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Geoffrey Roberts

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Moscow and the Marshall Plan: Politics, Ideology and the Onset of the Cold War, 1947

GEOFFREY ROBERTS

MOSCOW'S DECISION TO REJECT Soviet and East European participation in the Marshall Plan is seen by many historians as a key moment in the origins and development of the Cold War. For it was in the aftermath of this decision in summer 1947 that the Cold War on the Soviet side began in earnest.

According to Wilfried Loth's account,¹ for example, Moscow initially welcomed the Marshall Plan and the possibility of Soviet participation in a US-funded European reconstruction programme. Participation in the Marshall Plan meshed with Moscow's then foreign policy aims of (a) continued cooperation with the Western powers, (b) the prevention of the emergence of a West European bloc led by the United States, and (c) the political and economic stabilisation of Europe as a whole. Moscow was opposed, however, to the idea of a coordinated multilateral aid programme, which was seen to threaten the Soviet political and economic position in Eastern Europe. It was over this issue that the Anglo-Soviet-French Marshall Plan negotiations broke down in early July 1947. The USSR then withdrew from the Marshall Plan project, insisted that its East European allies do likewise, and subsequently embarked on a new foreign policy strategy: a strategy of isolation, and of the consolidation of Soviet and communist power in Eastern Europe as a counter to the emerging West European bloc signalled by the Marshall Plan. Moscow's rejection of the Marshall Plan was followed by the founding of the Cominform and Zhdanov's proclamation of the two-camps doctrine in September 1947, by the ending of West European communist support for reconstruction and postwar national unity, and, most notably, by the Stalinist *Gleichschaltung* of Eastern Europe.

In his analysis of the immediate sources of this great turn in Soviet foreign policy Loth, like many others,² emphasises Moscow's fear of the consequences for its strategic position of independent East European participation in the Marshall Plan—a danger which the Soviet leaders averted by exerting massive pressure on their communist-dominated allies to reject American aid.

As a broad description and analysis of Moscow's initial response and subsequent reaction to the inception of the Marshall Plan a summary along these lines seems reasonable enough. However, a more detailed examination of Moscow's decisions regarding the Marshall Plan reveals a rather more complex scenario than that presented by Loth and others.

First, despite its general predisposition to seek cooperation with the West, Moscow was uncertain and hesitant in its approach to the proposed European discussions about the Marshall Plan. The meaning of the plan was unclear to Moscow. Only in the context of negotiations with the British and French in Paris in June–July 1947 did the Soviet leaders arrive at their final conclusion about its purpose and act accordingly. Second, the usual story about Soviet blocking of East European participation in the Marshall Plan requires some amendment, for it seems that Moscow's exercise of its undoubted veto was as much a response to pressures from communist leaders in Eastern Europe as its own initiative. Third, Moscow's rejection of the Marshall Plan was far from being the only source and inspiration for the radical turn in Soviet policy in autumn 1947. Internal political and ideological shifts also need to be brought into the picture. Finally, the form of this radical shift in policy—the adoption of a dogmatic, militant leftist stance in both foreign and domestic affairs—was very much related to the peculiar character of Soviet ideology as a discourse of communicative action. The Cold War took the extreme ideological form that it did because it had to within the terms of Soviet political discourse.

More generally, there is a need to construct a narrative that more adequately conveys and explains how it was that in a few weeks over the summer of 1947 the USSR came dramatically to change its policy from one of coexistence, detente and cooperation with the West to a stance of isolation, conflict and confrontation.³

This article is presented as no more than a preliminary contribution to this task, using the few pertinent sources available to me at this time.⁴

Moscow and participation in the Marshall Plan

The Marshall Plan was publicly launched in a speech by the American Secretary of State at Harvard University on 5 June 1947. Marshall put forward the idea of a US programme to aid European recovery, reconstruction and stabilisation—a coordinated programme that would be developed on the initiative of Europe itself (not excluding the USSR and Eastern Europe). Marshall's proposal was then taken up by Britain and France.⁵ Bevin and Bidault met in Paris on 17–18 June and on 19 June issued a statement welcoming Marshall's speech and inviting the USSR to an Anglo-Soviet-French conference that would discuss the elaboration of a common European recovery programme backed by US aid.⁶

The initial Soviet response to these developments, as expressed in press articles, was negative in tone. *Pravda Ukrainy*, *Pravda* itself and *Soviet News* all published articles linking Marshall's proposal with the Truman Doctrine and depicting US financial aid to Europe as the crude deployment of economic power for the purpose of political interference in European affairs.⁷ However, another straw in the wind was the publication by *Pravda*, without comment, of the Anglo-French communique on the Marshall Plan.⁸ On 21 June the Politburo met and endorsed a positive reply to the Anglo-French proposal for a meeting of foreign ministers to discuss the Marshall Plan.⁹ In their reply the next day the Soviet leaders welcomed the idea of an American aid programme and accepted the invitation to a joint conference to discuss its terms and conditions.¹⁰ Moscow's suggestion that Paris should be the conference venue and that it should begin on 27 June was subsequently agreed by the British and French.

At the same time Moscow telegraphed its East European embassies with instructions that the people's democracies should ensure their own participation in forthcoming Marshall Plan discussions.¹¹

It seems clear that the initial Soviet response to the Marshall Plan constituted a decision by Moscow to participate on a serious basis in discussions about the terms and organisation of a US aid programme for Europe. In adopting such a stance Moscow was far from committing itself to eventual participation in any Marshall Plan, but the decision to negotiate with the British and French did signal that Moscow was seriously contemplating the possibility of US financial aid to both itself and its East European allies.

To many contemporary observers this turn of events was somewhat surprising, for Moscow's constructive response to the Marshall Plan came in the wake of two major setbacks for the prospect of an East-West detente: the proclamation of the Truman Doctrine in March 1947 and the effective breakdown of allied negotiations on the future of Germany at the Council of Foreign Ministers conference in Moscow in April.¹² In spite of these ill-omens, in June 1947 Moscow evidently decided on a positive response to the Marshall Plan idea.

