

Andrzej Koryn

INTERNATIONAL ASPECTS OF THE SOVIETISATION
OF CENTRAL-EASTERN EUROPE, 1944–1947

This paper shall deal predominantly with select international aspects of the inclusion of the countries of Central-Eastern Europe¹ into the sphere of Soviet influence and their Sovietisation. It is not my intention to propose a systematic presentation of this extensive and complex issue, a task which would require a much longer study. I shall merely point out certain questions and deal with motifs which I regard as essential or controversial. In several cases, more detailed references are made to archival sources or documents published in recent years.

I share the opinion expressed by a number of researchers, especially Central European ones, who claim that despite a great disproportion in the economic and technological potential between the Soviet Union, on the one hand, and the United States together with the United Kingdom, on the other hand, Joseph Stalin could so easily realise his aspirations concerning the construction of an outer Soviet empire in Central-Eastern Europe thanks, to a great measure, to the consent of the Anglo-Saxon powers². This compliance stemmed not so much from the absence of own force and the possibility of resistance but from the assessment that the region in question did not have greater significance for strategic and economic interests, and that rela-

¹ I use the term Central-Eastern Europe, today accepted universally for defining the region which, owing to the geopolitical configuration, was known after the war up to 1989 as Eastern Europe.

² *Czy Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia mogła się wybić na wolność? (Could Central-Eastern Europe Achieve Independence?)*, ed. by T. Kisielewski and N. Kasparek, Olsztyn 1996, p. 5, 7ff; H. Bartoszewicz, *Polityka Związku Radzieckiego wobec państw Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej w latach 1944–1948 (The Soviet Union's Policy towards the States of Central-Eastern Europe in 1944–1948)*, Warszawa 1999, p. 7ff.; Jiří Vykoňal, in: *Sověťizace východní Evropy. Země střední a jihovýchodní Evropy v letech 1944–1948*, Praha 1995.

tions with Moscow as a whole demanded sacrificing it. In those instances when the Soviet Union tried to extend its influence, and the Americans and the British opposed vigorously, as in the case of Northern Iran and the Turkish straits, the Soviet side withdrew without winning any gains³; obviously, in the case of Central-Eastern Europe one must take into consideration quite a different determination on the part of Moscow.

In the prevailing conditions, the inner configuration of political forces, social structures and political orientations, as well as the formal International status of states drawn into the Soviet sphere were of little importance. Allied countries (Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia) and former satellites of the Axis, subjected to armistice regimes (Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria), traditionally anti-Soviet countries where the communists comprised a mere margin (Poland, Rumania, Hungary), as well as those with strong philo-Russian tendencies, where the communists enjoyed considerable impact either already prior to the war or gained it during the war (Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia and the unique case of Yugoslavia) — all succumbed with equal ease. Certain differences in the rate and methods of imposing the Soviet system resulted, in my opinion more from Moscow's practical consideration of the International context than from the specificity of the domestic situation in those countries.

A totally different course was followed by the fate of such states as Greece, Italy or France, in which the communists at the end of the war exerted a strong impact upon society and in the Resistance, but could not rely on greater Moscow support, *i.a.* due to the fact that the Anglo-American powers had already opened a protective umbrella over this region.

* * *

The essence of the Sovietisation of Central-Eastern Europe in 1944–1948 was aptly captured by Ivo Ducháček, who after the experiences of 1948 in Czechoslovakia declared that in order that the communist revolution may win the democratic majority must be deprived of International support and the communist

³ See: L. Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War: The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*, New York 1992; N. Yegorova, *The Iran Crisis of 1945–1946: A View from the Russian Archives*, "Cold War International History Project" (further as: CWIHP), Working Papers, N° 15, May 1996.

minority must be certain of actual Soviet backing⁴. The communists themselves perceived similar sources of their success (as expressed in the well-known saying by József Révai, the Hungarian ideologue, dating from March 1949)⁵.

The subsequent assorted interpretations, envisaged as a more profound explanation of this process, tend to render us more distant from its essence. By way of example, J. T. Gross formulated the thesis that "the factor decisive for the liquidation of the pluralism of social forces and the competition between political milieus and organisations in Central Europe was neither the lack of support by the West nor the state of readiness of the Red Army, but a new conception of politics realised by the communist parties"⁶. Naturally, the confrontation between the traditional democratic parties and a totally different logic of political activity and conception of authority constituted one of the significant factors hindering resistance, although in the Sovietisation of Central-Eastern Europe, including the liquidation of political and social pluralism, this was certainly not a decisive factor, but a secondary one. Such a secondary and equally important factor was the fact, favourable for the communists, that societies were enormously exhausted by the war and great material and human losses. We must also keep in mind that the heretofore political class had been considerably weakened either by emigration (Poland, Yugoslavia, and, to a much lesser degree, Czechoslovakia) or by responsibility for collaboration with the Germans (Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria). On the other hand, an examination of this problem should take into account the fact that in the course of the second world war Europe witnessed a certain rise of leftist moods, although in the case of Central-Eastern Europe they were to a lesser degree procommunist. The political circles in Washington and London were well aware of this tendency. Nonetheless, it is certain that this factor too was not foremost. The communists would have been incapable of taking

⁴ Ivo Ducháček, *The Strategy of Communist Infiltration: The Case of Czechoslovakia*, Yale 1949, p. 2.

