

## TEACHING THE COLD WAR:

A STUDY OF SCHOOL HISTORY TEXTBOOKS



## Preface to a reprint in digital form for the 75th anniversary of VE Day

by *Helen Mercer, Greta Sykes, and Jan Woolf*, May 2020

This pamphlet was researched and written between 1983 and 1985 during the “second Cold War” and was launched at a press conference at the House of Commons chaired by Tony Benn.

The hysteria of the time was real and nuclear war seemed an imminent danger. Children were caught up in the war-mongering, and inevitably they were scared at the prospect of something they did not understand.

At the time we were all teachers in London secondary schools as well as active campaigners in CND. When teachers attempted through their teaching to counteract war-mongering, they were accused of indoctrinating children. *Deadly Persuasion* was written in response to that attack on teachers to show that indoctrination in schools was already there in the established textbooks.

35 years on we are facing not only Covid-19 but an on-going Cold War and an unabated arms race, fuelled by anti-Russian hysteria. To that purpose a major rewriting of history is taking place with the Soviet Union being blamed for starting the Second World War, and that in turn is used to exclude Russia, whose people sacrificed everything to defeat fascism, from commemorations. Once again Russians are being portrayed as somehow sub-human, echoing Nazi propaganda.

Not only is this First World inspired drive for more weapons keeping us on the brink of a nuclear exchange, but the resources to keep the military afloat are negatively affecting millions of people’s lives around the globe. Instead of spending money on health, education and solving the catastrophic threats to the natural environment, our governments focus on fighting wars.

Today the deadly persuasion of cold war rhetoric and almost daily reference to enemies, so well researched in this pamphlet on school text books, ensures the right setting for public acceptance of military spending.

(Illustrations are by Ralph Steadman, Greta Sykes and Jan Woolf)

## Foreword to the digital reprint of *Deadly Persuasion*

The republication of *Deadly Persuasion* is welcome and timely. The issues it raises concerning what is taught to our children about global politics and history remain as relevant today as they did when it first appeared thirty-five years ago. State education policy remains tainted by ideological considerations and this is shown most clearly in the case of teaching about all aspects of East-West relations.

The pamphlet's launch in October 1985 marked an important intervention in a political controversy raging within education and politics over "peace studies" which emerged against the backdrop of heightened global tensions over the upgrading of strategic nuclear weapons.

The threat of nuclear annihilation seemed all too real and urgent. In response, the world peace movement grew by leaps and bounds. In the UK, membership of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament had grown from only 20,000 in 1981 to upwards of 460,000 by 1985. *Deadly Persuasion* is a historical document of that period produced by a group of peace activists within the teaching profession.

The authors examine how historical facts are manipulated and presented within textbooks to influence the attitudes of school children and students towards the Soviet Union and distort its true role in the defeat of Nazism during the Second World War.

By means of meticulous research the authors expose how many standard textbooks ignore major events such as the Western invasion of the Bolshevik Republic in 1918, the Nazi invasion of the USSR in 1941 and the war on the Eastern front. *Deadly Persuasion* is a model for how historical research can make a positive contribution towards a greater public understanding of the vital issues that concern us all and it should remain of much interest to modern scholars and readers.

This teaching bias added fuel to the Cold War mentality and made it easier for governments of all political complexions to continue with their confrontational approach to the USSR during the 1980s and to justify high spending on armaments.

We are in urgent need of similar research today at a time when global tensions remain extremely acute. "Russia" is still treated as an enemy in all but name by Western governments and their think-tanks while a confrontation between the United States and China is seeming ever more likely. One wonders exactly how these urgent topics are being taught within education in 2020.

David Morgan  
Secretary, Socialist History Society (personal capacity)

# DEADLY PERSUASION

TEACHING THE COLD WAR:  
A STUDY OF SCHOOL HISTORY  
TEXTBOOKS

‘TEACHING THE COLD WAR’  
STUDY GROUP.

*(A group specifically formed to study  
school history textbooks in relation to  
the Cold War.)*

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*The year 1985 has seen the fortieth anniversaries of the defeat of fascism in Europe and the world's first and only nuclear attack.*

*The start of the new arms negotiations in Geneva and the beginning of the international year of peace make the timing of our publication appropriate; for integral to the building of a peaceful world is the examination of belligerent attitudes in young people and the process whereby they are formed.*

*We intend this publication not just to be an academic exercise, but a contribution to the peace movement.  
October 1985*

**Greta Sykes  
Helen Mercer  
Jan Woolf**

*“This is a very useful pamphlet. Many are simply not aware of the bias in education which already exists and to which we are all subject. It can only further the cause of understanding and peace”.*

**Bruce Kent**  
*(Vice President CND)*

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## FOREWORD

More than ten years have passed since I wrote a book about the Cold War which was intended to be a counterweight to the biased pro-Western view then current in British text-books. Following its publication, a brief period of detente has been succeeded by a possibly lethal worsening of relations between the West and the Soviets. It is very timely, therefore, that, forty years after the dissolution of the wartime Grand Alliance, we are again reminded of the damage being done to our young people by feeding them propaganda masquerading as history. This new publication unmasks once more the hypocrisy of those who, while trumpeting the benison of Western democracy, connive at the corruption of young minds through brainwashing techniques which they fiercely condemn when used by their political opponents. Only a fool or a knave would contend that there is such a thing as purely objective history. Honest teachers appreciate that historical events can be interpreted in different ways. The manner in which all teachers present the Cold War is crucially important to each one of us. What judgment prevails regarding, say, Richard III – a matter of some contention among professional historians – is already an academic matter at this remove. How we interpret to the next generation the past and present tensions between East and West is quite another affair. Either we seek to promote understanding and thereby a tenuous hope of human survival or we abet mutual hostility, the likely precursor – given the world's nuclear arsenals – to mutual destruction.

Hugh Higgins

*(Author of "The Cold War" and "Vietnam")*

## INTRODUCTION

“Peace studies” is being used by politically motivated teachers to indoctrinate children. This is the charge levelled by Roger Scruton, Lady Olga Maitland, Edward Leigh MP and others. (1) These political figures target teachers in the peace movement and brand them as indoctrinators. By default, the politically orthodox view is considered accurate and objective, and the censorship of other views a healthy and corrective act.

Clearly it is the aim of teachers to educate, not to indoctrinate. Teachers would agree with Sir Keith Joseph when he says that, when the subject of ‘peace’ arises in schools, “the selection of facts gives a picture which is neither unbalanced nor superficial; that facts and opinion are clearly separated; and that the pupils are encouraged to weigh evidence and argument so as to arrive at rational judgements.” (2) The question is how well do the existing ‘approved’ textbooks meet Keith Joseph’s criteria? How far are they free of the charge of indoctrination?

In this study we have looked at a broad cross-section of school history textbooks, about 60 in all, and analysed the way they explain the origins of the Cold War, particularly the period 1945–49. We have chosen this area as it is crucial to an understanding of current tensions between the West and the Soviet Union. Despite the disparity of levels, we have found that the textbooks give a broadly similar account: Soviet aggression is to blame for the Cold War.

We have compared this account with that given by British and American academics. In particular we have looked at the work of the so-called “revisionist” historians, who, while by no means left-wing, have seriously questioned or ‘revised’ political orthodoxy about the Cold War.

An early “revisionist” was W.A. Williams, in his book “The Tragedy of American Diplomacy”. He examines the American dimension of the Cold War and focuses on the ‘Open Door’ policy which the U.S. has pursued continuously since the 1890’s. He emphasises the economic aspect of American foreign policy which, he claims, was based on the conviction that, “America’s domestic well-being depends on sustained, ever-increasing overseas economic expansion.” (p.11). In “The Cold War and its origins” D.F. Fleming, another “revisionist” traces the Cold War back to 1917 and the Russian Revolution. He sees events prior to 1945 shaping a post-war Soviet foreign policy which was not concerned with expansionism but with security.

These writers are not “anti-Western”. Many of them believe that Western Cold War attitudes worked to the detriment of true U.S. interests. Fleming, for instance, criticises the West for ‘losing’ the Cold War and states; “If after 1945 we had kept the moral leadership of the world which we then had;

and if we had striven mightily to keep the whole world together, instead of promptly dividing it, there might indeed have been a century of American leadership, based not on power but on diplomacy". (p.1075).

Revisionist views have provoked lively controversy. Nevertheless a consensus has emerged which sees the Soviet Union, as less aggressive and the U.S. more culpable than orthodoxy would allow. Only passing references are made in school textbooks to alternative approaches to the Cold War. The majority are unbalanced in their selection of facts, present political opinions as though they were facts, and make little attempt to encourage children to "weigh evidence and argument". (3)

Thus pupils learning about the origins of the Cold War have extremely limited, if any, access to the facts and arguments which challenge the simplistic view of the Soviet Union as enemy. Instead they are presented with a rigid model of the world in which the Soviet Union is made synonymous with 'enemy', 'attacker', 'oppression', and the U.S. with 'friend', 'defender', 'freedom'. There is therefore a case to be made that children are receiving not education about the Cold War but indoctrination.

In this pamphlet we do not seek to overthrow the textbook model of the world, simply in order to put another one in its place, which reverses the 'good versus evil' roles. We argue that textbooks can and should present the world without encouraging prejudice and stereotypes. We would like this publication to be seen as an attempt to introduce balance and reason into a subject which generally receives unsophisticated analysis.

