

## Chapter 11

### Solutions to Five Crises

In the previous chapter, you were presented with five crises for US foreign policy makers. You were asked to choose among three solutions for each of these problems. This chapter will explain how President Harry Truman, his advisors, and Congress actually responded in each case.

#### War-torn Europe

On June 5, 1947, George Marshall, President Truman's Secretary of State, addressed Harvard's graduating class. In his speech Marshall announced that the United States was prepared to do whatever was necessary to assist Europe "in the return of normal economic health. Our policy," he stated, "is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos. Its purpose should be the revival of a working economy in the world so as to permit the emergence of political and social conditions in which free institutions can exist." The opponents of the aid package unsuccessfully argued that helping every anti-communist government throughout the world would bankrupt the United States.

Marshall's offer was grasped as a lifeline by the destitute nations of Europe. Before the end of June, foreign ministers of several Western European countries held a meeting attended by representatives of countries within the Soviet zones of occupation.\*\* Three months later, the non-communist nations of Europe drew up comprehensive plans for economic recovery. In December 1947, President Truman asked Congress for \$17 billion (170 billion 2000 dollars) over the next four years to pay for this program. Final approval of the plan was voted on March 31, 1948, shortly before an election in Italy in which a communist majority was predicted.

The impact of the Marshall Plan was both immediate and enduring. In the April 1948 elections, the communist party in Italy won only 31 percent of the vote. Over the next three years, industrial production in Marshall Plan countries increased by 37 percent, and steel manufacturing doubled. By 1952, output in most of these nations surpassed pre-war levels. This rate of growth has continued from the 1950s to the present day. In contrast, the countries of Eastern Europe, which were less industrialized before the war, have struggled economically under the communist economic system. Yet the total bill for the Marshall Plan was only \$12.8 billion, actually \$4 billion less than appropriated.

#### Greece and Turkey

President Truman's determination to contain Soviet expansion was expressed in a March 1947 speech in which he asked Congress to appropriate \$400,000,000 to help Greece and Turkey defend themselves. "If we falter in our leadership," Truman warned, "we may endanger the peace of the world and surely endanger the welfare of our nation." This speech and the aid package he requested are known as the "Truman Doctrine."

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\*\* The USSR ordered the countries under its control to withdraw their request for aid.

Truman's request caused a flurry of protests throughout the land. The president, after all, was asking Congress to break with tradition. He asked Congress to supply arms and money to two small nations, neither particularly democratic, 4,000 miles from US shores. Neither Greece nor Turkey was viewed as vital to the defense of the United States. Neither was an important trading partner. However, the economic and political assistance provided by the United States helped Greece and Turkey in resisting communist pressure. By October 1949, the Greek government had won the civil war against their communist opponents. Turkey resisted the USSR's demands for bases and territory. As of the year 2000, both Greece and Turkey are still allies of the United States. Furthermore, after many years of right-wing military rule, Greece has become a democratic country.

## **The Coup in Czechoslovakia**

Truman did nothing to prevent the Communist party takeover of Czechoslovakia following Jan Masaryk's 1948 fall from his office window. Under the leadership of Communist Party chief Klement Gottwald, Czech industry was nationalized, collective farms were set up, opponents were jailed, and all economic ties with Western Europe were severed. In 1968 a brief attempt by reformers in the Czechoslovakian Communist Party under Alexander Dubcek to liberalize Czech society was suppressed by the Soviet Union without intervention from US President Johnson. US Presidents Eisenhower and Reagan also stood by when the Soviet Union suppressed similar efforts by reformers in Hungary and Poland to establish greater freedom and democracy. Real freedom for the people of communist Europe did not occur until Soviet troops finally left the area in the early 1990's.

## **The Berlin Blockade**

The most dramatic response to the Soviet challenge in Europe was the American airlift to Berlin. In July 1948, the USSR announced a halt to the flow of passengers and freight into West Berlin. The United States feared that this blockade might ultimately lead to the incorporation of West Berlin into East Germany.

America's response to this threat was the Berlin airlift, a plan to fly goods into West Berlin over the Soviet zone. The United States, Britain, and France managed to fly in 8,000 tons of goods very day, enough to feed, clothe, and supply the city of 2,500,000. As many as 1,071 planes in one day (almost one a minute) flew into West Berlin. The airlift brought West Berliners sufficient raw materials and fuel to supply their factories. Thoroughly embarrassed for 11 months, the Soviets finally lifted the blockade in May 1949. Around the same time, the American, French, and British zones of Germany were united into the Federal Republic of Germany. West Berlin was officially united with West Germany.

In 1961 the East German government closed the border between East and West Berlin and built a wall across the city. The purpose of this wall was to prevent East Germans from fleeing west in search of political freedom and better economic conditions. In the 1990's, Soviet troops withdrew from East Germany and by 1998, the two Germanies were re-united, ending 50 years of forced separation.

## **The North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

Following World War II, the Soviet Union did not withdraw its troops from Eastern Europe. Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg reacted to the threat of overwhelming conventional Soviet force in Eastern Europe. In 1948 these countries signed the Brussels Treaty to form a mutual defense pact. Supported by Congress and over objections of isolationists, President Harry Truman began negotiations that eventually led to the formation of the North Atlantic

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Treaty Organization (NATO) in April 1949. Member nations pledged to defend one another in case of attack. Sixteen nations were the original members of NATO:

Belgium	Iceland	Italy	Portugal
Britain	France	Luxembourg	West Germany
Canada	Greece	Netherlands	Turkey
Denmark	Iceland	Norway	United States

For almost 40 years, NATO has helped protect Western Europe from the possibility of Soviet attack. In 1998, NATO actually added three countries from the former Soviet bloc, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland. The Soviet-led Warsaw bloc has collapsed, all nations that once were members are now free of Soviet control. Furthermore the Soviet Union itself has broken into separate republics and is now a shadow of its former self and no longer a strong military threat to the United States.

## Conclusion

The American response to the post-war crises in the late 1940s shaped US policy toward Europe over the next 50 years. Since the fall of Czechoslovakia in 1948, no Soviet troops have moved west from the Soviet-controlled parts of Europe. And since the Soviet Union no longer exists, the Soviet military threat to western Europe is over, and the east European bloc countries are free and independent.

## Suggested Student Exercises:

1. Identify or define and briefly tell the importance to this chapter of each of the following:

- |                              |                     |                                  |
|------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|
| a. Marshall Plan             | e. "if we falter"   | j. formation of West Germany     |
| b. Italian elections         | f. Jan Masaryk      | k. NATO                          |
| c. contrast between Germanys | g. Clement Gottwald | l. fate of Soviet Union          |
| d. Truman Doctrine           | h. Alexander Dubcek | m. outcomes in Greece and Turkey |
|                              | i. airlift          |                                  |

2. Did events prove that containment was the best policy for the US to pursue in response to the 5 crisis? Be prepared to support your answer.