Behind this apparently contrary policy stance lay in the first instance a set of general conditions. At the moment of the Marshall Plan's announcement the USSR was still, despite all the postwar conflicts and difficulties in Soviet-American relations, committed to a policy of peaceful coexistence, detente and collaboration with the West. Detailed studies demonstrate that in the period 1945-47 the Soviet outlook on foreign relations was dominated by the conviction that the postwar continuation in some form of the wartime grand alliance was both necessary and possible. This international outlook was rooted in a diversity of political and ideological sources: the priority attached to domestic reconstruction; confidence in the postwar international strength of the USSR and in its new-found position in Eastern Europe; a belief that inter-imperialist contradictions were stronger than inter-systemic ones between capitalism and socialism; a perception that the USSR and the major capitalist powers had a common interest in peace and commerce; a calculation that co-operation with the West was necessary to contain the long-term threat of a resurgent Germany; and an analysis of changes in the nature of capitalism that emphasised the political role of the working class and progressive forces in shaping its character and direction.¹³

Perhaps the most notable expression of what might be called the anti-Cold War policy of the USSR was a series of statements and interviews by Stalin in 1946-47 in which the Soviet leader reaffirmed his commitment to postwar international cooperation.¹⁴ Just a few weeks before the announcement of the Marshall Plan Stalin gave two important positive pointers to his attitude towards East-West relations. In April 1947 he described a session of the Council of Foreign Ministers on the German question as:

something like combat reconnaissance. When the partners have exhausted one another, the moment for a possible compromise arrives. The result may be attained at the next session rather than the current one, but on all important issues, such as democratisation, political organisation, economic unity and reparations, compromise is within reach.¹⁵

In May 1947 Stalin gave an interview to the Republican Senator Harold Stassen:

In answer to Stassen's question whether he—Stalin—thought that the Soviet economy and the free enterprise economy of the USA could coexist, Stalin replied: 'Not only can they coexist, but they can also co-operate; if they did so during the war, why not now? Lenin said that the co-operation of the two systems was possible, and Lenin is our teacher'.¹⁶

So, the initial Soviet embrace of the Marshall Plan was commensurate with the pro-detente policy the USSR was still clinging to in mid-1947. However, it also arose from a more specific set of political calculations. To see what these were it is necessary to examine further the Marshall Plan's reception in Moscow in June 1947.

The announcement of the Marshall Plan was, it seems, interpreted in a threefold light in Moscow. Firstly, as already noted, as quite simply an extension of the Truman Doctrine in which financial aid would be used as an additional means of applying political pressure on European states, particularly those in Eastern Europe. Secondly, as a project for extending France's Monnet Plan for modernisation and re-equipment to other countries, with the aim of using this as the basis for the creation of a US-led West European bloc. This was the view expressed by Novikov, the Soviet Ambassador to the United States, in a telegram to Moscow on 9 June, which concluded: 'in this American proposal are the perfectly clear outlines for a West European bloc directed against us'.¹⁷ Novikov reaffirmed this view in a further despatch on 24 June:

A careful analysis of the Marshall Plan shows that in the end it amounts to the creation of a West European bloc as an instrument of US policy . . . Instead of the previous uncoordinated actions directed towards the economic and political subjection of European countries to American capital and the formation of an anti-Soviet grouping, the Marshall Plan envisages more extensive action aimed at resolving the problem in a more effective way.¹⁸

Thirdly, the Marshall Plan was seen as a means of staving off a postwar depression in the United States. Marshall aid would help close the 'dollar gap', boost US exports to Europe, and ameliorate the growing problem of overproduction in the American economy. This was the view expounded by Varga in a confidential memorandum to the Soviet leadership dated 24 June.¹⁹ This was the line, too, of an article published in *Soviet News* on 26 June, which noted that

there can be no doubt that Mr Marshall's proposal is conditioned by the present position of the economy of the USA. It is an almost universal opinion that the post-war boom in the USA is drawing to a close and that the threat of an economic crisis draws daily nearer . . . The Marshall plan, it would appear, represents a programme for the solution of the American export problem, providing for the overcoming of the ever-sharpening dollar crisis in many European countries.²⁰

The implication of this kind of view was that there might be a mutual economic basis for an American aid programme to Europe (i.e. a boost to the US economy in exchange for reconstruction funds for Europe, including the USSR). But was this the consensus in Moscow? The answer to this question is far from clear, but it seems that the Soviet leadership reserved its final judgment on the nature of the Marshall Plan. As the *Soviet News* article pointed out, 'only when the real content of the Marshall Plan is unfolded and the conditions of aid are ascertained will it be possible to answer with certainty . . . the question of the relationship between the Marshall Plan and the

Truman Doctrine'.²¹ At the same time Moscow proceeded on the basis that it represented a genuine opportunity to secure US financial aid on an acceptable political basis. As Erofeev, Molotov's secretary, later recalled about the government's position: 'It was necessary to agree to this proposal and to seek the maximum reduction of all negative aspects'.²² However, Moscow was also mindful of the dangers of being drawn into a project with ulterior political motives, such as US interference in East European affairs and the formation of an anti-Soviet bloc—dangers which had been noted by Varga²³ as well as Novikov.²⁴ This concern found expression in the guidelines drawn up for the Soviet delegation to the Paris conference with Britain and France. These specified that the main Soviet aims in the talks were (a) to ascertain the kind and extent of American aid that was on offer; (b) to ensure that 'the question of American economic aid for European countries must be considered not from the point of view of drawing up an economic programme for European countries but from the point of view of ascertaining their economic needs for American aid (credits, delivery of goods), on the basis of demands drawn up by the European countries themselves'; and (c) to object to aid terms which threatened interference in the internal affairs of recipients. The delegation was also instructed that there should be no discussion of the German question in Paris, which was a matter for the Council of Foreign Ministers.²⁵

Molotov arrived in Paris at the end of June accompanied by nearly 100 advisers—a definite sign of the seriousness of Moscow's approach to the talks. Molotov immediately found himself confronted, however, with Anglo-French proposals which had the appearance of a Monnet Plan writ large, i.e. a proposal for a US-financed European economic plan under which states would agree modernisation programmes supervised by a central European organisation which would dole out American money.²⁶