- FN 1 Scruton, et al "Education and Indoctrination", see Edward Leigh's speech in Hansard
- FN 2 "Educating People for Peace: report of a one-day conference on Peace Education in Schools" (1984)
- FN 3 Hugh Higgins in his 'A' Level textbook "The Cold War" and Harriet Ward in "World Powers in the Twentieth Century" are the exceptions, they clearly outline historical debates in simple terms. See bibliography for other recommended textbooks.

# Chapter 1

## SETTING THE SCENE

For most textbooks the history of the post-war period is the history of the containment of Soviet expansion. The motive force behind such expansionism is asserted to be either Communist ideology, the “language of international civil war” as proclaimed in the Communist Manifesto (Bown & Mooney p.1) or the continuation of Russian tsarist imperialism or a combination of the two. Whichever it may be, certain assumptions are made about post-war Soviet intentions.

Generally the impression is given that the Soviets were never serious about their alliance with the West against Hitler and aimed from the outset to use military success in Eastern Europe to transform the area into satellite states. The West, naively trustful of their wartime ally, gradually woke up to this fact and the U.S. was forced to step in to rescue Europe from the threat of Communism. The threat was both the ‘looming presence’ of the Red Army and communists in Western countries acting as Stalin’s agents. Thus, it is implied, the Soviet Union was expansionist, but the U.S. moved into other countries to secure ‘legitimate’ defence concerns.

The textbooks give Soviet intentions at the end of the war detailed ‘analysis’ but make little critical examination of U.S. intentions.

### U.S. intentions

Academic research has analysed U.S. intentions and shown that the U.S. was very conscious of its ability to assume a new world role after the war. The proclamation by the publisher Henry Luce in 1941 of the ‘American Century’ is quite well-known. Behind that public assertion lay long-term U.S. government planning as the documents of the ‘War and Peace Studies Programme’ (which met from 1939-1945) show. Knowing by 1942 that the U.S. would end the war dominating the world, the officials and politicians set about organising it.

Noam Chomsky comments: “They developed the concept of Grand Area Planning, where the Grand Area is understood as that which in their terms was ‘strategically necessary for world control’. Their geo-political analysis attempted to determine which areas of the world would have to be ‘open’ — open to investment, the repatriation of profits, access to resources and so on — and dominated by the United States.” (Chomsky, Steele, Gittings, p.21)

These aims continued into the post-war period. In his neglected speech at Baylor University on March 6, 1947, Truman said that “the whole world should adopt the American system” (Fleming, p.436). Bernard Baruch

argued in 1947, "Any serious effort to promote our fundamental values and our national security demands that we pursue it through the strategy of the Cold War." Slightly later the U.S. defence documents known as the 'National Security 68' series indicate that the U.S. also had a conscious policy and was not simply responding to Soviet aggression. These documents detail ideas about waging psychological war to alienate the Soviet people from their government, to create unrest and resistance in selected satellite states. (Greiner p.29)

An analysis of U.S. intentions therefore reveal them as less defensive than the textbook account would allow.

### **Soviet intentions.**

Similarly textbook views of Soviet intentions can only be sustained by overlooking events prior to 1945 which would indicate that the Soviet Union had some potent security concerns.

Most striking is the way textbooks either omit or make only passing and uncritical reference to the invasion by British, U.S., French and Japanese troops of Soviet territory in 1918. Those textbooks which do mention it accept that the aim was, as Churchill stated it, to wipe out Communism.

Yet this event had an enormous impact on Soviet thinking. The threat of another attack from the West was a motive force behind Stalin's plans for rapid collectivisation and industrialisation. It dominated Soviet diplomatic moves in the years preceding the Second World War. Their fears were well-grounded. As threatened in "Mein Kampf" another attack from the West did come in the Nazi invasion of Russia in June 1941.

Thus the Soviet Union has twice experienced invasion from the West, whose avowed intention was the destruction of Communism, their social system. Western, and particularly British children can have little concept of the impact of these events on a nation's outlook because we have never experienced anything like it. So, from the start most textbooks are selective in their picture of the intentions of the two powers.

### **Relations between the U.S. and the Soviet Union.**

The textbooks are also misleading about the relationship and balance of power between the U.S. and the Soviet Union. For instance the U.S. adopted a hostile attitude towards the Soviet Union well before 1945. U.S. troops participated in the 1918 intervention, and it took until 1933 for the U.S. to grant the Soviet Union diplomatic recognition.

When charting their relations towards the end of the war the textbooks focus attention on the expansion of Soviet influence in Eastern Europe, brought about directly by the war, while neglecting the equally remarkable

and unprecedented expansion of American influence in Western Europe, not to mention Asia and her continued hegemony of Latin America.

The Second World War swept away the European power struggles which had shaped world events for the past 100 years, and substituted two super-powers. This the textbooks will state, but do not always point out that both powers sought influence in areas beyond their borders. The Soviet Union made stipulations about neighbouring countries in Europe and Asia: the U.S. went further afield. Not only did they claim “our little region over here which has never bothered anybody” but also aimed to “intervene promptly in Europe”. (Henry Stimson and John McCloy quoted in Ambrose, p.103)

Nor was there parity of power in other ways. In 1945 the Soviet Union had been wholly devastated (see Chapter 2), while the U.S., and she alone, had benefitted economically from the war. In 1945 her industrial production was equal to that of the whole of the rest of the world put together. In manpower terms the U.S. had demobilised faster than the Soviet Union, but, throughout the formative years of the Cold War, the U.S. had the atomic bomb and the Soviet Union did not. Ambrose argues that, for the U.S. the bomb meant that, “America could retain a powerful position in Europe without having to maintain a mass army there.”(p.112)

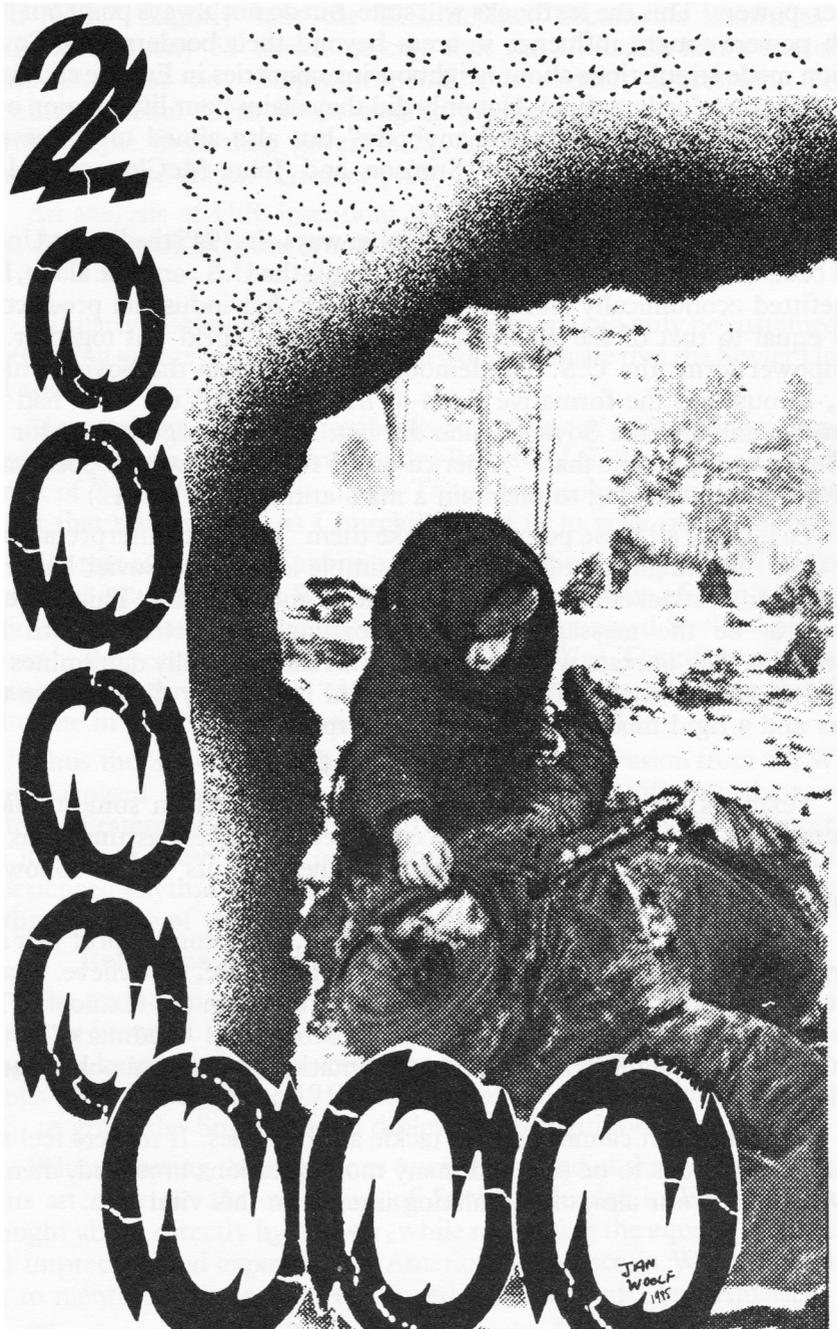
To include all these points and make them part of an interpretation of the Cold War might cast doubt on the simple idea of the Soviet Union as ‘enemy’ and ‘attacker’ and the U.S. as friend and defender. This however seems to be the message which the textbooks perpetuate. With few exceptions they operate with a scheme which moralistically determines the world as good and evil. The post-war world is basically divided into two sides and a rigid model established to interpret events.

