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II

THE CHANCE FOR PEACE, 1953–54

Malenkov and Eisenhower

Stalin's Death

On 1 March 1953, at his dacha outside of Moscow, Stalin did not appear at his customary midday time. His servants and bodyguards grew worried as the hours passed and not a sound was heard. They did not dare enter his quarters without being summoned. At 6:30 p.m. a light went on in Stalin's room and they breathed a sigh of relief, but then nothing more was heard. The hours ticked away. Anxiety rose. At 11:00 p.m., after a nervous discussion, one of the guards gathered the day's mail and walked to a small dining area where Stalin often slept on a tiny cot. He found the aged dictator lying on the carpet in pajama pants and a white undershirt. His pants were wet with urine. He was barely conscious. When he saw the guard, Stalin weakly raised his hand but could not speak. "His eyes expressed horror and fear and were full of pleading." His servants lifted him onto a sofa. They were terrified.[1]

Too frightened to telephone for medical care because Stalin had recently charged his doctors with plotting to kill the Kremlin's top leaders, they tried to contact Lavrenti Beria, head of the secret police, and Georgi Malenkov,

Stalin's principal lieutenant. It was nighttime, and Beria could not be found. He was carousing somewhere in Moscow with his latest mistress. Malenkov would not do anything without Beria. So more time elapsed. Nobody would call the doctors unless Beria approved. Finally, Beria, plainly drunk, emerged, and he and Malenkov drove to the dacha together. Malenkov removed his new shoes so they would not squeak as the two men approached their now unconscious boss. Seeing him asleep and snoring on the sofa, Beria pretended that nothing was wrong. "What do you mean . . . starting a panic?" he shouted at a guard.[2]

As Stalin lay dying, still without medical care, Beria and Malenkov drove back to the Kremlin early in the morning of 2 March and met with Nikita Khrushchev, Moscow boss of the Communist Party, and Nikolai Bulganin, deputy chair of the Council of Ministers and former civilian head of the armed forces. We do not know what they said to one another, but they probably began to discuss the division of power in the absence of Stalin. Beria, Malenkov, and Khrushchev all had reason to believe that Stalin had been intending to dismiss them. Recently, he had talked many times about aging comrades not living up to his expectations. Beria felt certain that he would be not simply dismissed but killed. His exultation at the turn of events was clear to his comrades as they drove back to Stalin's dacha, arriving around 9:00 a.m.

Now they summoned doctors. The physicians were new—Stalin's usual doctors were in prison—and did not know anything about the health of their fallen leader; they trembled as they scrambled to assess his condition, then applied leeches behind his ears and cold compresses to his head. Of course, nothing much could be done, as Stalin had suffered a cerebral arterial hemorrhage. As they labored, Beria harangued them, saying they would be held accountable if their leader died. Stalin's daughter and son, Svetlana and Vasili, arrived, as did other leading members of Stalin's entourage.

As his lieutenants approached his bedside, Stalin opened his eyes and looked at them one by one. V. M. Molotov, former president and foreign minister, whose wife was then in jail, had tears streaming down his cheeks. So did many of the others. Kliment Voroshilov, one of Stalin's oldest associates, implored, "Comrade Stalin, we're here, your loyal friends and comrades. How do you feel, dear friend?" Stalin stirred, his face "contorted," but said nothing.[3]

Beria went back and forth from the dacha to the Kremlin. All his comrades sensed that he was taking charge. He was clever, determined, audacious, experienced, and defiant. He had run the secret police and the Gulag. After the war, he had managed the vast project to develop the atomic bomb. He was also brutal, signing the lists that sent men to their deaths, engaging in torture, seizing women off the streets and raping them. Beria knew that Stalin in recent months had wanted to blame him for the crimes of his regime. Thinking that Stalin might have left a last testament, as Lenin had done, Beria used one of his quick visits to the Kremlin to search Stalin's office and safe, probably taking incriminating documents with him. He then returned to the dacha. When Stalin opened his eyes again, Beria slipped to his knees and kissed his leader's hand, displaying loyalty and uttering praise. But when Stalin finally died at 9:50 a.m., on 5 March, with his housekeeper sobbing on his chest, Beria immediately looked at Malenkov and snapped, "Let's go."[4] Off to the Kremlin they drove, eager to finish preparations for the government's and the party's transition.