⁵ J. R. Nowak, *Jak umierała węgierska demokracja, 1945–1948 (The Gradual Death of Hungarian Democracy)*, in: *Czy Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia*, p. 71 ff.

⁶ J. T. Gross, *Geneza społeczna demokracji ludowych: o konsekwencjach II wojny światowej w Europie Środkowej (The Social Genesis of People's Democracies: the Consequences of World War II in Central Europe)*, in: *Komunizm. Ideologia, system, ludzie*, ed. by T. Szarota, Warszawa 2001, p. 51.

over power and carrying out a systemic revolution in Central-Eastern Europe without outside intervention or cover. J. M. Zacharias demonstrated that without war supplies the same holds true for Yugoslavia and Albania, which the communists took over, for all practical purposes, by themselves⁷.

Naturally, it is possible to list many more elements describing the communisation of Central-Eastern Europe; but indubitable-factors decisive for the very existence of this process included Soviet intervention, supported by the presence of Red Army detachments, and the yielding policy pursued by the Western powers.

* * *

As I have mentioned above, one of the crucial factors influencing the dependence of Central-Eastern Europe was the presence of the Red Army and NKVD detachments, of special significance prior to the consolidation of the position held by the local communists. In wartime conditions, the Soviet military command posts wielded unlimited power, not only in the extremely wide front-line zones. This was the situation both in the vanquished states, subjected to truce regimes, and in formally allied lands (primarily in Poland). Nevertheless, Soviet army groups remained in the territories of the majority of the states also after the end of hostilities, totalling — according to British assessments made at the end of 1945 — hundreds of thousands of men⁸. It is characteristic that their distribution depended not only on the strategic location and the status of the status in which they stationed. The largest forces stayed in those countries which, it could be easily assumed, would resist their subjugation the most (Rumania, Poland, Hungary). The number of Red Army troops was smaller in strategically equally important Bulgaria, and they had been totally withdrawn from Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia in Novem-

⁷ M. J. Zacharias, *Weewnętrzne i międzynarodowe aspekty zwycięstwa komunistów w Jugosławii. U źródeł jugosłowiańskiej odmiany systemu komunistycznego* (*The Internal and International Aspects of the Communists' Victory in Yugoslavia. The Sources of the Yugoslav Variant of the Communist System*), in: *Czy Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia*, p. 101 ff.

⁸ *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, vol. II, ed. by R. Bullen, London 1985, doc. 281; vol. I, ed. by R. Butler, London 1984, doc. 362; Public Record Office (further as: PRO), CAB 119/125, COS(45)126; PRO, War Office 193/302; P. Hamori, *Soviet Influences on the Establishment and the Character of the Hungarian People's Republic (1944–1954)*, Univ. of Michigan, 1964, pp. 27, 240.

ber 1944 and December 1945, respectively⁹. We must keep in mind, however, the strong Red Army groups in Soviet occupation zones in Germany and Austria, where they closed off the entire Central European region from the West.

Soviet military presence had yet another dimension. It comprised a very strong argument in the political game conducted by the powers owing to the fact that, among others, they raised the degree of the difficulties and risk involved in eventual Anglo-American ventures aimed at winning independence for the region in question. Great Britain, which did not have at its disposal even a comparable land force, and which had vital interests in the Mediterranean and Western Europe, was particularly prone to this argument. Less susceptible were the much stronger United States, which viewed European problems and threats from another perspective, and which did not attach so much importance to them, at least up to 1946. Washington never took into consideration the possibility of any sort of military involvement in that part of Europe which was situated "to the east of Italy", as it informed London in April 1944¹⁰. The United States also demonstrated this tendency in praxis, by quashing the very embryo of a plan devised by Winston Churchill, foreseeing an Allied attack launched from Italy via the Lubljana pass towards Austria and Hungary; in the spring of 1945, the United States resigned from the possibility of capturing Czech lands and part of Moravia¹¹. In the wake of hostilities, the British feared that the Americans — in accordance with earlier declarations made by President F. D. Roosevelt — would rapidly withdraw their military forces also from Germany and other Western countries. The apprehension harboured by Churchill concerned the post-war future of Europe; the significance he attached to the configuration of military forces is indicated by the fact that he had commissioned a strictly secret study, dated 22 May 1945, on the possibility of a war to be waged in Europe by the Anglo-Saxon powers against the Soviet Union (*Operation Unthinkable* — the document