Whatever their actual intent, the Anglo-French proposals raised for the Soviet Union the twin spectre of a US-controlled West European bloc and Western incursions into its sphere of political influence in Eastern Europe. Not surprisingly, in his first speech to the conference on 28 June Molotov strongly objected to the kind of coordinated economic aid programme being proposed. 'The task of the conference', he argued, 'is that of bringing about collaboration between the European nations with a view to drawing up a list of these countries' requests for American aid, of clearly defining the possibility of such economic assistance from the United States, and of facilitating the acceptance of this aid by the countries of Europe'. To this end Molotov proposed the establishment of a series of committees that would ascertain needs and deal with requests for American aid.²⁷ Molotov's position was also reflected in his draft agenda for the conference and in a formal Soviet resolution submitted to the conference on 30 June.²⁸

Up to this point the Soviet negotiating stance in the conference was firm but businesslike and constructive—which was in line with the delegation's brief and was also reflected in a telegram from Molotov to Stalin on 29 June.²⁹ However, this position changed rapidly as the British and French stuck to their original position of a coordinated economic programme or nothing. On the night of 30 June Molotov telegraphed to Stalin:

Both England and France are in a highly difficult position and they do not have in their

hands any serious means of overcoming their economic difficulties. The only hope is the United States, which demands from England and France the creation of some kind of all-European body for the purpose of United States interference in both the economic and political affairs of European countries. The utilisation of this body for their own interests constitutes the calculation of Britain and, in part, France.³⁰

On 1 July Molotov reported to Stalin: 'In view of the fact that our position is fundamentally different from the Anglo-French position, we are not counting on the possibility of any joint decisions on the substance of the issue in question'.³¹

With the negotiations deadlocked, the conference moved towards collapse. On 2 July Molotov made his final statement to the conference, and it was a resounding rejection of the Marshall Plan:

The question of American economic aid . . . has . . . served as a pretext for the British and French governments to insist on the creation of a new organisation, standing above the European countries and intervening in the internal affairs of the countries of Europe, even to the extent of determining the direction in which the main branches of industry in these countries are to develop . . . There are two roads of international cooperation. One road is based on the development of political and economic relations between states with equal rights . . . There is another road of international cooperation which is based on the dominating position of one or several strong Powers in relation to other countries, which thereby fall into the position of some kind of subordinated states, deprived of independence . . . What will the fulfilment of the Franco-British proposal . . . lead to? It will lead to nothing. It will lead to Britain, France and the group of countries that follow them separating from the rest of Europe, which will split Europe into two groups of states.³²

As stated by Molotov, the main reason for Soviet rejection of the Marshall Plan was the Anglo-French insistence on a centrally coordinated programme of American assistance. However, it may be that Soviet fears concerning Germany's role in the projected reconstruction of Europe were also a central motivation. The Soviet delegation's instructions for the conference included a directive that German economic resources could not be used as part of the reconstruction programme.³³ At the conference Molotov badgered the French on whether or not their plans involved using German resources for European recovery rather than the payment of reparations.³⁴ Of crucial importance may be the fact that in the midst of the Paris conference Molotov received secret information from Moscow that the British and Americans had agreed that Germany would be central to any European reconstruction plan and that they would oppose the payment of reparations to the Soviet Union from German current production.³⁵ The receipt of this telegram coincided with the beginning of a hardening of the Soviet position at the conference. Finally, we should note that in his closing speech Molotov raised the German question strongly, linking the Anglo-French position on the Marshall Plan to the spectre of a Western-inspired division of Germany.³⁶

Moscow and East European participation in the Marshall Plan

Following the collapse of the Paris talks the British and French governments issued an invitation to 22 states in Europe to participate in a conference that would establish

an all-European organisation to supervise a Marshall aid assistance and reconstruction programme. All the countries of Eastern Europe were invited to attend.³⁷

The Soviet Union's withdrawal from the Marshall Plan discussions meant that East European participation in any American aid programme to Europe was very unlikely. Such indeed turned out to be the case. No East European state attended the Anglo-French conference and none took part in the European Recovery Programme that eventually emerged from the Marshall aid discussions. The agency of this outcome, we are told in numerous books and articles, was Moscow's exercise of its veto on East European foreign policy—the most famous case being the Czechoslovak reversal of a decision to attend the Anglo-French Marshall Plan conference. However, the recent evidence published from Soviet archives suggests that there is much more to the picture than just a simple case of a Moscow veto of East European participation in the Marshall Plan.

As we have seen, before the Paris Conference Moscow had encouraged its East European allies to get involved in Marshall aid discussions. For their part, the Polish and Czechoslovak governments responded to Moscow's advice with enthusiasm.³⁸ But what would be Moscow's attitude following the collapse of the Paris talks? On 5 July 1947 Moscow sent two messages to all its ambassadors in Eastern Europe. The first message was an instruction to deliver to the local foreign ministry an explanation of the Soviet stance at the Paris Conference. This explanation consisted of a straightforward summary of the already known position of the USSR on the Marshall Plan. It contained no policy directives other than the implication that the East European states should take up the Soviet critique of the British and French proposals on an American aid programme for Europe.³⁹ The second message was for delivery to the leaders of the communist parties. This message concerned the British and French conference invitation to European countries. This message did have a policy directive. Surprisingly, it urged that the East European countries *should accept* the Anglo-French invitation and attend the conference that was scheduled to open on 12 July:

Some countries friendly to the Soviet Union, it seems, are considering refusing participation in the conference, on the grounds that the USSR has decided not to participate. We think it would be better not to refuse participation in this conference but to send delegations to it, in order to show at the conference itself the unacceptability of the Anglo-French plan, not allow the unanimous adoption of this plan and then withdraw from the meeting, taking with them as many delegates from other countries as possible.⁴⁰

The fact that Moscow was prepared to countenance any East European participation in Marshall Plan discussions is of some significance, and not only because of what it reveals about Soviet tactical thinking at this time. East European participation in the forthcoming Anglo-French conference carried with it the possibility that East European countries would apply for and receive Marshall aid, providing that certain political conditions were met—most notably no undermining of Soviet and communist influence in the region.