During their conversations at the dacha, Beria, Malenkov, Khrushchev, Bulganin, and several of Stalin's other top lieutenants agreed that Malenkov would become chair of the Council of Ministers. Beria, Molotov, Bulganin, and Lazar Kaganovich would be first deputies. Malenkov also would head the party, while Khrushchev would step down as Moscow party chief and focus on his work at the party's Central Committee. The Ministry of State Security would be integrated into the Ministry of Internal Affairs, with Beria at its head. Bulganin would become defense minister, Molotov foreign minister, and Anastas Mikoyan trade minister. The Presidium was shrunk, eliminating the newcomers whom Stalin had been promoting at the old oligarchs' expense. They assured one another that the new leadership would be collegial and collective. Yet they all knew that Beria was trying to take charge. Molotov sat at the key meeting "silent and aloof." Khrushchev muttered to his friend Bulganin that Beria would destroy them if they were not careful.[5]

Soviet citizens knew little of Stalin's condition until hours before he died. Then there was a massive public display of grief. People were shocked. They did not know what would happen next. "People roamed the streets," wrote Andrei Sakharov, the physicist who became father of the Soviet hydrogen bomb and one of the country's most famous and distinguished dissidents. They were "distraught and confused, with funeral music constantly sounding

in the background."[6] Across the country, "the crowds began to gather in the squares. At first they were silent, listening to the radio news on crackling loudspeakers. Men and women wept, their shock giving way to bereavement and confusion. The crowds became hysterical. Mass demonstrations would continue until the day of the funeral, and in several cities . . . hundreds of people were crushed."[7]

People felt vulnerable. They were "worried about a general collapse, internecine strife, another wave of mass repressions, even civil war." They were not unaware of Stalin's crimes. They knew that life was bleak and the future would be harsh. But they believed Stalin had been leading them toward the construction of a new civilization based on social justice. "In the face of all I had seen," Sakharov wrote in his memoir, "I still believed that the Soviet state represented a breakthrough into the future, a prototype (though not as yet a fully realized one) for all other countries to imitate. That shows the hypnotic power of mass ideology."[8]

Soviet citizens had been convinced that the hardships they had endured through collectivization, the purges, and World War II were for a worthy cause. In the struggle for the soul of mankind, they represented the future, modernity. "Being modern was being on the road to communism, dealing with problems rationally and quantitatively, eschewing religious beliefs, extolling the constructions of dams, factories, and hydroelectric projects, measuring progress by material indicators, leaving ethnic and national identities behind, and treating history as just an interesting story."[9] Stalin had helped them to construct a new identity, a "new Soviet man," a new society based on the triumph of the proletariat, and a new international order dedicated to peace and the elimination of capitalist conflict and recurrent war. After all that had been endured, Sakharov continued, "the state, the nation, and the ideals of communism remained intact for me."[10]

Soviet citizens felt they had lost a great leader. In her scathing memoir of her father, Svetlana Alliluyeva nevertheless acknowledges that Stalin knew how "to appeal to the 'simple people' and their 'national ways,' loading his speeches with folksy sayings, wearing his trousers tucked inside his boots, the way Russian workers had done before the Revolution." For "the semi-literate, semi-blind peasants and workers, to whom his power offered a chance of becoming engineers, party bureaucrats, generals, state ministers, ambassadors (speaking only Russian), [for] those who had 'tended calves' in

their youth, . . . [for] all these he became for a long time 'their very own.' "[11] They lamented his death, "the greatest of the great men of all times and nations. . . . Our party has been orphaned," grieved the workers of a Moscow rubber factory, "the Soviet people have been orphaned, the working people of the whole world have been orphaned."[12]

The new collective leadership felt unease. They had revered, feared, and hated Stalin, but they did not know how they would cope without him. "How are we going to live and work without Stalin?" Khrushchev wondered.[13] Before his death, Stalin had mocked them, saying, "You'll see, when I'm gone the imperialistic powers will wring your necks like chickens."[14] Malenkov, Beria, Khrushchev, and their colleagues knew they lacked legitimacy and recognized they had formidable adversaries abroad. They also realized that beneath the outpouring of sorrow among Soviet citizens, there was a simmering discontent, a yearning for the utopia that had been promised them and for which they had suffered so much—and if not a utopia, then at least a relaxation of the terror they felt and an improvement in the conditions of their daily lives.