### **Dubious assumptions.**

Textbook accounts of post-war events are based on some dubious assumptions. By failing to set the scene objectively these assumptions are left unquestioned. We hope to illustrate these points in the following chapters.

We have examined five areas. The first two, the Second World War and Hiroshima, are events whose correct interpretation are, we believe, vital to an understanding of the Cold War, yet are distorted in the textbooks. The last three are issues highlighted by the textbooks as ‘landmarks’ in the history of the Cold War, yet whose presentation in the textbooks contain serious factual omissions.

Our pamphlet cannot hope to tackle all the issues. If readers feel that much more needs to be said and many more questions broached, then we have achieved our aim, of stimulating interest in this vital area.



MEANWHILE ON THE EASTERN FRONT

## Chapter 2

### MEANWHILE ON THE EASTERN FRONT: the role of the Soviet Union in the Second World War.

We have found that the role of the Soviet Union during the Second World War is so minimised, that children get not only a distorted view of the nature of the war but they do not realise just how much the Soviet Union lost in human and material terms. This in turn affects their ability to judge and understand the post-war concerns of the Soviet Union, in particular her search for security.

#### Soviet actions marginalised.

Very little space is devoted to the Eastern front. Typically a textbook on modern world or European history will contain one chapter on the Second World War. This is often divided into about 20 sections with, at most, 3 or 4 concerned with the role of the Soviet Union. One book entitled “World War Two” devotes one chapter to the causes, 3 to British concerns up to 1943, 1 to the Eastern front, 5 to the war in the Pacific, Japan, and the home front, followed by 2 chapters on the European war in 1944-1945. (Bayne-Jardine)

This gives a distorted view of the very nature of the war. At no time, from June 1941 onwards was less than 2/3 of the total German military strength nor less than 3/4 of their armoured strength on the Eastern front. For the Germans the Eastern front was the war. Winston Churchill wrote that the Russian army, “tore the guts out of the Nazi beast” (Satterthwaite, p.121)

Soviet actions are minimised in various ways in the books. Sometimes the phrase ‘meanwhile’ or ‘in the meantime’ introduces a section or paragraph on the Eastern front, as though it were a sideshow. The significance of Stalingrad and Kursk in the development of the war is recognised officially by the books but accounts of these titanic conflicts are much less detailed than, for instance, accounts of the Battle of the Bulge. It is very rare for any book to highlight the siege of Leningrad which lasted 2 and 1/2 years and cost 1 million lives, double the total losses in the whole war of Britain and the U.S. put together. One author gives a diagram to show the rise and fall of the Axis powers. Only two points on the line are attributable to Soviet actions: 8 are references to British and American actions. (Moss, p.146-147)

But during the Normandy landings themselves, while British and American troops in France and Italy faced 90 enemy divisions, the Red Army faced over 250 divisions along the 1,000 mile Eastern front. (Gaddis p.79)

There is total silence on the massive 'Soviet campaign of June 1944, possibly of greater strategic significance than the D-Day invasion itself. According to Alan Clark as a result of this Soviet operation "in spite of the mounting danger in Normandy all (German) reinforcements were henceforth directed to the East." (Clark, p.413)

### Soviet losses

Some authors give a sympathetic account of the Soviet experience in the Second World War, but in only a few books are valid comparisons given of Soviet losses with those of other belligerents. (e.g. Peacock, p.245) It is common to quote military losses only, showing that 1 out of every 22 Russians died, compared with 1 out of 150 British and 1 out of every 500 Americans. (Bayne-Jardine, p.152 & Stokes, p.296) One author reckons that 3.25 million German soldiers died, 3 million Russians, 1.5 Japanese and 400,000 British, (Snellgrove, p.203). This is a serious understatement and if Soviet civilian losses were to be included we would have the figure of 1 out of every 10 or 8 Soviet citizens dying. 20,000,000 in all.

A similar distortion occurs with regard to Soviet material losses. One author quotes only the percentage of German, French and British housing destroyed. (Moss, p.301) Another states, "*Material destruction was tremendous. The centre of Europe and much of Japan lay in ruins.*" (Snellgrove, p.203) Yet in the Soviet Union the Nazis had, to take but a few examples, demolished 31,850 industrial enterprises, 65,000 km of railway, 90,000 bridges, 10,000 power stations, 1,135 coal mines and 3,000 oil wells. They sacked 98,000 collective farms, 40,000 hospitals and medical centres and 84,000 schools and colleges. (Fleming, p.252)

### Soviet failures highlighted

In addition the Soviet Union is criticised for some of its actions during the war, although equivalent criticisms of Western actions are not made.

The Warsaw Uprising features very prominently in what are generally short sections on the liberation of Europe. In the textbooks it is shown as a Soviet betrayal. The issue is open to dispute; however, it seems pertinent to point out that similar prominence is not given to events which were suspicious in Soviet eyes. One example is the Western delay in opening the Second Front, (Gaddis, p.80). Britain and America also failed to consult with the Soviet Union over a settlement in Italy. (Ambrose, p.59) The Soviet Union was upset by this and Stalin proposed a military-political commission to consider "the questions concerning the negotiations with the different Governments dissociating themselves from Germany."

The incident is also important for understanding some of the post-war settlements in eastern Europe. John Winant, U.S. Ambassador to Britain

warned the State Department: “When the tide turns and the Russian armies are able to advance we might well want to influence their terms of capitulation and occupancy of Allied and enemy territory.” (Gaddis, p.69)

### **Soviet successes seen as sinister**

Double standards are again applied to accounts of Allied advance into Europe. The advance of the Red Army is seen as threatening: “*The huge Soviet army poured into Eastern Europe like a human sea engulfing country after country.*” (Snellgrove, p.209) Yet Roosevelt and General Marshall were actually afraid that the Red Army would not advance into central Europe, so leaving the West with a difficult and costly task. (Ambrose, p.69)

According to one ‘A’ level textbook the behaviour of the Red Army gradually opened up a chasm between them and the people of the liberated countries “*the chasm which separates civilised people from primitives,*” (Waterlow and Evans, p.13) Another compares the advancing Red Army to “*a barbarian horde on the march.*” He says how the Red Army was “*an instrument of vengeance as well as a liberating force.*” (Howarth, p.191 & 209) In fact the Soviet view was that Nazism and not the German people was to blame for the crimes of the Second World War. It was the Americans who held the German people as a whole responsible, and it was the British and Americans who carried out the devastating area bombings over German civilians.

### **Soviet duplicity**

Attempts are made to present the British and Americans as honestly trusting their dishonest allies; but Churchill made it clear that he was anxious to reach Berlin and other major capitals before the Russians in order to prevent the Soviet Union from gaining the strategic advantage this would give them. Thus, before any of the events in Eastern Europe used by the textbooks to demonstrate the unworthiness of the Soviets, some Western politicians were thinking about future conflict with the Soviet Union, and had acted to exclude them from participating in decisions in what was to become a Western sphere of influence.

The U.S. had a different strategic outlook from Britain on the question of reaching Berlin, and this is used by some textbooks to demonstrate how reasonable the Americans were prepared to be in the face of Soviet duplicity. According to one author while Stalin always saw the war-time alliance as temporary:

“*Roosevelt and Truman did their best to retain reasonable relations with the Russians. In fact, during the spring, they allowed the Red Army to ‘liberate’ Berlin, Prague, and Vienna and withdrew their own troops to the west bank of the Elbe to fulfil the Yalta agreements even though the military situation no longer made such concessions necessary.*” (Richardson, p.164)

It was indeed generous to “allow” the Russians to lose 100,000 lives in the liberation of Berlin alone. It is not mentioned by the same author that the Soviets, having suffered such losses did allow Western troops to occupy their sectors of Berlin and Vienna, as previously agreed. (Ambrose, p.71)

A comment by one author sums up the general view in the textbooks: “Stalin was determined that the defeat of the Nazis should be turned to the advantage of the Soviet Union.” (Booth, p.14)

As we have seen such a view is one-sided. Britain and the U.S. had a similar idea. Roosevelt had said in 1941 that the U.S. would win the war and the peace. Various Americans were loudly proclaiming the dawn of the “American century”. A hostile critic might argue that both Britain and America were principally following imperialist aims in Africa, and the Middle and Far East, i.e. turning the war to their advantage.

The textbook view of the Second World War does not agree with historical facts, and is a distortion which views the war through cold war tinted glasses. Fact and opinion are not separated, and children are given no chance to base their view of the subsequent Cold War on facts.

## Chapter 3

### REAPING THE WHIRLWIND: Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Any discussion with children about nuclear war inevitably includes the Hiroshima and Nagasaki bombs. Fear and horror have been instilled into people by pictures and accounts of this event. As a result all people must now look on life in a radically new way. Why was this weapon used? Did it have to be used? How does the U.S. justify such actions against civilians?

#### A military decision

In general the textbooks do little more than repeat the statements made by politicians at the time. With rare exceptions (1) textbook authors state that the decision to drop the A bomb was taken purely in the context of ending the Second World War, and thus was primarily a military decision. A few quotations will illustrate this.

