

THE COLD WAR BEGINS: SOVIET-AMERICAN CONFLICT OVER EASTERN EUROPE. By *Lynn Etheridge Davis*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974. x, 430 pp. \$15.00.

United States officials revealed concern over the future of Eastern Europe even before the Second World War. With the passage of time Soviet ambition in that region became the central issue in U.S.-Soviet relations. From the beginning the United States opposed any arrangement that would commit the Allies to postwar territorial changes which defied the principle of self-determination as embodied in the Atlantic Charter of August 1941. In February 1942, Undersecretary Sumner Welles reminded British Ambassador Halifax that the Soviets should not be permitted to enhance their security through "the placing of millions of human beings under Russian domination should those human beings desire to maintain their own independence and should they be bitterly opposed to Russian overlordship." The purpose was clear: the United States would resist by every available means any permanent Soviet encroachment on Eastern Europe.

Nevertheless, London and Moscow repeatedly sought Washington's approval for some territorial concession in Eastern Europe. In 1942, the British argued that American inflexibility not only served no useful purpose but antagonized a needed ally as well. Following the Battle of Stalingrad in early 1943, the Soviets announced that the Polish-Russian frontier would be the Ribbentrop-Molotov line, drawn in 1939. Throughout 1944 the question of Poland's future became a critical question in U.S.-Polish-Russian relations. Even as Russia emerged as Europe's dominant power, however, United States officials repeatedly refused to consider any territorial concessions to the Soviet Union. When, in that same year, Churchill sought Roosevelt's approval for a Soviet-British sphere-of-influence agreement, the United States government resisted. Later, in Moscow, Churchill agreed to a partition of Eastern Europe into Soviet and British spheres of influence, with Britain retaining control of Greece. Roosevelt regarded the agreement as a breach of faith with the Slavic populations. He preferred to avoid such troublesome and potentially divisive issues.

This inflexible purpose had no relationship to actual American intent or capability. One wartime theme, thoroughly developed in this volume, was the burgeoning United States recognition of Soviet power and expansionism in Eastern Europe. Former Ambassador William C. Bullitt warned Roosevelt, as early as January 1943, that Stalin's war aims included the extension of Soviet control over various Slavic countries. Long reports of the Office of Strategic Services and the Joint Intelligence Committee of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, both issued in September 1943, predicted the Sovietization of portions of Eastern and Central Europe. To suggestions like Bullitt's, that the United States create a British-American military line in Eastern Europe to limit Soviet expansion, the European Division of the State Department responded in August 1943: "Where? Presumably he means with the view to re-establishing boundaries as of September 1, 1939 in Eastern Europe. Our friends in the War Department tell us that such an attempt would be sheer military fantasy; that the United States and the United Kingdom are not in a position successfully to oppose the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe if Germany is defeated. In short, the only way Mr. Bullitt's suggestion could actually be implemented would be by means of a coalition between United States, United Kingdom, and the German military forces." Clearly the United States would be forced to contend with

Soviet predominance in Eastern Europe. Isaiah Bowman, at that time a member of the Political Subcommittee for Postwar Planning, argued that coming to terms with the Kremlin during the war would be far less costly than attempting to do so later. Officials who controlled policy never seemed to consider the consequences of policies that would bring the United States into direct conflict with the USSR in regions under Soviet military control.

Davis repeatedly emphasizes the failure of United States leaders to define U.S. interests in Eastern Europe. She observes that the United States became "locked into opposition with the Soviet Union over issues which, in fact, American officials either had not considered or were not in basic disagreement with the Soviet Union. . . . Conflict existed not on the merits of the issues but over the American commitment to postponement of all political and territorial settlements until the end of the war" (p. 61). If this was true, why the perennial United States opposition to all territorial concessions and a Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe? The author rejects the revisionist argument that the United States was concerned with not negotiating away any equality of economic opportunity in Eastern Europe—she is convinced that goals were never that clearly or accurately defined. Rather, she finds the explanation for American behavior in Roosevelt's concern for the Polish-American vote and in the broader and more traditional quest for a postwar international order that would at long last conform to the principles of self-determination and peaceful change.

The extent to which the United States pursued conflicting goals—agreement with Russia and self-determination for Eastern Europe—became clear at Yalta in February 1945. In its briefing book, the State Department reminded Roosevelt that "it now seems clear that the Soviet Union will exert predominant political influence over the areas in question. While the Government probably would not want to oppose itself to such a political configuration neither would it desire to see American influence in this part of the world completely nullified." How Roosevelt could create a policy from such conflicting elements was not clear. Still those same countering purposes circumscribed United States policy on the questions posed in Eastern Europe from Yalta through Potsdam, London, Moscow and afterward.

What contribution does this volume make to an understanding of the troublesome Eastern European theme? Other writers, in lesser or greater degree, have expressed both the lack of realism in American policy and its consequences for U.S.-Soviet relations. But no other work has dwelled on this theme quite as directly. Moreover, no previous studies have made such extensive use of the official United States diplomatic record. The book might have achieved greater variety and depth with a fuller use of memoirs and other wartime writings, but such materials would have altered the author's theses and conclusions little if at all. The writing is clear, although the repetition of certain ideas—even important ones—seems somewhat excessive. What this useful and disturbing book reveals, above all, is the determination and capacity of a bureaucracy to bar external challenges to inherited assumptions and policy goals which have no chance of attainment.

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