This might seem a somewhat strained interpretation of the quoted Soviet position but bear in mind that Poland was to become a *de facto* participant in the European Recovery Programme in the period 1947–49. As Anderson has convincingly argued,

during this period 'the Soviet Union allowed Poland considerable freedom of movement in the economic sphere and . . . Poland made an important contribution to the success of ERP, especially through the export of coal to Western Europe'. As Anderson points out, despite the East European boycott of the Marshall Plan Poland continued both to seek IBRD loans and to increase its trade with Western Europe.⁴¹ There is also some evidence that the Hungarian government remained interested in developing connections with the proposed ERP even after its official rejection of the Marshall Plan. In a memoir-history of the period Kertesz, who was Hungarian ambassador in Italy at this time, cites a telegram from Budapest on 13 July 1947 which indicates that the government there was still thinking of some kind of participation in the Marshall Plan despite its earlier announcement of its rejection of the Anglo-French conference invitation.⁴²

The second point of interest in this message to communist leaders is, of course, the reference to the fact that some East European countries did not want to attend the Anglo-French conference. One of these countries was Tito's Yugoslavia. Moscow's telegram to its Belgrade embassy on 5 July noted Tito's opposition to participation and urged the Yugoslav leader to change his mind.⁴³ On 6 July Molotov sent another telegram, this time to Warsaw as well as Belgrade, suggesting the sending of envoys to Moscow from Poland and Yugoslavia in order to achieve a united stand on the conference.⁴⁴ However, on 7 July Moscow sent another message to all communist leaders in Eastern Europe. This urged that any answer to the Anglo-French invitation should be delayed until 10 July because 'in some countries the friends declare against participating in the conference'.⁴⁵ The next day yet another message was sent to communist leaders, and this one revoked the 5 July proposal that East European states should participate in the conference and proposed that no delegations should be sent.⁴⁶ In line with this new Soviet position all the countries of Eastern Europe (and Finland, too) announced their rejection of the British and French invitation.⁴⁷

There was only one hitch in the implementation of the Soviet-led boycott of the conference. Czechoslovakia had already, on 7 July, accepted the invitation to attend the conference⁴⁸—a decision that appears to have been heavily influenced by Moscow's earlier pro-attendance stance. This Czech decision was only reversed following discussions in Moscow between the Soviet leadership and a Czechoslovak government delegation headed by the Prime Minister and Communist Party leader, Gottwald.⁴⁹

Of particular interest from what we know of these Soviet–Czech discussions in Moscow are the indications from Stalin's statements to the Czechs on 9 July that there were two main reasons for the boycott line: (a) anti-participation representations from Yugoslavia and Romania (and possibly Poland), and (b) Soviet fears that the main aim of the forthcoming conference and of the Marshall Plan was the further political isolation of the USSR. Stalin also made it quite clear that there could be no question of Czechoslovakia breaking the anti-Marshall Plan united front of Slav states.⁵⁰ No such question arose. The Czechs submitted without protest and on 10 July announced their withdrawal from Marshall aid discussions.

In summary, this review of Soviet–East European relations in the aftermath of the failure of the Paris conference suggests that communist leaders in the people's democracies played an important role in precipitating a hardening of Moscow's

rejection of the Marshall Plan. Such a scenario should come as no surprise. The more archive material that is released the more evident it becomes that Soviet relations with its communist allies were not a one-way street. The latter were often as much the voluntary agents of hardline Soviet policies as passive conduits of implementation.⁵¹

The Marshall Plan and the turn in Soviet foreign policy

The announcement of the Soviet and East European boycott of the Marshall Plan was followed in summer 1947 by the launch of a Soviet propaganda campaign against the plan. The main points of the Soviet critique of the plan were (a) that it was a plan for the formation of a US-led Western bloc, (b) that it aimed at developing Western Germany into a mainstay of the 'imperialist camp' in Europe, and (c) that it was directed against Soviet influence in Eastern Europe and the anti-capitalist road that was being taken in those countries.⁵² In September 1947 the Deputy Foreign Minister, Vyshinsky, proclaimed the Soviet position on the Marshall Plan at the United Nations:

The Marshall Plan constitutes in essence merely a variant of the Truman Doctrine . . . the implementation of the Marshall Plan will mean placing European countries under the economic and political control of the United States and direct interference in the internal affairs of those countries . . . this plan is an attempt to split Europe into two camps . . . to complete the formation of a bloc of several European countries hostile to the interests of the democratic countries of Eastern Europe and most particularly to the interests of the Soviet Union.⁵³

Vyshinsky's speech was followed by Zhdanov's denunciation of the Marshall Plan at the founding meeting of the Cominform⁵⁴ and Molotov's speech on the 30th anniversary of the October Revolution which depicted US foreign policy in Europe as being one of imperialist expansion and encirclement of the USSR.⁵⁵

The battlelines had been drawn and the ensuing story of Cold War crisis and the tightening of Soviet control in Eastern Europe is well known. Clearly, the Marshall Plan episode was a major precipitating factor in the Soviet declaration of the Cold War and the radical turn in Moscow's ideological and political policy in autumn 1947. But the Marshall Plan was not the only catalyst for the change in Soviet foreign policy. There were, it appears, other influences and forces at work in Moscow and Soviet fears concerning the Marshall Plan provided an opening for their policy expression.

First, and most obvious, the analysis of American foreign policy in terms of anti-Sovietism, international supremacism, the military threat to the USSR, and the construction of a European bloc came to fruition over a long period of time. The internal details of this process remain obscure and will remain so in the absence of Soviet archival material. But we do have one piece of evidence and that is the so-called 'Novikov telegram'.⁵⁶ This 'telegram' is a long despatch from the Soviet ambassador in Washington dated 27 September 1946. It consists of an analysis and critique of American foreign policy that was to become publicly familiar in the Cold War years that followed.