*“The one good result of this nightmare was the end of the war.”* (Snellgrove, p.201)

*“The surrender terms were refused and the Americans dropped the first atom bomb on Hiroshima.”* (Larkin, 1968, p.60)

*“Japan surrendered after the dropping of the atom bomb.”* (Unstead, p.6)

The alternative, according to the textbooks was unacceptable American casualties. (2) The assaults on Iwo Jima and Okinawa are frequently cited as proof of the losses the U.S. might expect in a full-scale invasion. One author puts the potential losses at two million another at one million. (Moss, p.152 & Catchpole, 1983, p.78) Others take the figure given by Truman that 200,000 American lives would have been lost. However, the textbooks fail to make clear that these figures are estimates. The contention that the bomb was necessary to save American lives is thereby presented as fact.

This is particularly naive when so much historical research has shown that such explanations are totally inadequate. According to one historian, “before the atomic bomb, was dropped each of the Joint Chiefs of Staff advised that it was highly likely that Japan could be forced to surrender ‘unconditionally’ and without the use of the bomb and without an invasion.”(Alperowitz, in Higgins, p.31)

Fleming quotes the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey of 1946: “Based on a detailed investigation of all the facts, and supported by the testimony of the surviving Japanese leaders involved, it is the Survey’s opinion that certainly prior to December 31, 1945, Japan would have surrendered, even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.” (p.297)

## A political decision

Historians advance political and diplomatic as distinct from military reasons for dropping the bomb. They quote James Byrnes, then U.S. Secretary of State, who hoped that in the coming negotiations with the Soviet Union “The bomb might well put us in a position to dictate our own terms . . .” (Higgins, p.32)

D. F. Fleming sees one aim of the bomb being to stop or minimise the expansion of Russian power in the Far East. Had the Soviet armies swept into China, “The impression that the Red Army always prepared the way for Allied victory, and that it was invincible everywhere would have spread around the world.” (Fleming, p.307)

As early as 1948 P.M.S. Blacket wrote: “that the dropping of the atomic bombs was not so much the last military act of the Second World War, as the first act of the cold diplomatic war with Russia now in progress.” (Higgins, p.31) This view, widely held today, is only occasionally given expression in school textbooks. (Roberts, p.194; Broster & Jones, p.39; Speed, p.275) Almost without exception an account of Hiroshima is placed at the end of a chapter on the Second World War. This position is justified in chronological terms but implicitly favours one side of a historical and political debate.

### Soviet involvement in the war against Japan

Soviet intentions in the Far East are portrayed in one of two ways. Either the Russians were straining at the leash to “annex territory” in the Far East, so the bomb was necessary to forestall that little game:

*“Stalin was poised to hurl his troops against Japanese positions in Manchuria and was looking forward to a land grab in China.”* (Howarth, p.216)

Alternatively, the Soviet Union delayed her attack, or even her decision to attack, until the U.S. had broken the back of Japan with the atomic bomb, hoping she would then be able to step in and grab what she could, particularly in diplomatic terms:

*“The Russians attacked when Japan was already exhausted and after the first atomic bomb on Hiroshima, in order to profit from the subsequent treaty.”* (Sellman, p.98)

Both these views are mutually exclusive and are both pure speculation. The Soviet Union was obliged, under the Yalta agreement to enter the war against Japan 3 months after the end of the war in Europe, i.e. on August 8th. She therefore carried out her obligations. The Soviet Army was responsible for destroying the Kwantung army, after which Japan surrendered, and the Soviet Union then accepted a settlement which gave the U.S. sole control over Japan.

One author admits that:

*“The Americans were in an even more dominant position in the Far’East than the Russians in Eastern Europe.”*

He continues to excuse this by saying that by late 1945 it was:

*“obvious that Russia might be an even greater menace to American interests in the Pacific than Japan had been. So MacArthur had to try to turn the ruined and the bewildered country into a stable pro American democracy.”* (Richardson, p.166)

Thus, while Soviet influence in the Far East is always seen as reprehensible and dangerous, U.S. interests are unquestioned.

### **Other distortions.**

The textbooks fail to make clear to children that the dropping of the bomb was a unilateral U.S. decision. They frequently refer to the “allied” decision. (e.g. Gough, p.263; Richardson, p.159; Peacock, p.243) In fact the Soviet Union was never consulted, and neither was Britain.

Another common omission is an explanation of why the second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki. If one bomb was enough to stun Japan into surrender, why use two? And why drop the second before political results from the first could be looked for?

A few authors stray even further from their role as impartial transmitters of historical facts. they believe that Japan got her just deserts: *“They had sown the wind and they reaped the whirlwind.”* (Larkin, 1968, p.60)

Such a view overlooks the fact that it was Japanese generals and politicians who bombed Pearl Harbour, but civilians who suffered at Hiroshima.

### **The Bomb and post war politics.**

Finally the influence of the bomb on post-war politics and the development of the Cold War receives little sensible discussion. Some textbooks explain how the A Bomb increased Soviet suspicions of the U.S. and contributed to their sense of insecurity (Marcham, p.111), but others fail to raise the question at all. (This they are able to do if the bomb is not described under the chapter on the Cold War, but under the Second World War.) One author’s only comment is:

*“The Americans had produced the atomic bomb. After some short discussion it was decided to use the new weapon.”* (Ray, p.107)

Others present their opinions as facts. According to one author:

*“Only the U.S. army and U.S. atomic weapons could have stopped further Russian advance.”* (Snellgrove, p.209). It seems equally valid to argue, particularly in 1945, that, on the contrary, U.S. atomic weapons actually increased Russia’s need for secure buffer states around her borders.

The author of a very simple book for junior school classes reckons that Stalin had to adopt stop-gap measures in his plans for world domination:

*“But Russia could not risk a war with the U.S. until she had her own atomic weapons. Stalin forced his scientists to work day and night trying to make one. In the meantime he encouraged communists to get influential jobs in their own countries and then to plot communist takeovers of their own governments. In this way he hoped communism would spread all around the world.”* (Sayer, ch.1)

Not many authors are as blatantly partisan as that, but the quotation reveals the assumptions underlying many of the accounts. (3)

In contrast the counter-arguments are rarely mentioned, although they are supported by some respectable historians. According to Williams, the atom bomb, along with economic might, gave the U.S., at the end of the war a “vision of omnipotence”. The U.S. first displayed its new confidence when reparations were being discussed as a major item at Potsdam:

“American leaders were certain that the bomb, and Russia’s great recovery needs, provided them with the leverage to re-establish the Open Door and pro-Western governments in eastern Europe.” (p.253)

This new U.S. policy was described by Henry Stimson, Secretary of War, as wearing “this new weapon rather ostentatiously on our hip.” He was later to criticise the policy which, he believed, had fed “their suspicions and their distrusts of our purposes and motives.” (quoted in Ambrose, p.112)

These arguments, that the U.S. sought political capital out of its sole possession of the atomic bomb, have not been successfully refuted, and textbook authors have a responsibility to present them.

It is often argued that we must not be emotional and moralistic about Hiroshima: in war nasty things will happen. But even so, a question of historical fact remains: to what extent was the bomb directed against a declared enemy, Japan, or to what extent was it a warning to the Soviet Union, an ally? Textbook authors have mainly opted for one side of the political and historical debate.

If Hiroshima was indeed the first act of the Cold War, then the U.S. would appear as the aggressor and the history of the origins of the Cold War takes on a completely different aspect.

This example demonstrates that one way that the Soviet Union is made to appear the attacker is by playing down those events where U.S. action was, to say the least, questionable, and at worst, ruthless and calculating, and fuelling Cold War suspicions.

FN 1 see Watson, p.166; Lowe, p.194; Speed, p.275; Stokes, section 24.

FN2 Holohan, p.285; Roberts, p.194; Broster and Jones, p.39; Tull and Bullwer, p.205; Ray, p.141; Rundle, p.31; O’Callaghan, p.53; Poulton, p.189.

FN 3 J. & G. Stokes, C. F. Speed are examples of attempts at more reasoned accounts.



HIROSHIMA: REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

## Chapter 4

### FROM GOEBBELS TO CHURCHILL: the image of the “Iron Curtain”

The expression “Iron Curtain” has become firmly embedded in the consciousness of the people of the U.S.A. and Western Europe. Many of our young people today think that an iron curtain physically exists. This will especially be the case for those growing up since the Berlin Wall.

The image Winston Churchill created in his speech at Fulton, Missouri in March 1946 was a chilling, and effective piece of rhetoric. He was the first politician to proclaim publicly the new enemy: a red Russia out to conquer the world. But was he accurate? Most historians do not believe so. According to one non-revisionist historian, Gaddis:

“Historians, revisionist and non-revisionist, now generally agree on the limited nature of Stalin’s objectives.” (p.355, note) “The Russians did not immediately impose Communist regimes on all the countries they occupied during the war, and Stalin showed notoriously little interest in promoting the fortunes of communist parties in areas beyond his control.” (p.355)

In contrast the textbook authors fail to challenge Churchill’s rhetoric: they accept his portrayal of Europe in 1946 as historically accurate.

#### Confusing the dates

The main way in which they do this is by confusing, or being vague about dates. Churchill spoke of the ‘iron curtain’ as a fact in March 1946. The textbooks see the iron curtain as the border between communist and non-communist governments. Yet most of the east European communist governments were not set up until well after 1946. This is glossed over.

For a few textbooks the phrase “Iron Curtain” was a fitting description of the European situation created by the Soviets.