⁹ M. K. Kamiński, *Polska i Czechosłowacja w polityce Stanów Zjednoczonych i Wielkiej Brytanii 1945–1948 (Poland and Czechoslovakia in the Policy of the United States and Great Britain, 1945–1948)*, Warszawa 1992, p. 114; M. J. Zacharias, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

¹⁰ PRO, Foreign Office (further as: FO) 371, 40733, U 3385/491; *ibidem*, 39284, C 8243/21.

¹¹ M. K. Kamiński, *op. cit.*, pp. 77–114.

was made public in 1998)¹². I believe that this document did not pertain to a war whose primo objective was to oust the Soviet forces from Central-Eastern Europe, and in the first place from Poland — as proposed in the interpretation formulated by the Russian historian Oleg Rzheshvsky¹³ — but rather to a reconnaissance of the possibilities of a clash with the Soviet Union in order to eliminate threats to West Europe, Turkey, Greece and Iran. It was assumed that this conflict was to take place chiefly in the Central European war theatre, where the main Soviet forces were concentrated. Naturally, one of the consequences of an eventual victory would be a change of the situation also in this region.

The conclusions drawn from the above mentioned study and the opinions of the chiefs of staff, expressed in May and June, were unambiguous: in the face of a considerable disproportion of land forces favouring the Soviet Union (approximately 3:1) the possibility of a military confrontation in this region should not be taken into consideration. It was assessed that even the involvement of the forces of the whole Western world and the total nature of the war would not render its outcome certain. Naturally, such conclusions must have affected the leaders of the Anglo-Saxon powers, primarily Great Britain, and their capability of opposing Stalin's policy. Nonetheless, several months later, those calculations were significantly altered by a successful testing of the atomic bomb, subsequently used in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The awareness that the United States possessed a nuclear monopoly (although today we know that initially they did not have almost any atomic arsenal at their disposal) undoubtedly rendered the attitude not only of the Americans, but also of the British much more rigid¹⁴. It also exerted an essential impact upon the gradual evolution of the policy of the Western powers vis a vis the Soviet Union a process which lasted from the autumn of 1945 to the middle of 1947. At the same time, initially, it had rather unexpected consequences, and did not incline the Soviet

¹² D. Dilks, *The Bitter Fruit of Victory; Churchill and an Unthinkable Operation, 1945*, in: "Bulletin du Comité International d'Histoire de la Deuxieme Guerre Mondial", N° 30/31-1999/2000, *The Second World War in the 20th Century History*, pp. 27-49.

¹³ O. A. Rzheshvsky, M. Myagkow, *The End of the Grand Alliance. New Documents and Materials*, in: *ibidem*, s. 17.

¹⁴ D. Dilks, *op. cit.*, p. 46.

Union towards greater concessions. The Soviet leaders wished to demonstrate that the American nuclear monopoly did not affect the readiness and preparedness of the Soviet Union to defend its interests and realise its political goals. Fear of being suspected of diminished readiness led to a more relentless stand on the part of Moscow, and its lesser inclination towards compromises, predominantly as regards all issues concerning the region which Moscow considered its zone of influence¹⁵. Naturally, Stalin was compelled to keep in mind the argument of atomic weapons, but he never revealed that it could influence his stance concerning Central European questions, even more so considering that he did not believe — as evidenced by assorted sources, today at our disposal — that Washington and London would decide to wage a war, and particularly to battle for a region which, from their viewpoint, was of secondary importance. He was well aware of the overwhelming power of the West, first and foremost, of the United States — Stalin began treating Great Britain as a secondary power, as did the Americans — but he regarded the U. S. as incapable of starting a war against the Soviet Union owing to the inability to win the support of Western societies¹⁶. On the other band, influential Anglo-American politicians dealing with relations with Moscow shared the predominating conviction that the Soviet Union simply could not afford the risk of a new war owing to the exhaustion of the country and the state of its economy and army¹⁷. Today, numerous historians continue to share this opinion.

¹⁵ A. Koryn, *Rumunia w polityce wielkich mocarstw 1944–1947 (Rumania in the Policy of the Great Powers, 1944–1947)*, Wrocław 1983, p. 157; D. Holloway, *Stalin and the Bomb: The Soviet Union and Atomic Energy 1939–1954*, New Haven 1994, p. 272. This tendency is clearly demonstrated by the course of a session of the Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs held in London on 11 September – 2 October 1945, see: A. Koryn, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–158; G. A. Agafonov, *Diplomaticheskiiy krizis na londonskoy siesii SMID*, in: *Stalin i kholodnaya voyna*, ed. by A. O. Chubar'yan, Moskva 1998.