The idea of a summary document on the postwar foreign policy of the United

States originated at the Paris Peace Conference of summer 1946. Novikov was ordered to compose such a document, which he did, and which Molotov read with obvious interest.⁵⁷

So, the kind of Cold War thinking that greeted the launch of the Marshall Plan was already in the air in 1946. It found further expression in Novikov's despatches on the Marshall Plan in June 1947, which analysed US foreign policy along the same lines—a view which the Anglo-French proposals in Paris appeared to vindicate. It seems likely too that Novikov in his despatches was voicing what he presumed were Molotov's views and that the Soviet foreign minister tended to share the view of US policy articulated by Novikov. Molotov's annotations on the 'Novikov telegram' indicate that this was the case and when Novikov was recalled to Moscow in July 1947 he was given the task of producing another document, this time on the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. Novikov's conclusion in this document was that Marshall aid was part of an American plan aimed at the worldwide encirclement of the USSR and the construction of an aggressive bloc directed against it. Molotov considered the document very useful.⁵⁸

A second influence on the change in Soviet policy that needs to be taken into account concerns the genesis of the Cominform and the role played by Tito and Yugoslavia in the left turn in the policy of the International Communist Movement in September 1947.

The decision to found a new coordinating centre for the international communist movement, to replace the Comintern which had been abolished in 1943, was made by Stalin around the same time as the rejection of the Marshall Plan. The Marshall Plan apart, the move was inspired, it seems, by concerns regarding the policy of the West European communist parties and their relative independence from Moscow, and by opposition to cooperation between its East European allies without Soviet involvement. The Cominform may also be seen as an outgrowth of internal bureaucratic developments in the Soviet communist party—including the creation of what was to become the International Department of the CPSU—designed to replace the defunct organisational structures of the Comintern.⁵⁹

As far as Soviet foreign policy is concerned there are two points of particular interest concerning the inception of the Cominform. First, it appears that the political line enunciated by Zhdanov at the founding conference in September 1947—the ideological line of Soviet foreign policy in the period that followed—only emerged gradually in summer 1947. It seems, for example, that the two-camps thesis only found its way into Zhdanov's speech late in the drafting process.⁶⁰ This indicates that the Soviet political and ideological response to the Marshall Plan, as embodied in the Cominform, was very much an improvised one.⁶¹

The second point of interest concerns the role of Tito and the Yugoslav communist party in this improvisation. As Swain has recently argued, the establishment of the Cominform and the political line it proclaimed represented the acceptance/adoption by Stalin of the Yugoslav critique of the popular front line of the European communist parties in the immediate postwar period. This policy was denounced at the Cominform conference and the Yugoslav delegates led the attack on the idea of a parliamentary, non-Soviet road to socialism involving alliances with non-communist parties and groups and which envisaged a prolonged transition from capitalism to

socialism. The alternative was class war, a militant popular front from below and the implementation of the most radical socialist measures possible in the shortest possible time. It was a view that Tito had been advocating and practising since the time of the war. Following the Marshall Plan débâcle Moscow shifted its ideological view in this leftist direction.⁶²

The final factor that needs to be taken into account when examining the Soviet policy shift in 1947 is the impact of internal Soviet politics. This is a highly vexed and still undetermined issue,⁶³ but it does seem that in the early postwar period there were tensions and conflicts within the Soviet leadership and within Soviet policy between ideological 'moderates' and 'radicals', between those who thought detente with the West possible and those who thought conflict inevitable. It seems to me also to be true that these moderate vs radical contradictions were sited within Soviet ideology as well as constituting a battleground between different individuals and factions.⁶⁴

One of the climactic moments in this internal debate came on the eve of Moscow's Marshall Plan decisions. In May 1947 Varga came under attack from hardliners over a book that he had published in 1946. In this book Varga had argued that as a result of economic, political and social changes during the war the character of Western capitalism had changed. Politically, the most important changes were the greater role of the state in regulating capitalism and its economic crises and the enhanced role of the left in political life. Varga's critics argued that capitalism had not changed its spots and that its crises and their political expression in aggressive tendencies remained a fact of life.

This debate was a harbinger of an internal ideological shift and mid-1947 marked the beginning of a retreat by Varga and others on the proposition that capitalism had changed in nature as a result of the war. This retreat went in parallel with other hardline ideological shifts and with the change to a more militant stance in Soviet foreign policy in 1947–48.⁶⁵

Conclusion: ideology and the Soviet origins of the Cold War

To sum up, what seems to have happened in summer and autumn 1947 when the USSR embarked on its Cold War against the West was a coalescence of three trends in Soviet policy and politics: a return to Marxist-Leninist ideological orthodoxy internally; the triumph of a leftist trend within the international communist movement; and the acceptance of a hawkish interpretation of US foreign policy.

The role of the Marshall Plan in this process was that, coming on top of the Truman Doctrine and other negative developments in postwar Soviet–Western relations, it confirmed Moscow's worst fears about the prospects for collaboration, negotiation and agreement with the West. What the Marshall Plan seemed to signify was the final failure of what can be called an integrationist strategy in foreign policy—the political and economic integration of the USSR and its zone of influence into a wider European and international constellation. With the coming of the Marshall Plan, that kind of integration, it seemed to Moscow, was only possible on the basis of giving up vital Soviet positions and interests in Eastern Europe.

The alternative to integration was separation, isolation and consolidation within the

sphere of influence that had been gained as a result of the war. That essentially was the choice made by the USSR in autumn 1947. Like the United States, the Soviet Union chose to abandon diplomacy and the search for cooperation and agreement and to seek instead to protect its interests by independent manoeuvring, the gathering of strength, and the judicious deployment of its power.⁶⁶

Historically, the decision against integration and in favour of isolation was not an unusual one. It was the choice made in the 1920s when the doctrine of socialism in one country was adopted.⁶⁷ It was the choice made in 1939 when the integrationist strategy of the collective security period was abandoned in favour of the Nazi-Soviet pact. And it was the choice made at the time of the Hitler-Molotov conference in Berlin in November 1940 when Stalin refused integration into a German-dominated Europe and an Axis-dominated world.⁶⁸

There is also another comparison to be made between the turn in Soviet foreign policy in 1947 and the radical shifts in policy of previous years: the extent to which each was compounded by the limits and possibilities of Soviet ideology.