*“The Russians had established Communist governments in a number of Eastern European countries. It was suggested that an “Iron Curtain” divided these states from those in Western Europe.”* (Ray, p.112)

*“At first the Americans and their European partners believed that their Russian allies in the war would prove their companions in peace . . . In fact Soviet Russia with her satellites set up between Eastern and Western Europe a barrier so impenetrable that it became known as the iron curtain.”* (Strong, p.241)

*“By the end of 1947, in Churchill’s words, an ‘iron curtain’ had descended across Europe.”* (Richardson, p.168)

*“The phrase iron curtain explains itself and you can see it marked as a thick black line on the map opposite. By March 1948 the ‘curtain’ which was . . . a stretch of barbed wire . . . had become the dominant feature.”* (Howarth, p.212)

Later Howarth comments, *“the iron curtain had been slammed across Europe; Poland, Bulgaria, Hungary etc. had fallen to the communists. Not only that, but the Russians had their hands on half of Germany.”*

Thus, the textbooks tacitly accept that the ‘facts’ Churchill spoke of did not actually appear for 2, or 3, years after he made his speech. Nor can the speech be taken to refer to areas occupied by Soviet troops. They had been withdrawn from Czechoslovakia in December 1945, and Eastern Germany may not have been inside the iron curtain. One author places it outside in 1945. (Heater, p.4) His map for 1946 shows a little wall winding its way through the centre of Germany, although Churchill said that the iron curtain started at Stettin, i.e on the German/Polish border.

### **Churchill was not wrong but far-sighted**

Other tactics are adopted by the textbook authors to get around the fact that Churchill was factually inaccurate at the time he was speaking; they portray Churchill as enormously far-sighted and realistic about Soviet intentions.

*“Some people thought he was exaggerating. Within two years Czechoslovakia had gone Communist and most of the Western world realised he was right.”* (Snellgrove, p.210)

Even two ‘A’ Level books comment:

*“At the time many in the West thought that he was exaggerating the Russian menace but later events appeared to prove the accuracy of Churchill’s opinion.”* (Perry, p.238)

And the Fulton speech expressed, *“what most people in the West could not yet bring themselves to contemplate.”* (Waterlow and Evans, p.39)

Highlighting ‘obvious’ Russian intentions rather than deeds is one way of making this view of the Fulton speech stick.

*“Stalin’s objective was to ensure that Communist governments would come to power in the states he controlled . . . Churchill was the first statesman in the world to understand the meaning and implication of Stalin’s methods.”* (Holohan, p.292)

Other authors in their chapters on the Cold War, although not always specifically on the Fulton Speech expand on this view of Soviet intentions. According to Wilson, from 1945, *“Stalin set about increasing the size of his Empire”* (p.176) According to Moss, between 1945 and 1946 *“It was clear that Russia was determined to make her zone of Germany as well as the governments of Eastern Europe completely subservient to Moscow.”* (p.270) According to Speed *“rightly or wrongly”* the U.S. thought Russia wanted to control the world. (p.287) And Hamer intones darkly that Russia pushed *“into the heart of Germany itself. Would Stalin be willing to surrender this opportunity of expanding Russian Communist influence?”* (p.170)

Thus, the Fulton Speech is just accepted as either factually accurate or prophetic and a salutary warning of Stalin's evil intentions. As we have seen this does not accord with established historical, academic opinions.

### The impact of the speech

The textbook writers fail to draw attention to the true impact of the speech in West and East alike.

Most Western press reaction to the speech, according to Higgins, was hostile. Some leading politicians, like James Byrnes, U.S. Secretary of State and the British labour government, issued official disclaimers as to their involvement or agreement with the sentiments. (Fleming, p.351 & 352) Several, possibly the majority of U.S. politicians in the State department saw the speech as damaging to the United Nations. People did not just think that Churchill was exaggerating, they were alarmed at its possible consequences. Moss is historically wrong to say that the speech at once "caught the imagination of the public." (p.272)

In the Soviet Union there was very serious alarm indeed. The Moscow correspondent of the "New York Times" said that "Moscow received it hysterically, as if atomic bombs might start dropping before midnight." (quoted in Fleming, p.354)

### Full text of the speech omitted

The textbooks omit certain elements in the speech which would explain both Western and Soviet alarm. Churchill's main conclusion was the need for a military alliance against the Soviet Union. He called for a "settlement and the longer that is delayed the more difficult it will be and the greater our dangers will become." That is, comments Fleming, before "our atomic monopoly would disappear" (p.350)

Churchill referred to the "natural supremacy" in world affairs and government of "the English-speaking peoples". If one substitutes any other language one can begin to imagine how this idea might have sounded to the Russians: how about "the natural supremacy of the German-speaking peoples"? In fact Stalin did describe the concept as a new race theory supplanting that of Hitler's.

Moreover, Churchill's phrase had a sinister significance which is not immediately apparent. The term 'Iron Curtain' was first coined by Goebbels in an editorial in 'Das Reich' in February 1945. He wrote:

*"If the German people lay down their arms the whole of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, together with the Reich would come under Russian occupation. Behind the iron curtain mass butcheries would begin . . ."*

As far as the war-weary Soviets were concerned a leading Western statesman was taking over a major theme of fascist propaganda: the need

for unity in the face of a Bolshevik threat to Western civilisation. This was a theme which Churchill had first taken up in 1918 to justify British intervention in Russia.

### **Events in Western and Eastern Europe**

The textbooks do not comment on the fact that the process by which Communist governments arose in the East had its counterpart in the West. In 1946 practically every European country involved in the war had a coalition government. (The exceptions were Britain, which had a Labour government, and Germany which was run by the four occupying powers.) In most cases, both East and West, the Communists were partners in the coalition. This followed naturally from the war-time alliance of anti-fascist forces which had occurred in European countries, although it may seem rather odd today.

As the Cold War developed anti-communists were excluded from the governments in eastern Europe which, while formally remaining coalitions became broadly communist and pro-Soviet.

But a mirror-image of this occurred in the West. Communists were excluded from coalitions and the governments became anti-Soviet. In the U.S. the exclusion of Communists from public life turned into the McCarthyite witch-hunts.

Interestingly, this process began in the West. Communists were expelled from the governments in France and Italy in May 1947: the balance shifted against the right wing of the Agrarian Party in Hungary in August 1947, the right-wing Rumanian peasant party was dissolved in October 1947. The Czech pro-Western ministers were not removed from the government until February 1948. (See Morgan, chronology).

One textbook author argues that the settlements in the West were fairer because, on the whole, the pre-war governments were re-established. (Strong, p.238) But it must be remembered that most pre-war east European governments had been fascist or nearly so and as such had formed part of Hitler's army on the eastern Front.

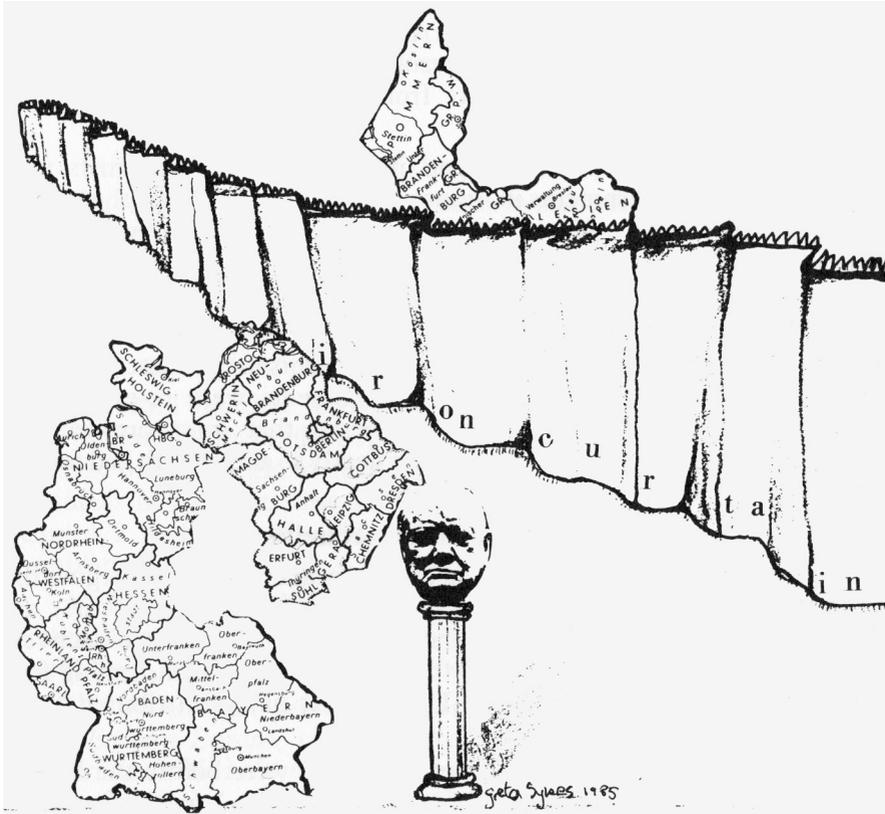
### **Soviet search for security**

Finally, as we have seen, a strong body of academic opinion argues that Soviet intentions in Eastern Europe were always concerned first and foremost with its security. Some authors do discuss this quite objectively. But if this is a valid interpretation then Churchill's speech, calling for a military alliance against the Soviet Union must have contributed to the rising tension.

It could be that, whatever Soviet intentions were before the Fulton speech, their attitude towards the West was bound to harden after it.