¹⁶ M. M. Narinskij, *Geneza „zimnej wojny” — ideologia i geopolityka (The Genesis of the Cold War — Ideology and Geopolitics)*, „Dzieje Najnowsze” 2000, fasc. 2, p. 97; *New Evidence on Poland in the Early Cold War. The Conversation between Władysław Gomułka and Josef Stalin on 14 November 1945*, by A. Werblan, CWIHP, Bulletin, № 11, winter 1998, p. 136; J. Gaddis, *Teraz już wiemy... Nowa historia zimnej wojny (We Know Now... A New History of the Cold War)*, Warszawa 1997, pp. 50–52; B. Bonwetsch, *Związek Radziecki w 1945 — ciemne strony zwycięstwa (The Soviet Union in 1945 — the Dark Sides of Victory)*, „Dzieje Najnowsze”, 2000, № 2, p. 69.

This is the reason why in a situation in which none of the sides wished to hazard a conflict, and did not believe that the other side would be capable of deciding to provoke it, much depended on the manner of conducting a pertinent policy and on determination in attaining goals. Here, the Soviet side was distinctly superior, especially from the viewpoint of the maintenance of its position in Central–Eastern Europe, which it treated as a priority issue.

A conviction about Stalin's unwillingness to embark upon the actual risk of confrontation inclined numerous researchers, including such earnest ones as J. Gaddis¹⁸, to ask what would have happened if the West had from the very beginning assumed a more unyielding attitude concerning Central–Eastern Europe. Could a peremptory policy pursued by Washington and London have produced a different development of the situation in the region? An answer to this question poses a risk for a researcher interested in alternative history. I maintain that we may only ascertain that their policy or, as some claim, the absence of a policy¹⁹ — exerted a meaningful impact on the ease with which Stalin realised his plans concerning the region in question. This holds especially true for the first period, up to the spring of 1945, when upon the basis of an assessment of the importance of wartime cooperation with the Soviet Union the Anglo–Saxon powers agreed unresistingly that the area of Central–Eastern Europe should become a *de facto* sphere of Moscow influence.

* * *

First symptoms of the emergence of a conception of building the so-called outer empire, in other words, the creation along the western Soviet frontier of a system of states dependent upon Moscow, could be observed, according to H. Bartoszewicz who studied this problem, already in 1941. Only at the end of 1943, in the wake of Soviet front-line successes and the basic

¹⁷ M. J. Zacharias, *Kryształizacja polityki zagranicznej Stanów Zjednoczonych wobec Związku Sowieckiego w latach 1945–1947* (*The Crystallization of the United States's Foreign Policy towards the Soviet Union in 1945–1947*), "Mazowieckie Studia Humanistyczne", 1999, N° 1, p. 61; Documents on British Policy Overseas, vol. I, doc. 102, pp. 181–187 (the O. Sargent Memorandum for A. Cadogan 11 July 1945).

¹⁸ J. Gaddis, *op. cit.*, pp. 52.

¹⁹ G. Lundestad, *The American Non-Policy towards the Eastern Europe 1943–1947*, Bergen, New York 1975.

acceptance by the Anglo-Saxon powers of the territorial demands made by Moscow, could Stalin start planning and preparing political foundations for the implementation of his conceptions²⁰. The actual subjugation of the states of Central-Eastern Europe and the construction of a zone of influence was inaugurated in the middle of 1944, when Red Army detachments entered the region.

Apparently, the Soviet leaders, at least from the end of 1944, still did not have a precise plan defining the frontiers of the outer empire. J. Gaddis wrote that Stalin knew exactly what regions he wished to incorporate into the Soviet Union, but was unable to describe with similar certainty how far the sphere of Moscow influence was to reach²¹. He rendered this process dependent on the course of wartime events and, to an equal degree, upon the reactions of his Western allies.

