan. Not a single historian has argued that any of these men were not excited about the prospect to collaborate with the Soviet Union in order to defeat Nazi Germany. Despite their initial excitement, all three of them came to the conclusion that a great conflict was brewing between the two greatest victors of the war--the United States and the Soviet Union. Their proximity to the heart of the Soviet Union gave them a unique perspective and outlook on diplomacy as the war came closer to an end. But their experiences and insights often fell on mostly deaf ears back in Washington.

The US was not about to radically change its foreign policy aims as the war came to an end. The US wanted the Soviet Union to help out by fighting Japan once Germany fell. The US realized that it would need the USSR to become part of the United Nations if the international peace keeping organization were to have any chance of succeeding. FDR did not want to see the UN become an impotent international body like the League of Nations. Peace in the post-war world depended on the cooperation between the two superpowers.

From the time of the Warsaw Uprising, Kennan had stood out in the Embassy since he held the most radical and concrete opinion of what US foreign policy should be. He realized early on that the Soviet Union was not going to let go of the border countries which it had liberated because this ensured future security from any foreign threat. He advocated a "line" by which the Western Allies should not permit Soviet influence to extend any further. Kennan was focused on consolidating the territories which the US and UK had control of at the time. He did not believe that all of Europe was going to suddenly become a place free for democracy and national self-determination. Kennan argued that the Soviet Union's main aim was not the spread

of communism, but instead the creation of friendly border states which Moscow could easily influence and control.

Harriman was not so quick to give up on Eastern Europe like Kennan. The Warsaw Uprising dramatically changed his view of the Soviet Union, but Harriman realized that the US needed to cooperate with the Soviets. He argued that the US just needed a “firm but friendly quid pro quo attitude.” Harriman did not advocate a spheres of influence arrangement nor did he approve of Churchill’s “Percentages Agreement” at the Tolstoy Conference in October 1944. Unlike Kennan, Harriman believed the US had the leverage to make the Soviet Union cooperate. Not until after the Yalta Conference did Harriman begin to worry about the situation in Europe as the Soviet Union began to solidify its dominance over Eastern Europe. Before Yalta, Harriman had only advocated a change in US attitude toward the Soviets.

After Yalta, Harriman’s opinion grew more radical since he viewed Soviet conduct in Europe as a blatant violation of the Yalta agreements. Harriman began to use charged language when describing the Soviet Union. He feared a “20th Century barbarian invasion,” “Soviet penetration,” and “Communist dictatorship.” Never before had he used such charged language, but Soviet Union’s violation of the Yalta agreements had made him far less optimistic and far more willing to advocate for bolder policies. Harriman’s solution to the Soviet problem, the use of economic aid to protect Western Europe and the adoption of “firm but friendly quid pro quo attitude,” illustrated how much his thinking had evolved from the Warsaw Uprising. Although he claimed he was not for a spheres of influence policy, the use of economic aid exclusively in Western Europe would create a de facto spheres of influence arrangement.

Deane’s opinion of the Soviet Union evolved in close step with Harriman. Countless times Harriman wrote that “Deane concurs” at the end of his telegrams to Washington. Similarly,

Deane would also state that he had Harriman's endorsement when he wrote to the Joint Chiefs. This is due to the fact that Deane worked very closely with Harriman throughout the war. The Warsaw Uprising greatly affected Deane's outlook toward the Soviet Union as a wartime ally. Although Deane's purview was military and not political affairs, he soon discovered how political fallout could compromise important military operations. As tensions over the political organization of Poland grew, Deane suffered more setbacks in his effort to create a POW repatriation agreement. Deane asked for help from Harriman and Kennan multiple times but their collective efforts often met Soviet silence or bureaucratic stonewalling. Thus it makes sense that Harriman and Deane's opinions would evolve together as the war came to an end. Deane was not as quick to give up on Eastern Europe as Kennan was, but he was just as willing as Harriman was to use control of Lend-Lease aid as a way to coerce Soviet cooperation.