There is at least a prima facie case for arguing that, by pushing a hard anti-Communist, anti-Soviet line Churchill and others helped to polarise Europe into opposed camps. Compromise, co-operation and coalition were made impossible in both East and West.

Churchill was the first politician to articulate an image of the post-war enemy. Textbook authors fail to challenge the image and so instead perpetuate it.



THE IRON CURTAIN

## Chapter 5

### Two Halves of the Same Walnut: the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.

The Truman Doctrine was announced during the Moscow Peace Conference in March 1947 and was followed by the Marshall Plan in June 1947. In his speech Truman referred to ‘totalitarian regimes’ which had been forced upon countries ‘against their will’, and mentioned Poland, Rumania and Bulgaria in this context. His call to all nations to choose between ‘freedom’ and ‘oppression’ was, like Churchill’s Fulton speech, an attempt to persuade the post-war world of the existence of a new enemy. The textbooks writers are generally content to repeat his assertions without question.

#### Soviet influence

Chapters on the Truman Doctrine usually link the civil war in Greece with Russian influence in Eastern Europe, thus implying that the Soviet Union used communists as agents in their aim for world domination.

*“By 1947 the Russian grip on Eastern Europe was nearly complete and Greece seemed ready to fall into their lap.”* (Doncaster, p.31)

*“Without Western aid Greece would be added to the list of Soviet satellites.”* (Cornwell, p.74)

*“Immediately after the war, in addition to her massive gains in Eastern Europe, Russia began to push out at three points, Persia, Greece and Turkey.”* (Larkin, p.283)

The equation of communist activity with Soviet influence is made quite clear by Catchpole:

*“Britain and America sent aid to Greece and Turkey, in the hope that Communism would not take over these countries and thus give Russia direct access to the Mediterranean Sea.”* (1976, p.83; our emphasis)

By pointing at communist takeovers in Eastern Europe the textbooks seek to justify Truman’s intention of American intervention in Greece. However, arguably, in March 1947 there had been only two outright communist takeovers. Harriet Ward comments: *“The dismantling of coalition governments and the stalinisation of the whole area came after* (her emphasis) *the announcement of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.”* (p.239)

#### The reasons for Soviet influence

Textbooks rarely contain attempts to explain the origin of Soviet influence and the prestige of communist parties in Europe at the end of the war. Instead, while American influence in Western Europe is taken for granted,

Soviet influence is portrayed as ominous: “The Soviet Union, dominating Eastern Europe, began to put increasing pressure on Greece and Turkey.” (Marcham, p.62)

It was the Soviet Union’s victory over Nazi Germany and the late opening of the second Front which led to the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe. If subsequent to victory Russian influence became more entrenched this was due more to an American initiative than a Soviet one.

At Potsdam the Soviet Union, having been refused an American loan insisted on reparations from Germany. But it was Byrnes, the U.S. Secretary of State, who proposed to Molotov in July 1945 that “each country take reparations from its zone.” This proposal was fought by the Soviets for a whole week. Williams comments: “The Byrnes offer to Molotov of July 23 clearly meant that the Russians would have a free hand in their zone of Germany and throughout Eastern Europe.” (p.250).

None of the textbooks mention details of these important agreements. Instead they may formulate the issues in the following way:

*“... behind the ‘iron curtain’ the Russians were hard at work not just establishing their influence but their political and economic control. America therefore reacted strongly to developments in Greece in the Winter of 1946/47.”*

Nor is the view that Communist activity was part of Soviet expansionism seriously challenged. Communists had played a leading role in the resistance movement against Hitler. Why the British should then have found it necessary to fight this movement is not a question that the textbooks choose to answer. Indeed Greece is an example of Soviet willingness to stand by agreements about ‘spheres of influence.’ British rule in Greece had led to economic chaos, and prisons were full of former resistance fighters. It would not have been difficult for the Soviet Union to support the resistance fighters but they offered no help. (Socialist Register, p.11)

According to Churchill, “Stalin adhered very strictly to this understanding.” (Quoted in Williams, p.222)

The unproven assumption that communist activity is part of Soviet expansionism is not challenged. A ‘cops and robbers’ view of history is accepted which allows American intervention to be justified:

*“Attlee told Truman that British troops would have to pull out of Greece. Truman saw the implications of such a move – the Russians would step in.”* (Catchpole, p.82)

*“... But Britain was too weak to stand alone against Russia so America was forced to step in.”* (Doncaster, p.31)

In other words, the Soviet government stood by the Yalta agreements, even though political and economic control was being established in

the British sphere, whereas political and economic control in the Soviet sphere was challenged and interpreted as sinister before it had even been established.

### American intentions

Most textbooks present the Truman Doctrine as a spontaneous American response, suggesting that Truman suddenly realised in 1947 that he had to help Europe: Holohan (p.294): “*The Truman Doctrine was a turning point in post-war international relations: It was an affirmation that when aggression endangered peace, American’s own security was involved.*” For most authors “*Truman intervened in the nick of time to underpin the integrity of Greece and Turkey and to promote the cause of Freedom throughout the world.*” (Higgins, p.44)

However as early as 1945 he had told his staff that “we were committed to the rehabilitation of Europe and there was to be no abandonment this time.” (Higgins, p.45) In January 1946 Truman declared that World War Three was inevitable unless the Russians were faced with an iron fist and strong language. (Williams, p.260) In other words long before the Greek civil war became a crisis for the West Truman had pledged himself to a policy of involvement in Europe.

American intentions also take on a less favourable interpretation if the timing of the Doctrine is analysed. Rarely do the textbooks mention that it was announced during the Moscow Peace Conference. Higgins quotes a commentator, Howard Smith writing in 1950: “Molotov proved uncommonly conciliatory in the opening discussion . . . Right on top of the conference burst the bombshell of the Truman Doctrine . . . it sounded like an ultimatum to the rest of the world to be with us or to be counted against us.” (p.45)

Fleming (p.466) comments: “. . . these reports indicate fairly clearly that there was no hesitation about blanketing the conference with the Truman Doctrine. It was even expected that a dose of real toughness would bring hard-boiled Russian leaders to terms. If not, well and good, since the Administration did not attach much importance to the conference anyway”.

Thus, commented one British diplomat at the time, “the policy of aid to Greece was made to seem hardly less than a declaration of war on the Soviet Union.” (p.45)

The textbooks also fail to point out that, for all Truman’s avowed intention to “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures” he was not to the fore of encouraging those struggling against the unfree governments of Spain or Latin America. Walter Lippman therefore assumed that Truman was prepared to support any regime so long as it was anti-communist.

## Marshall Aid

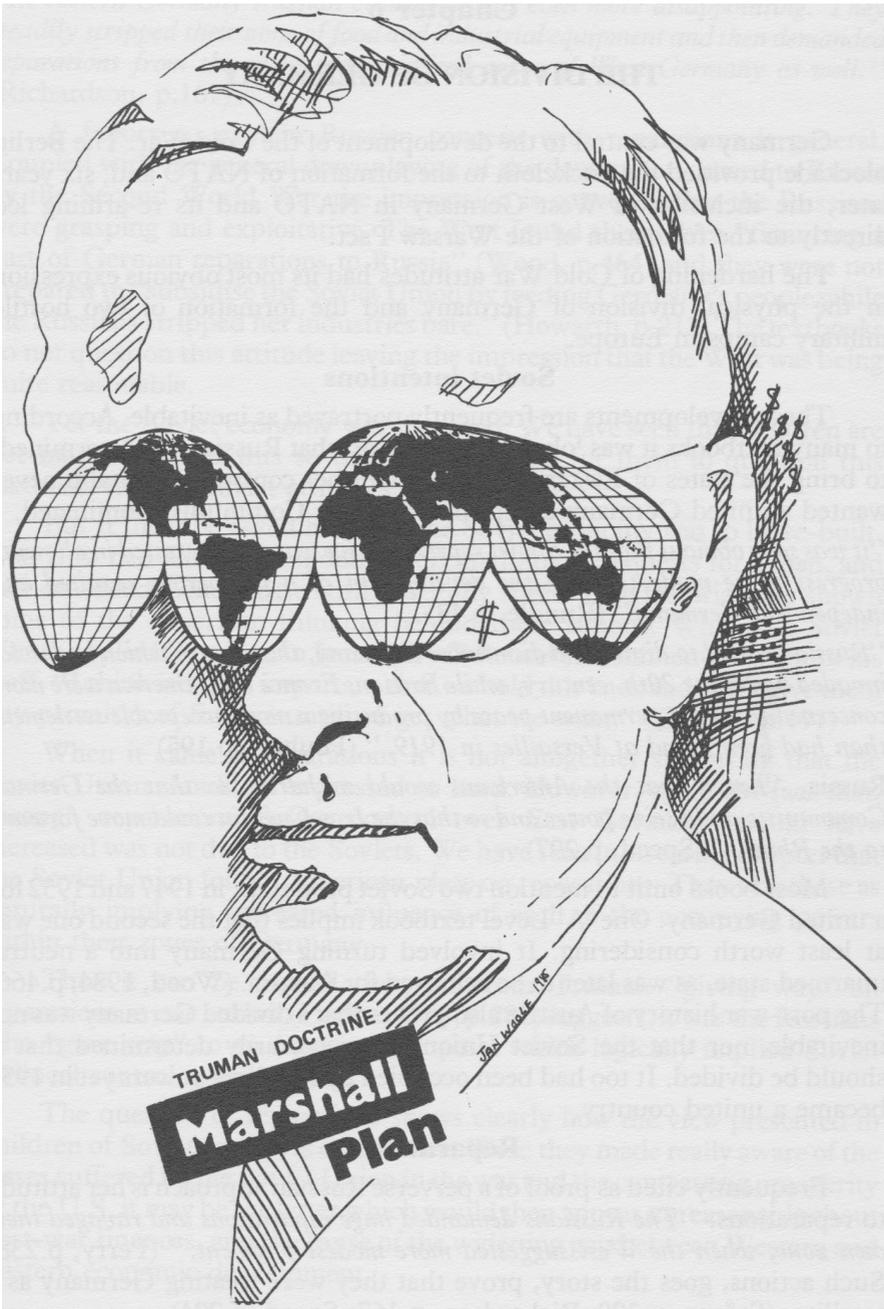
In their analysis of Marshall Aid, the other half of the walnut as Truman put it, textbooks again ignore the timing. Fleming suggests that “If the Marshall invitation had been issued before the Truman Doctrine or rather in lieu of it, the Cold War might have been averted.” (p.478) As it was the Soviet leaders were suspicious and decided to keep American finance out of their sphere of influence. The textbooks interpret this decision, however, as justification for the use of such terms as ‘totalitarian’, ‘iron curtain’ and ‘satellite’.