The studies (disclosed in the 1990s) prepared in January 1944–January 1945 for Viacheslav Molotov by outstanding diplomats — Ivan Maisky, Maxim Litvinov and Andriey Gromyko — and concerning future relations with the Anglo-Saxon powers, indicate that the so-called maximum security zone of the Soviet Union was not always perceived identically. Everyone, however, shared the opinion that it should have encompassed Central-Eastern Europe; the differences concerned Turkey, Sweden, Norway, Austria and even Yugoslavia. Simultaneously, everybody considered this sphere rather within the aspect of traditional geostrategic domination than Sovietisation (territorial changes, military bases, bilateral mutual assistance pacts — with the possibility of the access of Great Britain as the third party). The remaining European states were to be situated either within the sphere of British (or Anglo-Saxon) influence or in a neutral zone. Only Maisky wrote about the possible victory of socialism across the whole Continent, but as an extremely distant target. The emergence of future Soviet-type governments in some Eastern European states was mentioned by Gromyko, but within the context of American apprehension, unfavourable for relations between Moscow and Washington, of such a development of

²⁰ H. Bartoszewicz, *Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia w polityce Związku Sowieckiego 1939–1947*, in: *Czy Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia (Central-Eastern Europe in the Policy of the Soviet Union in 1939–1947)*, pp. 30–35.

²¹ J. Gaddis, *op. cit.*, p. 51; a similar stand in: H. Bartoszewicz, *Polityka Związku Sowieckiego*, pp. 7, 34.

situation²². The documents provide valuable information about the way in which Soviet diplomatic circles perceived the future in the breakthrough year of 1944.

The policy pursued by Moscow, however, depended on the will and decisions of a single man: Josif Vissarionovich Stalin, and, to a certain degree, upon Molotov, the realiser of his directives. A number of directives show that the Soviet dictator understood the concept of the security zone or Soviet influence differently than his diplomats. He conceived it as a totally subjugated area, in which he would enjoy the opportunity for an unhampered shaping of the situation²³. The forms and rate of this process was to be delineated primarily by relations with the Anglo-Saxon powers.

True, we still do not know whether originally the actual goal set up by Stalin was merely the reduction of Central-Eastern Europe to the status of a vassal, combined with its future Sovietisation, since, as it quickly became apparent, Stalin regarded only such a process as complete and guaranteed. This was the scenario which he consistently realised in a rather differentiated and, by Soviet standards, cautious manner, even if only in view of relations between the powers. Once Stalin saw the ease with which he attained his goals and the post-war weakness of Europe, his appetite increased. Or was this plan to have been only the first stage, while the ultimate aim was the subjugation of the Continent, and as long as he cherished this hope he was willing to preserve certain moderation in treating the region already incorporated into the zone of Moscow influence?

We could discover a number of arguments supporting each of those hypotheses. Apparently, Stalin did not grow attached to his plans, nor did he set up terms for their realization, but rather made use of emergent opportunities, which depended chiefly upon the configuration of international forces²⁴.

²² V. O. Pehkatnov, *The Big Three after World War II. New Documents on Soviet Thinking about Post War Relations with the United States and Great Britain*, CWIHP, Working Papers, N° 13, July 1995; H. Bartoszewicz, *Polityka Związku Sowieckiego*, pp. 31–33; A. M. Filitov, *V komissiyach Narkomindiela*, in: *Vtoraya mirovaya vojna. Aktualniye problemi*, ed. by O. Rzheshhevski, Moskva 1995, p. 59.

²³ M. M. Narinskiy, *op. cit.*, p. 93; V. O. Pehkatnov, *op. cit.*, pp. 21, 23.

²⁴ J. Gaddis, *op. cit.*, p. 52; M. J. Zacharias, *Krystalizacja polityki zagranicznej*, p. 61 (quoting an opinion expressed by G. Kennan).

Admittedly, the attitude of Great Britain and the United States, especially during the last stage of the war, offered outright (idea) conditions for exploiting a chance for rendering the whole of Central-Eastern Europe dependent.

Already at the beginning of 1944, the British — aware of the fact that Soviet armies would appear in Central-Eastern Europe or at least its larger part, and believing that in the future the traditional British policy of European balance would depend on arranging relations with Moscow — embarked upon intensive work on the delineation of their strategic targets and the possibility of their realisation within the context of the predicted Soviet policy. The conclusions drawn from a number of studies, whose major part was written between January and August 1944²⁵, defined the line of the British policy in relation to the Soviet Union at least to the end of the war in Europe. Their consequences, however, were further-reaching.