The watershed moment in the Embassy came after the Yalta Conference. Deane, Harriman, and Kennan's collective opinion changed sharply. Almost every report that came out of the Embassy that went to Washington was negative in tone. In their view, the Soviets had trampled all over the Declaration on Liberated Europe. Where the events of late 1944 prompted these men to view the Soviets with much greater skepticism, the events after Yalta grounded them in their skepticism. Like a major contract, Yalta was supposed to unite the Grand Alliance on major issues and agreements regarding the future of post-war Europe and the remainder of the entire war; instead, the agreements fueled more disagreement and soured relations.

The US and USSR began to interpret everything quite differently and this caused many problems for the Embassy. Harriman believed the Soviets had violated the agreement on reorganizing Poland's provisional government by blocking his attempts to incorporate more London Poles. Kennan deplored the entire Declaration on Liberated Europe from the moment the

ink dried because the agreement had done nothing productive to check Soviet domination over Poland and Germany. Although Deane signed a formal prisoner repatriation agreement, he soon discovered that the Red Army had reinterpreted it in a vastly different way. Rather than let the US quickly evacuate POWs from rally points in Poland, the Red Army decided to deny US entrance into Poland by moving all of the POWs by train car to Odessa for evacuation. Although Poland was a political issue, prisoner repatriation should not have been.

As the war came to end, the points of view of all three men began to converge to a general consensus. Whereas Kennan had advocated a spheres of influence arrangement from the beginning, Harriman was also advocating a similar plan despite his insistence that he did not want a spheres of influence arrangement. Kennan wanted a political line to be drawn and agreed upon by the Western Allies so that they could stop the Soviet Union from crossing it. Harriman insisted that the US needed to rebuild Western Europe by using Lend-Lease aid. With evidence that the Soviets were looting and removing all the materials that they could to rebuild their country, Harriman believed that it was necessary for the US to do all that it could to protect Western Europe through economic assistance. Harriman's struggle to reorganize the Polish Provisional Government and Deane's inability to properly conduct POW evacuations further illustrated that the US had no leverage within the Soviet Union's growing sphere of influence.

Although Harriman and Deane had influenced Truman to take a tougher stance toward the Soviet Union, their influence seemed to be too little too late. FDR could have used the events of the Warsaw Uprising to signal to the Soviets that the Americans would not tolerate just conduct. FDR interjected himself when repatriation became a larger issue and when the Berne incident occurred. However, he did little to allow the Embassy to show how serious the US was about the Yalta agreements. Even after having been accused of collusion with the Germans, FDR

stubbornly insisted that the Berne incident be left as a “minor misunderstanding.” He did this despite Harriman’s protest that it would let Stalin think that the US could be pushed around. FDR might have done better for himself had he taken more time to listen to the warnings that had been coming from the Embassy.

Truman’s ascension offered a major opportunity for people like Deane and Harriman to offer their expertise. Although Truman’s rhetoric was a departure from the rhetoric of FDR, Truman still believed in pursuing the goals that FDR had wanted. The problem was that the war so close to the end that anything the US could have done was perhaps too little too late. By the time Truman scolded Molotov in Washington, the Red Army was already in possession of half of Germany and almost all of Eastern Europe.

The narratives of these men show how important it is for leaders to listen to mid-level officials. FDR chose to make his own decisions on just about everything with some input from his advisors. Truman realized he could not know everything and that there might be others more suited to speak on an issue. The men of the Embassy were the Soviet experts during the war; they were seriously worth listening to. This is not to argue that FDR should have abandoned everything to listen to these men in 1944. However, he should have evaluated their opinions much more seriously because of their experiences with the Soviets. Truman saw the value in making an executive decision, but only after having listened to the experts on the issue. If FDR had done something similar all along, US foreign policy at the time might have been more effective at dealing with the Soviet Union at the end of the war.