In fact the Marshall Plan was designed in such a way that the Soviet Union could not have taken advantage of it. Some textbook authors acknowledge this: “*The Soviet Union enquired about the terms of membership and found them too much, as indeed they were bound to be.*” (Howarth, p.224).

The textbooks also portray Marshall Aid as “*freely given by the American people*” (Tull & Bullwer, p.238) Yet again research has shown that it was not simply an act of altruism, but motivated by self-interest. Williams, in particular has argued that the aid to Europe was necessary to maintain American exports and thereby full production and employment in the U.S. (p.269)

The textbooks neither refer to the extensive restrictions which were part of the package, nor to the political changes which preceded it (see chapter 6). For instance, aid was not to go towards nationalisation projects, nor anything that “might destroy or impair private enterprise.” (Fleming, p.482)

While one author argues that the Marshall Plan may have allowed America to dominate Western Europe in the way that the Soviet Union dominated Eastern Europe, most textbooks take it for granted that it was welcome to save Europe from Communism. (e.g. Rundle, p.49). Most authors also hail America as the generous friend who is ensuring freedom and democracy. The good versus evil schema of history has been maintained.



TWO HALVES OF THE SAME WALNUT

## Chapter 6

### THE DIVISION OF GERMANY

Germany was central to the development of the Cold War. The Berlin blockade provided the backcloth to the formation of NATO and, six years later, the inclusion of West Germany in NATO and its re-arming led directly to the formation of the Warsaw Pact.

The hardening of Cold War attitudes had its most obvious expression in the physical division of Germany and the formation of two hostile military camps in Europe.

#### Soviet intentions

These developments are frequently portrayed as inevitable. According to many textbooks it was 'obvious' and 'clear' that Russia was 'determined' to bring the states of Eastern Europe under her control; that Stalin never wanted a united Germany except one that was Communist-dominated.

*"it was soon obvious that the Soviet representative was not interested in allowing progress to be made towards the development of a prosperous reunited and independent Germany"* (Rundle, p.48)

*"Russia wanted to divide and dismember Germany, the country which had twice invaded her in the 20th. century, while Britain, France and America were more concerned to find a permanent peace by producing a more acceptable settlement than had been found at Versailles in 1919."* (Poulton, p.195)

Russia, *"hoped that the Americans would withdraw so that the German Communists could seize power and so that the Iron Curtain could move forward to the Rhine."* (Speed, p.297)

Most books omit to mention two Soviet proposals, in 1947 and 1952 for a united Germany. One 'A' Level textbook implies that the second one was at least worth considering. It involved turning Germany into a neutral unarmed state, as was later to be achieved for Austria. (Wood, 1984, p.466) The post-war history of Austria also proves that a divided Germany was not inevitable, nor that the Soviet Union was necessarily determined that it should be divided. It too had been occupied by the three powers yet in 1955 became a united country.

#### Reparations

Frequently cited as proof of a perverse Russian approach is her attitude to reparations. *"The Russians demanded huge reparations and ravaged their own zone, when the West suggested more modest payment."* (Perry, p.238) Such

actions, goes the story, prove that they were treating Germany as a satellite. (Strong, p.309; Richardson, p.167; Speed, p.294)

*“In eastern Germany Russian behaviour was even more disappointing. They steadily stripped their zone of food and industrial equipment and then demanded reparations from the more industrialised areas of West Germany as well.”* (Richardson, p.167)

A failure to explain Russian concern with reparations is general. Coupled with the general downplaying of the devastation caused to Russia by the Second World War the impression is conveyed that the Russians were grasping and exploitative. The West found themselves “financing a part of German reparations to Russia” (Wood, p.464) and they were not prepared to “subsidise the Soviet Union by feeding Germany’s people while the Russians stripped her industries bare.” (Howarth, p.212) The textbooks do not question this attitude leaving the impression that the West was being quite reasonable.

Yet the Soviet economy was shattered. We have seen that children are not made aware of this so there is no reason for them to question this textbook view of Soviet attitudes to reparations.

But it must be asked how else the Soviet economy was to be re-built. The U.S. had failed to respond to repeated Soviet requests for a loan, and had cancelled Lend Lease with unseemly speed. One historian has shown some of the American thinking behind these actions. When the Soviet Union applied for a loan in January 1945 Roosevelt commented to one of his staff, “I think it’s very important that we hold this back and don’t give them any promises of finance until we get what we want.” (Gaddis, p.191)

When it came to reparations it is not altogether surprising that the Soviet Union should have pressed so hard. However, again the fact that, through reparations Soviet control over East Germany should have increased was not due to the Soviets. We have seen in an earlier chapter that the Soviet Union fought American ideas on reparations. They saw these as naturally implying increased influence of each of the occupying powers within their zones of Germany.

Thus it can be argued that, far from Truman “giving way” on reparations as one author (Larkin, 1965, p.282) suggests, it was the Russians who “gave way” to an American proposal which logically implied Soviet political control over her zone.

The question of reparations shows clearly how the view presented to children of Soviet actions is cumulative. Were they made really aware of the losses suffered by the Soviet Union in the war and the contrasting prosperity of the U.S. it may be the latter which would then appear unreasonable about post-war finances, and the cause of the widening gap between Western and Eastern economic development.

## Berlin Blockade

Soviet actions before and during the Berlin Blockade are portrayed either as arbitrary or as part of a grand design:

*“Stalin sought to re-unite his empire by a continued offensive against the non—Communist world. In 1948 he began his blockade of Berlin.”* (Richardson p.173)

Some textbooks use the word “suddenly” to describe the start of the blockade:

*“In June the Russians suddenly stopped all transport through their zones of Germany to the western sectors of Berlin.”* (Heater, p.6)

Alternatively, or in addition, books frequently state what the Russians did and, by providing no explanation, imply it was unprovoked and aggressive. (e.g. O’Callaghan, p.113; Ray, p.149)

Those textbooks which do provide explanations make no attempt to distinguish fact and opinion. Three commonly-cited causes can only rank as opinions: **a)** the Russians wanted to force the Western armies out of Berlin. (Satterthwaite, p.134; Wilson, p.176; Moss, p.276; Ray, p.112) **b)** the Russians wanted to stop the use of Berlin as an escape route to the West, (Gough, p.272) **c)** tension had been created as a result of the higher standard of living in West Berlin. (Moss, p.276; Markham, p.62; Cornwell, p.76)

These may, or may not, provide the background to the Berlin crisis, but the immediate causes were, firstly the Western moves to set up a separate government in the Western zones of Germany, and secondly the introduction by the West of a new currency. Two authors highlight the first of these and see the blockade not as an attempt to force the West out of Berlin but to get them to abandon their policy of uniting their three occupation zones in Western Germany. (Smith, p.106; Neville, p.124)

The currency reform is given prominence in several books. However, why the Russians should be so upset by it that it led to an international crisis, during which the West contemplated the use of nuclear weapons, is not explained. According to one author, the Deutschmark was simply

*“rejected by Stalin, who claimed control of all Berlin and closed land access to the Western sector.”* (Broster and Jones, p.42)

For another the blockade:

*“was over a new money system for the Germans. The Russians wanted nothing to do with it. The Allies, however, introduced it into their zones.”* (Ray, p.112)

Now the role of financial questions in international politics is not easy to explain to children. However it would not be too difficult to point out that a new currency for Western Germany only was a step towards the

economic separation of the two zones, and this was against the decision at the Potsdam conference to treat Germany as one economic unit.

One author manages to show how the blockade came as a series of actions and counter-actions, in which the Soviet Union was not necessarily the only provocateur. The Soviet Union walked out of the Control Commission after the fusion, without consultation with the Russians, of "Bizonia" (the British and U.S. zones) with the French zone in early 1948. The West then introduced a new currency into their zone. The Soviet Union responded by introducing a currency into the Eastern zone, including Berlin. The West then introduced their currency into their zone of Berlin. (Howarth, p.225)

The Russian action in Berlin was certainly not arbitrary. Nor was it prompted necessarily by a desire to expand Soviet influence. An equally valid opinion might be that it was aimed at containing western influence, after all West Berlin was in the heart of the Soviet zone of a country whose future was seen as very significant to Soviet security.