The basic strategic targets of Great Britain were to include: a guarantee of crude oil supplies from the Middle East, the protection of communication routes across the Mediterranean, and the retention of a leading maritime force. The list of European priorities encompassed France and minor Western European states, Greece, Turkey, Germany, Austria and Italy. The authors of the studies admitted that they did not have sufficient data to pronounce with certainty how the Russians saw their strategic interests, and what fort of a policy they intended to conduct after the war. They presumed that at least initially, during the period of post-war exhaustion, Moscow would be ready to continue her cooperation with the Anglo-Saxon powers, and would not try to extend her influence so as to include Western Europe (and, via Siberia, the Asian continent). The authors were well aware of the fact that if those assumptions were to fail then the whole British strategy would have to be changed. The best path leading towards

²⁵ Effect of Soviet Policy on British Strategic Interests (24 April 1944) — PRO, FO 371, 43335, N 28 83/183/38; Probable post-war tendencies in Soviet Foreign Policy as affecting British interests (29 April 1944) — PRO, FO 371, 43335, N 1008/183/38; Soviet Policy in the Balkans, Memorandum by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (7 June 1944) — PRO, CAB 66/51, W. P. (44)304; Soviet Policy in Europe, Memorandum by Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (9 August 1944) — PRO, CAB 66/53, W. P. (44)436; Russian capabilities in relation to the strategic interests of the British Commonwealth (22 August 1944) — PRO, CAB 121/64, J. I. C. (44)366(0); Russia's strategic interests and intentions from the point of view of her security (18 December 1944) — PRO, CAB 119/ 129, J. I. C. (44)467(0).

the retention of Soviet conduct within such a framework was to be the inclusion of this power into the world security system, and — and this is of greatest interest to us — not to oppose any of its acceptable demands as long as they would not undermine the vital interests of Great Britain. Since the British surmised that Moscow would regard Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, Finland and Yugoslavia as her security zone, they concluded that it was necessary to be prepared for the recognition of Soviet domination in this region, which the United Kingdom did not consider to be one of its priorities.

The opinions expressed in London about the manner in which Moscow would want to exploit this domination, varied and mentioned the following paths:

- traditionally conceived influence, delineated by allied treaties and military bases,
- the installation of subservient or, according to Soviet terminology, friendly governments, but without systemic transformation,
- the establishment of people's front governments or stronger, authoritarian ones, capable of conducting nationalisation and introducing the system of "state socialism",
- the realisation of the planned process of rendering those countries communist and the establishment of totalitarian governments.

At the time, the last variant was regarded as doubtful, *i.a.* due to the weakness of the communist parties in the Balkans and Central Europe²⁶. With such an assessment, the acceptance of Soviet domination appeared to be more acceptable. Already in March 1945, several months after Moscow began realising her control over the majority of the states of the region, it was precisely this extreme variant which was considered to be the most probable²⁷.

Stalin was compelled to take into consideration also the stand of his other, stronger Western ally. After all, generally speaking, Washington opposed the policy of zones of influence which was essentially followed by Moscow and London. Nonetheless, the

²⁶ PRO, FO 371, 43351, N 3441/183/38.

²⁷ PRO, FO 371, 48219, R 5063/5063/67 (the O. Sargent Memorandum of 13 March 1945 — *British Policy towards Bulgaria, Rumania and Other Liberated Countries*).

policy pursued by the United States towards the Soviet Union was dominated by Roosevelt's foremost striving towards the retention of post-war cooperation with Moscow. The President maintained that in order to induce Moscow to cooperate it was necessary to eliminate her feeling of being threatened, and to recognise her justified need of security, *i.a.* in Europe²⁸. With Roosevelt's proclivity towards belittling the significance of Europe, and especially its central-eastern part, such a stand led, for all practical purposes, towards coming to terms with Soviet domination in this region.

A combination of the tendencies of the British policy and the consequences of the stand represented by the American President was the reason why for several months the Soviet Union enjoyed great freedom of activity in all the terrains reached by the Red Army, regardless whether they belonged to states subjected to armistice regimes or allies. Upon certain occasions, the former found themselves in a more fortunate situation thanks to the formal presence on their terrains of Allied control commissions.

By agreeing so easily to Soviet domination in Central-Eastern Europe Churchill and Roosevelt counted on the fact that they would be capable of persuading Stalin that this process should assume the form of "Finlandisation". It soon became apparent that the Soviet leader perceived Sovietisation differently, and applied methods not quite concurrent with the Western concept of democracy. Presumably, he did not envisage pursuing a policy in a subjugated terrain — and this is exactly how Stalin saw Central-Eastern Europe — by methods other than those with which he was familiar thanks to Soviet reality. Furthermore, it seems that Stalin regarded the introduction of a Soviet system as the only guarantee of total subjection²⁹.

Disillusionment with Moscow's conduct, together with the end of the war in Europe and the presidential election of Harry Truman, who viewed the Soviet Union differently from Roosevelt, temporarily transformed the attitude of the Anglo-Saxon states. London and Washington deliberated the possibility of rendering their policy towards Moscow more demanding also as regards Central-Eastern Europe, and even considered opting for a new

²⁸ M. J. Zacharias, *Kryształizacja polityki zagranicznej*, p. 54 ff.