Deane, Harriman, and Kennan had all the reasons in the world to criticize the Soviet Union’s actions in Eastern Europe and to doubt the effectiveness of US foreign policy as it related to the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government did not treat any of these men particularly

well with its constant stonewalling and refusal to negotiate on issues. Also, all of the information that the Embassy had obtained through the Soviet media, Western correspondents, and other observers showed it that the Soviet Union fully intended to dominate the affairs of Eastern Europe as a “world bully.”

Harriman’s joke about having “to buy the same horse twice” became the theme of this time at the Embassy. In diplomacy, two sides might negotiate and renegotiate for a while but there is the hope that some mutual agreement will be achieved and carried out to the satisfaction of both sides. In Moscow, the Embassy constantly renegotiated only to see nothing productive come out of the meetings and correspondence. Thus, when the Soviets had begun to violate the Yalta agreements, the situation represented a new reality-- there was no longer a “horse” to buy anymore. If the Soviet Government was moving forward with plans to dominate the affairs of Eastern Europe no matter what, then what good did constant renegotiating do? Since all three men were the primary American contact points, it makes sense that they were the first ones to believe that the Soviet Union was no longer the faithful they had hoped it would be after the war.

Deane, Harriman, and Kennan’s criticisms did not make them Russophobes or anti-communist ideologues. In each of their writings, all three men spoke well of the Soviet people.¹⁹³ Throughout most of his correspondence, Harriman remained optimistic that the US could still maintain a good relationship with the USSR. Without a doubt these men did not approve of the Soviet Government but there is little evidence to suggest that their disapproval hampered their ability to collaborate with Soviet officials. They conducted themselves professionally and cordially treated Soviet officials. Not until after the Yalta Conference did the Embassy start to

¹⁹³ For specific examples see Kennan, "Russia--Seven Years Later (September 1944)," in *Memoirs 1925-1950*, 504; Deane, *The Strange Alliance*, 305; Abramson, *Spanning the Century*, 356-57.

confess a fear of communist revolution backed by the Soviet Union. These men came to distrust the Soviet Union because of its actions, not because of their prejudices.

Historian Frank Costigliola's revisionist treatment of the men at the US Embassy has attempted to discredit their perceptions and motives because they had high emotions when it came to Soviet relations. He said that "personal frustration jaundiced [Harriman and Kennan's] political analysis and advice." Costigliola's justification for such an oversimplification was that decades later both Harriman and Kennan "reversed [their] tough stance to advocate reengaging with Moscow." He also cites a later quote from Harriman who had said that history might have been different had FDR not died.¹⁹⁴

There are two problems with Costigliola's conclusion. The first problem is that he was correct about the fact that Harriman and Kennan were frustrated but incorrect as to why this frustration was significant. The second problem is that he took both of their future opinions out of context in order to discredit what they believed decades prior.

Time in Moscow during the war made Deane, Harriman, and Kennan angry, frustrated, and worried, but they had legitimate causes to feel this way because of what the Soviet Union had started doing in Europe. All of these men were experienced government professionals and they all were highly self-disciplined individuals. From the Warsaw Uprising to the end of the war, each man saw what the Soviets were attempting to do in Eastern Europe. They realized early on that the concept of peace meant different things to different nations. Once a territory came under Red Army control, that territory fell under strict Soviet control which always entailed the denial of foreign entry. Once the Soviets had control of Poland, there was little Harriman could do to negotiate for a more broadly representative democratic provisional government. All three men were stonewalled by the Soviet Government day after day despite all

¹⁹⁴ Costigliola, *Roosevelt's Lost Alliances*, 427-28.

of the aid the US had been sending. So when they perceived that the Soviets were planning to dominate the rest of Eastern Europe, they took notice and duly reported all that they could back to Washington.

