

## Containing Communism

Like Churchill, President Truman saw communism as an evil force creeping across Europe and threatening countries around the world, including China. To deal with that threat, the United States abandoned its traditional isolationism. Unlike after World War I, when it withdrew from global affairs, it took a leading role on the world stage after World War II.

When Stalin began to put pressure on Greece and Turkey, Truman took action. In Greece, Stalin backed communist rebels who were fighting to topple a right-wing monarchy supported by Britain. By 1947, however, Britain could no longer afford to defend Greece. Stalin was also menacing Turkey in the Dardanelles, the straits linking the Black Sea and the Mediterranean.

**The propaganda war.** Both sides campaigned in a propaganda war. The United States spoke of defending capitalism and democracy against communism and totalitarianism. The Soviet Union claimed the moral high ground in the struggle against western imperialism. Yet linked to those stands, both sides sought world power.

**Truman Doctrine.** On March 12, 1947, Truman outlined a new policy to Congress:

*"I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures .... The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms."*

This policy, known as the **Truman Doctrine**, would guide the United States for decades. It made clear that Americans would resist Soviet expansion in Europe or elsewhere in the world. Truman soon sent military and economic aid and advisers to Greece and Turkey so that they could withstand the communist threat.

The Truman Doctrine was rooted in the idea of containment, limiting communism to the areas already under Soviet control. George Kennan, the American statesman who first proposed this approach, believed that communism would eventually destroy itself. With "patient but firm and vigilant containment," he said, the United States could stop Soviet expansion. Stalin, however, saw containment as "encirclement" by the capitalist world that wanted to isolate the Soviet Union.

**The Marshall Plan.** Postwar hunger and poverty made Western European lands fertile ground for communist ideas. To strengthen democratic governments, the United States offered a massive aid package, called the **Marshall Plan**. Under it, the United States funneled food and economic assistance to Europe to help countries rebuild. Billions in American aid helped war-shattered Europe recover rapidly and reduced communist influence there.

President Truman also offered aid to the Soviet Union and its satellites in Eastern Europe. Stalin, however, saw the plan as a trick to knock Eastern Europe out of the Soviet orbit. He forbade Eastern European countries to accept American aid, promising that the Soviet Union would help them instead.

1. What is containment?

2. Where was Stalin attempting to spread communism?

3. What is propaganda war?

4. What is the Truman Doctrine?

5. What was the goal of the Truman Doctrine?

6. What is the Marshall Plan?

7. How is the Marshall Plan different from the Truman Doctrine?