The Soviet turn to Cold War in autumn 1947 was at one level simply a response to perceived threats and conditions that called for a strengthening of Moscow's position, particularly in Eastern Europe. At the same time this turn in Soviet policy took a peculiarly militant and ideological form—the delineation of a world split into two camps, the demand that states and peoples decide which side they were on, prognostications of an attack on the USSR, the imposition of a rigid Soviet model of socialism and revolution on both Eastern Europe and Western communist parties. To an extent all this was just a matter of perception, calculation, belief and, perhaps, expediency. However, a role was also played by the dynamics of the discourse in which political positions were discussed, formulated and acted on.⁶⁹

Soviet ideology, like any other, was more than a set of beliefs. It was also a language of political communication—a set of terms, concepts and validating assumptions which constituted the public discourse through which individuals spoke to each other. This language presented its adherents with a set of resources—acceptable arguments and formulations—which they could deploy in political debate about policy and action. Those resources of communication were subject to interpretation, emphasis and change, but they imposed definite limits on what could be said if the speaker wanted to be listened to.

The case of the Soviet turn to Cold War appears to be an instance of a new course of policy and action that had to be discussed, presented and legitimated within the relatively narrow range of terms and concepts available within Soviet ideology at that time. The effect of the processing of policy through ideology was, instead of a simple adaptation to a more defensive and anti-Western posture in foreign relations, the adoption of a radical, aggressive ideological posture. Given the existence of a discourse that denoted capitalist hostility to the USSR, the inevitability of war and conflict in an imperialist world, and the universal validity of a single, Soviet model of revolution and socialism, such an outcome was highly likely.

However, it was not inevitable. As we have seen, in the early postwar years Moscow's policy and action drew on other elements of Soviet ideology. Ideology as discourse is a resource which individuals can choose to deploy in a variety of ways, even, indeed, to transform the meaning and use of existing terms and concepts. Were

it otherwise it would be impossible to explain the history of change in Soviet ideology, most notably the ideological revolution of the Gorbachev years.

Ideology, moreover, has many different uses and results in many unexpected outcomes. A striking example in this respect concerns one of the sequels to Moscow's rejection of the Marshall Plan. The Soviet rejection was followed by the launch of the so-called Molotov Plan—the signature of a series of bilateral trade treaties between the USSR and Eastern Europe. This marked the beginning of the processes that led to the foundation of Comecon in 1949. Stamped on the character of Comecon and the ensuing history of attempted socialist economic integration in Eastern Europe was the ideological nature of the Soviet rejection of the Marshall Plan. Moscow formally rejected the Marshall Plan because, among other things, it proposed central direction of European economic development and limitations on national economic sovereignty. Moscow's objections on these grounds were subsequently embodied in Comecon's character and purpose and all Soviet efforts in the postwar period to amend the essentially national-based character of the organisation ended in failure. The USSR's East European allies were able to resist socialist economic integration with the USSR for a variety of reasons, including the utilisation of Moscow's own national-ideological arguments against the Marshall Plan. To make reference to a recent reinterpretation of the history of West European economic integration by Milward, it may be that in rejecting the Marshall Plan in the way it did Moscow helped save its communist allies from socialist economic integration and thereby contributed in no small way to the strengthening of the nation-state in Eastern Europe.⁷⁰

University College Cork

¹ W. Loth, *The Division of the World, 1941–1955* (London, 1988), chapters 6–7.

² E.g. W. Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy: From Entente to Detente to Cold War* (New York, 1982), chapter 7.

³ The interpretation and conclusions of the present article are commensurate with those of S. D. Parrish, 'The Turn to Confrontation: The Soviet Reaction to the Marshall Plan, 1947', in *New Evidence on the Soviet Rejection of the Marshall Plan, 1947: Two Reports*, Working Paper no. 9, Cold War International History Project, March 1994. Parrish's work is based on direct access to a number of important archival documents.

⁴ An earlier version of this article was presented to the annual conference of the British International History Group, University of the West of England, September 1993. It was produced with financial support from the Arts Faculty Research and Development Fund, University College Cork.

⁵ *Foreign Relations of the United States 1947* (hereafter *FRUS*), vol. 3, section on 'The Marshall Plan', and T. Paterson, *Soviet-American Confrontation: Postwar Reconstruction and the Origins of the Cold War* (Baltimore, 1973), pp. 207–214.

⁶ *French Yellow Book: Documents of the Conference of Foreign Ministers of France, the United Kingdom, and the U.S.S.R. held in Paris from the 27th June to the 3rd July, 1947* (hereafter *French Yellow Book*), pp. 18–19.

⁷ *Pravda Ukrainy*, 11 June 1947 (in *FRUS*, pp. 294–295); 'Novoe Izdanie "Doktriny Trumana"', *Pravda*, 16 June 1947; K. Gofman, 'Mr Marshall's "New Plan" for Relief to European Countries', *New Times*, 17 June 1947.

⁸ *Pravda*, 20 June 1947.

⁹ M. M. Narinsky, 'SSSR i Plan Marshalla: Po Materialam Arkhiva Prezidenta RF', *Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya*, 1993, 4 (April), p. 12. For an English-language version of this article see Narinsky, 'The Soviet Union and the Marshall Plan', Working Paper no. 9, Cold War International History Project, March 1994.

¹⁰ French Yellow Book, pp. 20–21. The Soviet reply was published in *Pravda*, 23 June 1947.

¹¹ Telegram of 22 June 1947, reprinted in G. Takhnenko, 'Anatomiya Odnogo Politicheskogo Resheniya', *Mezhdunarodnaya zhizn'*, 1992, 5 (May), pp. 119–120. (Published in English in *International Affairs* (Moscow), 7 (July) 1992.

¹² On the failure of the Foreign Ministers Conference see A. Werth, *Russia: The Post-War Years* (London, 1971), chapter 12.

¹³ See A. Resis, *Stalin, the Politburo, and the Onset of the Cold War, 1945–1946*, The Carl Beck Papers in Russian and East European Studies no. 701 (University of Pittsburg, 1988); D. Allen, *The International Situation, 1945–1946: The View from Moscow* (Centre for Russian and East European Studies, University of Birmingham, 1986); G. D. Ra'anani, *International Policy Formation in the USSR: Factional 'Debates' during the Zhdanovshchina* (Connecticut, 1983), chapter 12; W. G. Hahn, *Postwar Soviet Politics: The Fall of Zhdanov and the Defeat of Moderation, 1946–1953* (Ithaca, 1982), chapter 1; Werth and Parrish.