To say that history would have been different had Roosevelt lived is nothing than but a convenient platitude. No one can say with certainty how much history would have changed if he had lived longer. By the time Roosevelt died, the Soviet Union was already dominating most of Eastern Europe and would continue to do so until 1989. Roosevelt had never been the kind of person who would boldly confront Stalin and the Soviets. Once the Soviet Union took a territory it kept it. FDR did not have the power to convince the Soviet Union that it should give up all of the territory which it had spent over 20 million lives to liberate from German occupation.

Furthermore, Harriman and Kennan were a part of politics long after the war. Tensions during the Cold War went up and down. Like anyone, they made observations and inferences based on the evidence they had at the time. To say that 1970's Cold War issues were the same as in the late 1940's issues is just not correct. Also, Costigliola portrays Harriman and company as men who were determined to undermine the President. He fails to explain why FDR never fired Harriman if he was in fact so emotional and jeopardizing his entire foreign policy with the Soviet Union. Harriman served at the pleasure of the President. No evidence shows that FDR's faith in Harriman and his Embassy ever wavered during the war.

However, they were not perfect men and so they did make miscalculations. Kennan might have been more influential if he had better understood how politics and public opinion played into US foreign policy. Harriman and Deane might have been able to use the assurance of Soviet representation at the Berne meeting to gain some concessions from the Soviets. Instead, they decided to deny the Soviet Union as a way to show the US was not weak. Harriman and

Deane probably did not expect the Soviet Union to react so strongly to this denial. Furthermore, Harriman did not realize how much influence his words would have on Truman. Thus, Truman's confrontation with Molotov gave the Soviets a negative first impression.

Although the history of the origins of the Cold War is quite complicated, this historical narrative offers great insight as to why such a global ideological conflict occurred. The story of the US Embassy illustrates how two countries failed to cooperate because each had opposing foreign policy goals. The US wanted a democratic Europe safe for national self-determination and open for free trade. The Soviets had just defeated the largest military offensive in history and they paid a heavy price for such a sacrifice. Kennan realized that the Soviet Union was both proud of its accomplishment and determined to ensure that no enemy would ever storm through its territory again. Thus, the Soviet Union was not about to pull out from Eastern Europe without first ensuring that it would have friendly neighbors. The Soviet Union's desire to control Eastern Europe fundamentally clashed with the Western Allies' desire for democracy. To the Soviets, the creation of democratic states would not guarantee its own future safety.

Since both countries had fundamentally different goals for the post-war world, there was great tension already between them as the war came to an end. The Embassy's story shows that the Soviets were not going to give up what they had liberated. In a manner of several months, the Soviet Government's conduct had eroded away at the American officials whom it should have been concerned about maintaining good relations. By badly treating and alienating Deane, Harriman, and Kennan, the Soviet Government had created its own enemies who would then go back to Washington and have nothing positive to say about the USSR. The Soviet Government failed to effectively cooperate with the US Embassy when it had the chance to keep tensions from spiraling out of control. Without a common cause in the fight against Germany, the victory

in Europe liberated each ally from the other so that cooperation was not as imperative as it was before.

All of the distrust and fear that remained between both countries at the end of the war carried on and grew into the rest of the decade. All three men became Cold Warriors and they all wrote about their difficult experiences working in Moscow and this greatly influenced America's Soviet policy. For example, George Kennan went on to write his famous "Long Telegram" and he became known as the father of the US "containment" policy during the Cold War. This set America on a course to feel that it was protecting its own interests and the people of the world by doing all that it could to check the global expansion of Soviet influence. No longer did the US and USSR fight wars as friends; instead they fought proxy wars aimed to hurt the other.

The story of the US Embassy was not the cause for the Cold War, but this historical narrative shows that the US and USSR were on an ideological collision course over the fate of post-war Europe. This collision permanently divided the mighty Grand Alliance into what became the Warsaw Pact and NATO. Of these three men, the only one who was alive to see the collapse of the Soviet Union was none other than George Kennan; the unknown US diplomat in 1944 who had worried that the Soviets might try to control Eastern Europe.

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