²⁹ M. M. Narinskiy, *op. cit.*, p. 93; J. Gaddis, *op. cit.*, p. 16 ff.; PRO, FO 371, 48219, R 5063/5063/67.

orientation. London expressed sincere opinions about the need to question the position field by the Soviet Union in this part of the Continent, regardless whether the Americans would support the British decision or would wish to continue their policy of concessions³⁰. Ultimately, everything reverted to the old course, and both powers embarked upon attempts at persuading Moscow, by diplomatic means, to change the methods of her control over Central-Eastern Europe; at the same time, reference was made to the general principles of the Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe. Obviously, this attempt did not yield any concrete results, as evidenced by the course of the Potsdam conference, which regulated European issues for the time being and, in practice, for the next half a century³¹. The final formulation of a number of the conference resolutions, including the extremely important and underestimated points 8 and 9 of chapter IV on the division of German assets in Europe, practically sanctioned the Soviet zone and indirectly defined its range. The latter encompassed Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Albania, as well as Finland, situated beyond this range, and the Soviet occupation zones in Germany and Austria, whose situation was quite different. In other words, the range in question coincided with the frontiers attained by the Red Army; Stalin predicted this in April 1945 when he said to the Yugoslav communists that: everyone imposes his social system as far as his army can reach³². It is not surprising that in August 1945 a pleased Molotov could declare to Georgi Dimitrov: our sphere of influence has been de facto recognised³³.

It is rather unlikely that having captured Central-Eastern Europe Moscow would have agreed to any sort of a subsequent violation of the situation once the Anglo-Americans side accepted this region as a Soviet sphere of influence. At any rate, all attempts aimed in this direction would have had to entail the

³⁰ Documents on British Policy Overseas, vol. I, doc. 102, pp. 1R1-187; see also A. Koryn, *op. cit.*, pp. 109-116; M. M. Narinskiy, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

³¹ A. Koryn, *Konferencja Poczdamska a Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia (The Potsdam Conference and Central-Eastern Europe)*, in: *Od Wersalu do Poczdamu. Sytuacja międzynarodowa Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej 1918-1945*, Warszawa 1996, pp. 151-162.

³² M. Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*, New York 1962, p. 114.

³³ G. Dimitrov, *Dnevnik (9 mart 1945 — 6 fevruari 1949)*, Sofija 1997, p. 492; M. M. Narinskiy, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

hazard of a confrontation, if not military then economic and political. The Western capitals did not see any foundations for facing such a risk. After Potsdam, the protests voiced by the Anglo-Saxon powers, forced by shocking events in Central-Eastern Europe, never transcended a boundary that would render all further dialogue impossible. They were left with an extremely constrained, but, nonetheless, exiting possibility of acting. Such facts as the permission for holding free elections in Hungary in November 1945 and in Czechoslovakia in May 1946, the postponement of elections in Bulgaria in August 1945, owing to the protests of the opposition and the campaign conducted by the American representative, exceeding the expectations of the Department of State³⁴, the consent expressed in December 1945 for the expansion, albeit symbolic, of the governments in Rumania and Bulgaria (in the latter country, this never took place), or reproofs administered by Kremlin to impatient Yugoslav, Bulgarian or Polish communists for conducting an overly ruthless policy³⁵, indicated that Stalin was ready to make certain gestures as regards the rate and methods of the introduction of the Soviet system in this area. It is from this perspective of controlled pressure exerted by the Anglo-American side, and the extremely limited concessions by the Soviet Union that one should view the difficult albeit successful fifteen-months long negotiations concerning peace treaties with Rumania, Hungary and Bulgaria³⁶.

The Soviet dictator did not want to needlessly spoil relations with the Anglo-Saxon powers, and found the existing situation to his liking. Stalin had attained his goals in Central-Eastern Europe, perhaps more slowly than intended but, as a rule, without greater tension on the International arena, and frequently within the framework of agreements between the powers. He

³⁴ L. E. Davis, *The Cold War Begins. Soviet-American Conflict over Eastern Europe*, Princeton 1974, pp. 306-313.

³⁵ J. Jackowicz, *Partie opozycyjne w Bułgarii 1944-1948 (The Opposition Parties in Bulgaria, 1944-1948)*, Warszawa 1997, p. 50 ff.; J. Gaddis, *op. cit.*, p. 51; C. Békés, *Soviet Plans to Establish the Cominform in Early 1946, New Evidence from the Hungarian Archives*, CWIHP, Bulletin, N° 10; M. J. Zacharias, *Wewnętrzne i międzynarodowe aspekty*, p. 105 ff.