¹⁴ See Stalin's replies to questions by Eddie Gilmore (Associated Press), 22 March 1946, Alexander Werth (Sunday Times), 17 September 1946, and Hugh Baily (United Press), 23 October 1946 and interviews with Elliot Roosevelt (21 December 1946) and Harold Stassen (9 April 1947). All reprinted in J. V. Stalin, *Sochineniya*, vol. 16 (Stanford University Press, 1967), pp. 45–46, 52–56, 65–70 and 75–92. For some summaries and discussion see Werth, pp. 142–147 and 250–252 and Ra'anani, pp. 124–129.

¹⁵ Russian foreign policy archives, cited by M. Narinsky, 'Soviet Foreign Policy and the Origins of the Cold War', in G. Gorodetsky (ed), *Soviet Foreign Policy 1917–1991* (London, 1994), p. 107. See also Parrish, pp. 7–8, who quotes a similar statement by Stalin recorded in an American foreign policy document.

¹⁶ Cited by Werth, p. 250.

¹⁷ Telegram, Novikov to Molotov, 9 June 1947, reproduced in Takhnenko, pp. 118–119.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

¹⁹ The memo was drawn up by Varga following a request from Molotov in early June and was submitted to the Soviet foreign minister on 26 June. Its circulation list included Stalin and other Soviet leaders, as well as Molotov. For a detailed summary and discussion of the memo see Parrish, pp. 16–18.

²⁰ 'The Forthcoming Conference in Paris', *Soviet News*, 26 June 1947.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² Cited by Narinsky, 'SSSR i Plan Marshalla . . .', p. 13. Erofeev also noted that Molotov was a supporter of this position. For Molotov's own confused and unenlightening recollections, where he states that at first he was in favour of the Marshall Plan and then changed his mind, see F. Chuev, *Sto Sorok Besed s Molotovym* (Moscow, 1991), pp. 88–89. In regard to Molotov, Parrish, p. 14, argues that his underlinings of the text of Marshall's speech indicate that the Soviet foreign minister viewed the Marshall Plan mainly in terms of American economic interest in staving off a postwar depression in the US.

²³ See Parrish, pp. 17–18.

²⁴ Novikov was in favour of participation in Marshall Plan discussions on tactical grounds: 'Our attitude to the "Marshall Plan" and to the conference of the three ministers should, I suppose, be one of seeking a decisive role in work on a programme for the rehabilitation and development of the national economies of European countries . . . Our participation in work on the programme would prevent the realisation of the American plan of subjecting Europe and forming an anti-Soviet bloc'. Telegram, Novikov to Molotov, 24 June 1947, Takhnenko, p. 122.

²⁵ 'Direktivy Sovetskoi Delegatsii na Vstreche Ministrov Inostrannykh Del v Parizhe', 25 June 1947, Takhnenko, pp. 123–124. According to Parrish, p. 22, in a covering letter to Stalin, Molotov noted that these instructions were 'insufficiently worked out'.

²⁶ On Anglo-French proposals see French Yellow Book, pp. 25–37.

²⁷ Molotov's speech: French Yellow Book, pp. 38–42. Molotov's two speeches at the Paris conference (which were both published in *Izvestiya*) are also reproduced in V. M. Molotov, *Problems of Foreign Policy* (Moscow, 1949), pp. 459–470 and in Russian in *Vneshnyaya Politika Sovetskogo Soyuza 1947 god: Dokumenty i Materialy*, pp. 117–124.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 43 and 49–50.

²⁹ The telegram is quoted by Narinsky, 'SSSR i Plan Marshalla . . .', p. 14. See also *FRUS*, pp. 296–301, for Western reports that indicate a relatively benign Soviet negotiating posture during the early stages of the conference.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

³² French Yellow Book, pp. 58–61.

³³ 'Direktivy Sovetskoi: Delegatsii ...'.

³⁴ See *FRUS*, pp. 304–305.

³⁵ Telegram, Vyshinsky to Molotov, 30 June 1947. Quoted by Narinsky, 'SSSR i Plan Marshalla ...', p. 14.

³⁶ French Yellow Book, pp. 60–61.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 69–71.

³⁸ See Parrish, p. 19, who cites replies from Warsaw and Prague to Moscow's telegraphed instructions to its ambassadors of 22 June. Also *Dokumenty i Materialy po Istorii Sovetsko-Pol'skikh Otnoshenii*, vol. 9 (Moscow, 1976), doc. 137.

³⁹ Document reproduced in Takhnenko, pp. 124–125.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁴¹ S. Anderson, 'Poland and the Marshall Plan, 1947–1949', *Diplomatic History*, 15, 4, Fall 1991.

⁴² S. D. Kertesz, *Between Russia and the West: Hungary and the Illusions of Peacemaking, 1945–1947* (Notre Dame, 1984), pp. 243–249.

⁴³ Telegram quoted by Narinsky, 'SSSR i Plan Marshalla ...', pp. 16–17.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Telegram reproduced in Takhnenko, p. 126.

⁴⁷ Reports in *Soviet News*, 12 June 1947; Kertesz, p. 246; V. S. Parasadanova, *Sovetsko-Pol'skie Otnosheniya, 1945–1949* (Moscow, 1990), pp. 154–155; and A. A. Shevyakov, *Otnosheniya Mezhdru Sovetskimi Soyuzom i Rumyniei, 1944–1949* (Moscow, 1985), p. 265.

⁴⁸ Parrish, p. 26.

⁴⁹ On this episode see K. Kaplan, *The Short March: The Communist Takeover in Czechoslovakia, 1945–1948* (London, 1987), pp. 72–73.

⁵⁰ The Czechoslovak record of the meeting with Stalin is reproduced (in translation) in 'Moskovskii Ul'timatum', *Izvestiya*, 9 January 1992. See also Werth (who cites Ripka's memoirs), pp. 266–268 and *FRUS*, pp. 319–320. In relation to Poland, according to the memoirs of Winiewicz, the Polish ambassador to the United States, it was his reports that convinced Warsaw to reject the Marshall Plan, not Moscow's veto. Winiewicz argued that the Marshall Plan had political as well as economic objectives and that no communist country would be voted aid funds by Congress anyway. There was also apparently concern in Warsaw about the possibility of German participation in ERP and about the potential effect of the Marshall Plan on Polish reparations from Germany. (See Anderson, pp. 476–479, but note that Anderson himself argues that Poland rejected the Marshall Plan on orders from Moscow). Also of interest are Jakub Berman's brief comments on Polish and Soviet hesitations regarding rejection of the Marshall Plan in T. Toranska, *'Them': Stalin's Polish Puppets* (New York, 1987), pp. 297–299 and Werth's account of his conversation with Hilary Minc in August 1947, (pp. 275–276).