There is evidence that the British and Americans were themselves ambivalent to say the least, about German unity and working amicably with the Russians. Policy in Western Germany has been interpreted as 'guided by an anti-communist impulse'. To this end former Nazis were re-instated in the judiciary by 1946, the activities of anti-fascist political parties and of Trade Unions curtailed. (Socialist Register, p.165-167) Ambrose points out that by the summer of 1948 the Soviet Union was faced with some threatening developments: The Brussels military Pact signed by Britain, France and the Benelux nations and officially endorsed by the U.S.; and the Western determination to make West Germany independent. He comments, "in the long run this could only mean that the West intended to merge West Germany into the proposed anti-soviet military organisation." (p.149) Neal Ascherson in a recent article in *The Observer* (8.9.85) sees Anglo-American policy towards Germany beginning to change by August 1945 to the need to establish a new West German state as part of an anticommunist alliance.

One is inclined to ask, having read this article just how widespread do 'alternative' opinions about Western actions during the Cold War have to become, before writers of school textbooks are prepared to acknowledge them?

### **Formation of N.A.T.O. and Warsaw Pact**

Finally events in Germany were the immediate cause of the formation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Here two distortions are made.

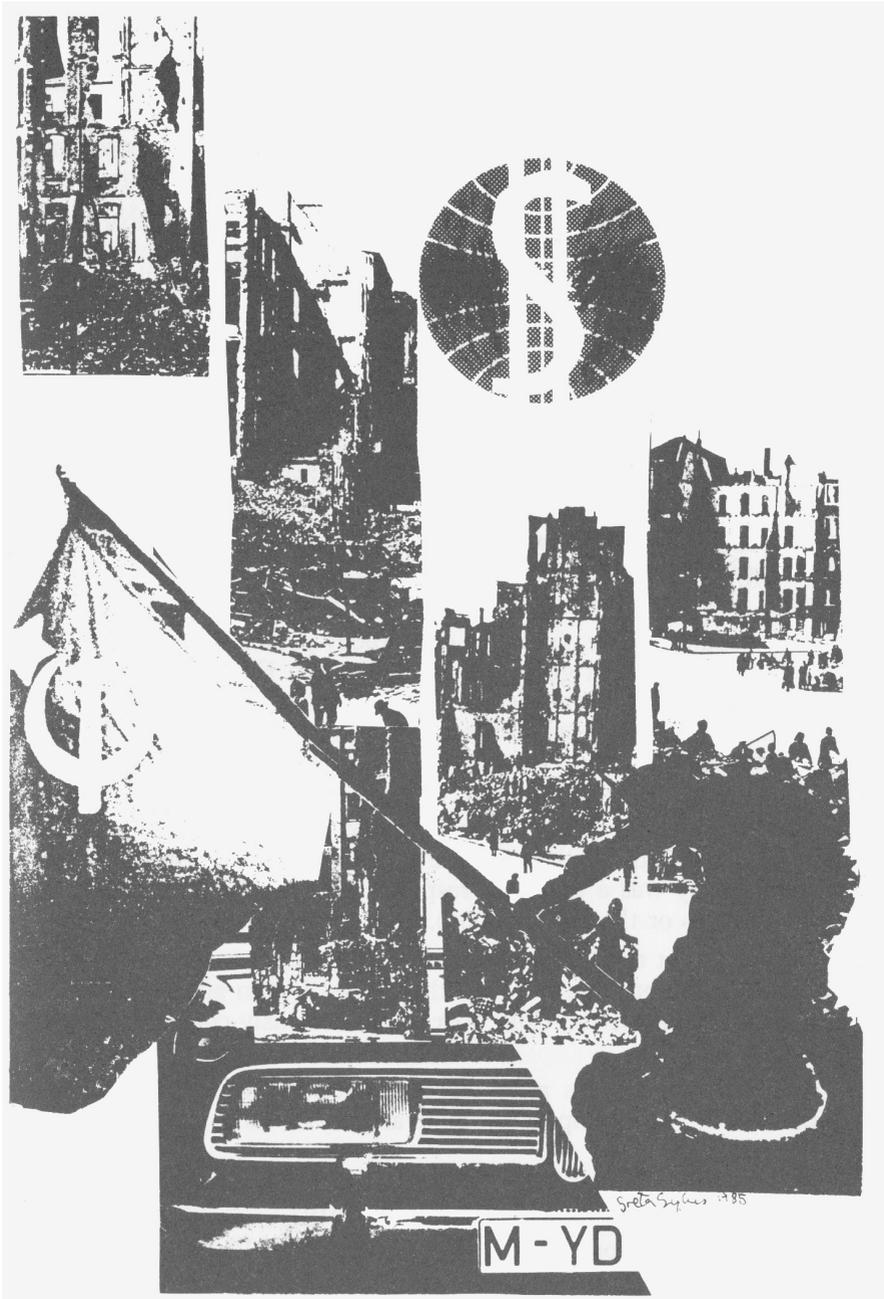
Firstly, some textbooks state that NATO was prompted by the fear induced by the blockade and the Soviet Atom bomb. (Markham, p.62; Cornwell, p.77) In fact NATO was formed in April 1949; the Soviet bomb was exploded in September 1949.

Secondly, it is common to imply that the Warsaw Pact was formed immediately “in reply” to NATO. (Wilson, p.178; O’Callaghan, p.113) Moss gives 1949 as the date when the Warsaw Pact was formed. (p.272) In fact the Warsaw Pact came 6 years later as a result of a momentous decision by the West to re-arm West Germany and include it in NATO. This contravened the Potsdam agreement.

One textbook writer aptly demonstrates this confusion. According to him the U.S. was afraid that the deployment of their troops in Korea (i.e. 1950 – 1954) might prompt Russia and the Warsaw Pact (formed 1955) to attack Western Europe. It was therefore decided to re-arm Western Germany (which occurred in 1955) (O’Callaghan, p.113)

According to another textbook the Russians “used every device of propaganda” to prevent German re-armament. (Strong, p.312) That is, they called on the West to honour the Potsdam agreement.

In the final example we can see how the textbooks, having set up a scheme of the post-war world, no longer need to attempt any explanation of Soviet actions: they can all be dismissed as obviously expansionist, and cunning. By now any Western action aimed at ‘containment’ becomes immediately justifiable.



THE DIVISION OF GERMANY

## CONCLUSION

The origins of the Cold War will continue to be an area of intense political and historical debate.

We argue, in response to Leigh, Scruton etc. that it is not teachers of peace studies who are indoctrinating children. Indoctrination already exists; that it is the textbooks which fail to live up to Sir Keith Joseph's criteria, but instead bewilderingly confuse fact and opinion.

The majority of school history textbooks present children with a simplistic and misleading account of Soviet and, by extension, Western actions in the early years of the Cold War.

To sum up from the case studies chosen:

- Events are selected which conform to the orthodox view of the Cold War, rather than for simplicity or other educational considerations.
- The timing of events is confused or manipulated and Soviet actions which were responses to Western moves are presented as their cause. Fleming says: "There can be no real understanding of the Cold War unless chronology is kept in mind. What came first? What was action and what was reaction? The later event could not be the cause of the earlier." (p.475)
- Children would believe, given the chronology presented in textbooks, that there were Communist governments in Eastern Europe at the time that Churchill made his Fulton speech; that it was a Russian idea to extract huge reparations from the eastern zone of Germany. Such beliefs encourage the view of the Soviet Union as enemy.
- Soviet policy is interpreted as sinister and volatile: sudden, yet cunningly prepared. Western policy is portrayed as long-suffering and tolerant; naive and trusting. Where it cannot be shown in that way then Western policy was a reluctant response to a no-choice situation: either American lives or the atomic bomb.
- The idea that the U.S. was actually following a conscious "Cold War strategy" does not emerge. That the Soviet Union acted for reasons of security through out the Cold War is not seriously considered in school textbooks.
- The worst textbooks refer to the Soviets as "frosty" "barbaric," "a human sea": contemporary equivalents of the Nazi epithet of 'Untermensch'
- Misrepresentation of events in these ways has a cumulative effect. If the intervention of Western troops in Russia in 1918 is omitted as an event in the Cold War; if Soviet losses during the Second World War are downplayed: if the political impact of the Atomic bomb receives trivial discussion, then when it comes to the Fulton speech, or events in

Eastern Europe or the Truman Doctrine or Germany, children will not have background knowledge to allow informed judgements to be made. They are in the hands of the opinions of the textbook writers.

The result is that children are being given a view of 20th century history which a wide body of historians would consider “distorted” or “extreme”.

To write and teach school history is no easy task and any simplification involves a degree of error. Children cannot be expected to grasp and may not be interested in all the intricacies of diplomacy and strategy. However, all too many textbooks present not a simplified account of the Cold War but simplistic opinions in the guise of factual accounts. Their distortions and omissions maintain and perpetuate a rigid image of the Soviet Union as the enemy.

Consequently school students have limited chance to form judgements also about contemporary nuclear issues. Yet the arms race itself would be rendered obsolete without an enemy. To convince children that there is an enemy is to convince them of the need for the arms race.

Thus we believe: to educate for peace is not indoctrination, far from it. **The indoctrination already practised subtly educates for war.**

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