³⁶ In Polish literature see: A. Kastory, *Pokój z Rumunią, Bułgarią i Węgrami w polityce wielkich mocarstw, 1944-1947 (Peace Treaties with Rumania, Bulgaria and Hungary in the Policy of the Great Powers, 1944-1947)*, Rzeszów 1981; J. Jackowicz, *Traktat pokojowy z Bułgarią 1947 (The Peace Treaty with Bulgaria in 1947)*, Wrocław 1981; A. Koryn, *Rumunia w polityce*, pp. 177-245, 257-286.

appeared, therefore, as one of the main, recognised creators of world politics and, without any greater threats to his zone, he was free to attempt widening the impact of the Soviet Union. It was exactly those attempts, undertaken carefully but discernibly from the end of 1945 and during the whole of 1946 (directed against the Western European countries, Turkey, Greece and Middle East), that finally produced a change in the methods of the U. S. policy towards the Soviet Union as well as the involvement of this world power in European issues.

The British proved to be too weak — a feature finally evidenced in February 1947 by their resignation from an independent protection of Greece and Turkey — to deal with Russian expansion, especially in view of an equally feeble France and the elimination of Germany. Consequently, the Americans were forced to do something which they earlier tried to avoid — to salvage the equilibrium in Europe, whose western part they acknowledged in 1947 to be crucial for world balance, and thus for the strategy of the United States. This stand differed from the one represented by Roosevelt and, initially, by Truman, who claimed that the old Continent would not be of any greater importance for the future world order³⁷.

The new course of the American policy, delineated by the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and most fully by the containment strategy devised by George Kennan, rapidly contributed to halting Soviet penetration and, later on, to the economic and political stability of Western Europe, Greece and Turkey. For the societies of Central-Eastern Europe, however, it brought only a drastic deterioration of their situation.

The containment policy led to that which had been postulated by Kennan already at the beginning of 1945, and echoed, on the British side, in an extremely veiled manner by Orme Sargent, the influential Deputy Under-Secretary — i. e. to the preservation of post-war order based on a mutual and unconditional compliance to the inviolability of zones of influence³⁸.

Naturally, the Americans were well aware of the effects that this policy would bring to Central-Eastern Europe, and that it would be the latter which would pay the main price for enlarging

³⁷ M. J. Zacharias, *Kryształizacja polityki zagranicznej*, pp. 54–57, 71–73.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 61 ff.; M. K. Kamiński, *op. cit.*, p. 23; PRO, FO 371, 48219, R 5063/5063/67 (the O. Sargent Memorandum of 13 March 1945).

the security of the Western sphere. Kennan foresaw a rapid completion of the process of the subjugation and Sovietisation of the region, and an altered situation in Czechoslovakia. He believed that Stalin was interested in retaining appearances of the independence of that state only as long as he could influence Western Europe³⁹.

The reaction of Moscow was precisely the sort which was anticipated. After the Soviet Union together with all the countries of the Soviet zone, rejected the possibility of participating in the Marshall Plan (which, as pertinent documents show, was exactly what the authors of the Plan assumed would happen), and following the establishment of the *Cominform*, Stalin ceased to pay any attention to the expectations of the United States and Great Britain; previously, as I have already mentioned, he did so to a very limited degree.

In the autumn of 1947, the situation in Central-Eastern Europe was dominated by certain joint features, albeit differences also occurred. Power in Poland, Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Albania was totally in the hands of the communist parties, although in the majority of cases it was formally wielded by fronts or coalition blocs steered by the communists. The only exception was Czechoslovakia, where the local communist party still did not possess a monopoly on actual power. The organised anti-communist opposition, wherever it still existed, *i. e.* in Bulgaria, Rumania, Hungary and Poland, was liquidated in the second half of 1947. In Yugoslavia and Albania this problem had been solved much earlier, and only in Czechoslovakia the opposition was quashed slightly later — in February 1948. The Rumanian monarchy the last existing monarchy in Central-Eastern Europe, although deprived of all actual power — was abolished at the end of 1947⁴⁰. The fiasco of the London session of the Council of Foreign Ministers, held in November 1947, confirmed an impasse as regards peace regulations with Germany and Austria; for all practical purposes, this meant that the eastern parts of those countries were to remain within the Soviet zone for an indefinite period of time.

³⁹ M. J. Zacharias, *Kryształizacja polityki zagranicznej*, p. 71 ff.

⁴⁰ A. Koryn, *Likwidacja monarchii w Rumunii w 1947 r.* (*The Liquidation of the Monarchy in Rumania in 1947*), "Studia z Dziejów ZSRR i Europy Środkowej", vol. XXVI, 1991, pp. 93–109.

Since 1948, the Sovietisation of Central–Eastern Europe became drastically intensified. Moscow decided to apply a different treatment only in relation to Finland and the occupation zone in Austria; from time of the split of June 1948 Yugoslavia began building a novel model of socialism.