⁵¹ In connection with this general point see the documents and articles in the various bulletins and working papers of the Cold War International History Project.

⁵² See Ya. Viktorov, 'Posle Parizhskogo Soveshchaniya Ministrov Inostrannykh Del SSSR, Frantsii i Anglii', *Pravda*, 6 July 1947; 'The Paris Conference and the Anglo-French Proposals', *Soviet News*, 8 July 1947; M. Marinin & B. Leontev, 'Ob Anglo-Frantsuzskoi Ekonomicheskoi Programme dlya Evropy', *Pravda*, 12 July 1947; L. Chernyavsky, 'Close of the Paris Conference', *Soviet News*, 18 July 1947; 'Economic Roots of American Expansion', *Soviet News*, 19 July 1947; M. Marinin, 'Parizhskoe Soveshchanie i "Zapadnyi Blok"', *Pravda*, 29 July 1947; E. Varga, 'Predstoyashchii Ekonomicheskii Krizis v SShA i "Plan Marshalla"', *Pravda*, 5 August 1947 (translated in *Soviet News*, 7 August 1947); Ya. Viktorov, "'Plan Marshalla" i Anglo-Amerikano-Frantsuzskie Raznoglasiya', *Pravda*, 16 August 1947; and V. Shapiro, 'Contradictions of the Marshall Plan', *Soviet News*, 21 August 1947.

⁵³ M. McCauley, *The Origins of the Cold War*, doc. 27, p. 124.

⁵⁴ A. A. Zhdanov, *The International Situation: Report made at the Conference of Nine Communist Parties held in Poland, September 1947*, pamphlet, nd. For summary and analysis of the Zhdanov speech see Werth, chapter 14 and Parrish, pp. 35–38.

⁵⁵ Molotov, *Problems of Foreign Policy*, pp. 483–493, and compare with Molotov's speeches in this volume before the Marshall Plan episode.

⁵⁶ The 'telegram', together with various commentaries, is published in *Diplomatic History*, 15, 4, Fall 1991. The text was handed out by a Soviet archive official at a meeting of Soviet and American historians in Washington in July 1990.

⁵⁷ On the background to Novikov's despatch see the commentary by Mal'kov in *Diplomatic History*, 15, 4, and N. Novikov, *Vospominaniya Diplomata* (Moscow, 1989), pp. 352–353. Molotov's

underlining and annotations of the document are indicated in the text published in *Diplomatic History*, 15, 4.

⁵⁸ Novikov, *Vospominaniya* . . . , pp. 391–396.

⁵⁹ On the origins of the Cominform see L.Ya. Gibyansky, 'Kak Voznik Kominform', *Novaya i Noveishaya Istoriya*, 1993, 4, On organisational developments within the CPSU: S. Kudryashev, 'The Central Committee of the All-Union Communist Party and Eastern Europe 1945–1953', speech to the annual conference of the British International History Group, September 1992.

⁶⁰ See Gibyansky, pp. 146–147 and Parrish, p. 36.

⁶¹ This point is also made by Parrish, pp. 35–36.

⁶² G. Swain, 'The Cominform: Tito's International?', *The Historical Journal*, 35, 3, 1992. On the change in communist politics and policy in both Western and Eastern Europe following the setting up of the Cominform see P. Spriano, *Stalin and the European Communists* (London, 1985), chapters 22–24. Also D. Sassoon, 'The Rise and Fall of West European Communism', *Contemporary European History*, 1, 2, 1992.

⁶³ See Hahn, Ra'anana, Resis and Allen; also T. Dunmore, *Soviet Politics 1945–53* (London, 1984).

⁶⁴ There is a similar argument over Soviet foreign policy in the 1930s. See G. Roberts, *The Soviet Union and the Origins of the Second World War: Russo-German Relations and the Road to War, 1933–1941* (London, 1995), chapter 1.

⁶⁵ Varga's book, *Izmeneniya v Ekonomike Kapitalizma v Itoge Vtoroi Voiny*, was published in September 1946. A number of chapters from the book and associated articles were published in 1945–1947 in the journal edited by Varga, *Mirovye Khozyaistvo i Mirovaya Politika* (see nos 1 and 9, 1945, no. 6, 1946 and nos 3 and 8, 1947). The May 1947 discussion on Varga's book was convened by the Institute of Economics and the political economy department of Moscow State University. The discussion was held in three sessions on 7, 14, and 21 May and the stenographic transcript of what was said was published as a special supplement of Varga's journal in November 1947. Opinions differ as to who came out best in the debate: Hahn pp. 84–93 argues that Varga got the better of the hardliners, whereas Ra'anana chapter 6 stresses the success of Varga's conservative opponents. In any event the sequel to the discussion in 1947–1948 was the closure of Varga's journal and the marginalisation, although not the complete suppression, of Varga's views.

⁶⁶ In this connection one can refer to the following definition of Soviet foreign policy under Stalin during the Cold War: 'messianic in its world view, limited in its geographical and functional scope, pessimistic in its evaluation of situations, parsimonious in its acceptance of costs and risks'.

⁶⁷ See T. J. Ulrick, 'Russia and Europe: Diplomacy, Revolution and Economic Development in the 1920s', *The International History Review*, 1, 1, 1979.

⁶⁸ See Roberts, *The Soviet Union and the Origins* . . .

⁶⁹ The following paragraphs were prompted by J. Schull, 'What is Ideology? Theoretical Problems and Lessons from Soviet-Type Societies', *Political Studies*, XL, 1992 and 'The Self-Destruction of Soviet Ideology', in S. G. Soloman (ed), *Beyond Sovietology* (New York, 1993).

⁷⁰ See A. S. Milward, *The European Rescue of the Nation State* (London, 1992).