Stalin's heirs agreed that Malenkov would be their official leader, the public face of their collective rule. But Beria was the dynamo behind Malenkov, though, being a Georgian and a police chief, he could not officially succeed Stalin. At a time when the national identity increasingly revolved around the sense of Russian greatness, it was impossible to contemplate another Georgian ruling the Soviet Union. Beria knew this, and he labored closely with Malenkov, with whom he had collaborated for many years. "My father proposed that Malenkov be Prime Minister," writes Beria's son, "because he thought he would be able to control him totally."[15] But in these first days and weeks after Stalin's death, Malenkov, Khrushchev, Beria, and Molotov appeared to agree on what needed to be done.[16]

They knew they had to calm the atmosphere and gain trust and legitimacy. They knew the U.S.S.R. was in terrible shape economically. They wanted to humanize communism, making it work for the people. Almost immediately they declared an amnesty that freed more than a million people from the prisons and labor camps of the Gulag. They renounced Stalin's old accusation of a doctors' plot, acknowledged it was a fabrication, and released the physicians from prison. They reduced the size of the security apparatus, prohibited the routine use of physical torture, and rationalized the economic

functions of the forced labor camps. They decided to boost the production of consumer goods. They agreed that more power should be moved from the party apparatus to government institutions, which meant that the Politburo, still the supreme authority in the land, would have somewhat less influence and the Council of Ministers more.[17]

They grasped that to accomplish their domestic priorities they needed to relax tensions with the West. It was essential "to end the confrontation with the outside world," Beria said, in order to improve the standard of living of the Soviet people.[18] He was not alone in thinking this way. "We had doubts about Stalin's foreign policy," Khrushchev recollected. "He overemphasized the importance of military might for one thing, and consequently put too much faith in our armed forces. He lived in terror of an enemy attack."[19]

Yet Malenkov, Beria, and Khrushchev were true believers, imprisoned by their dependence on totalitarian methods and communist axioms, the most conspicuous of which was their fundamental conviction in the hostility of the capitalist West. They felt encircled, beleaguered. "The United States," Khrushchev said, conducted "an arrogant and aggressive policy towards us." The Americans never missed a chance to demonstrate their superiority, he thought. "Our country was literally a great big target range for American bombers operating from airfields in Norway, Germany, Italy, South Korea, and Japan."[20]

Yet the Kremlin's new masters sought to build a bridge. Beria, writes his son, "wanted to make clear to the Westerners that the USSR did not want confrontation and was abandoning its previous policy." Malenkov and Khrushchev shared the same intentions but, like Beria, feared the Americans would exploit their weakness, vulnerabilities, and divisions. They did not want to appear as supplicants. Why should they have, since they represented a superior civilization? But they knew they needed to relax tensions in order to focus on domestic priorities, redefine their goals, and buttress their values. Détente was essential to move their utopia forward. Coexistence and peace would be their mantras.[21]

All this was apparent at the funeral orations on 9 March. Malenkov, Beria, and Molotov spoke. The country had suffered "a most grievous, irreparable loss," Malenkov began. Stalin would never be forgotten. His name "justly takes its place beside the names of the greatest men in the history of mankind—Marx, Engels, and Lenin. . . . Comrade Stalin brought our coun-

try to a world historic victory of socialism, which ensured for the first time in many thousands of years of existence of human society the abolition of the exploitation of man by man." Stalin had understood that "the strength and might of our state are the most important conditions for the successful construction of Communism in our country. It is our sacred duty," Malenkov went on, "to continue to strengthen our great Socialist state."

Stalin's greatness, Malenkov also stressed, inhered in his construction of a multinational state. He overcame the economic and cultural backwardness of formerly oppressed peoples and brought them together "into one brotherly family . . . forging friendship among nations." Another sacred duty of Stalin's heirs, therefore, was to continue to breed friendship among the many peoples of the nation.

Malenkov then laid out the agenda for the future, underscoring continuities but intimating the possibility of new directions. The Communist Party remained the vanguard of the proletariat. It had to be strengthened and its unity preserved. The "unbreakable" bonds between party and people had to be fortified. All workers must remain vigilant in the "struggle against internal, inner, and the foreign enemies." The party, meanwhile, had to lead the country forward, ensuring that the "Socialist motherland" flourished. "We must develop by every means our Socialist industry, the bulwark of might and strength of our country. We must develop by every means our collective farm order. . . . We must strengthen the union of workers and collective-farm peasantry."

But then Malenkov hinted at something new: "In the internal sphere, our main task is ceaselessly to strive for further improvement in the material welfare of the workers, the collective farmers, the intelligentsia, and all the Soviet people. It is a law for our party and government to implement the duty of ceaselessly striving for the good of the people for the maximum satisfaction of its material and cultural needs."

Turning to foreign policy, Malenkov uttered the traditional platitudes, yet there, too, he hinted at a new direction. Fraternal ties had to be nurtured within the camp of peace, democracy, and socialism, he said, a camp that included the countries of Eastern Europe, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany), the Mongolian People's Republic, and "the great Chinese people." The Soviet Union had to support not only the "heroic Korean people" defending their homeland but also the Vietnamese people who were

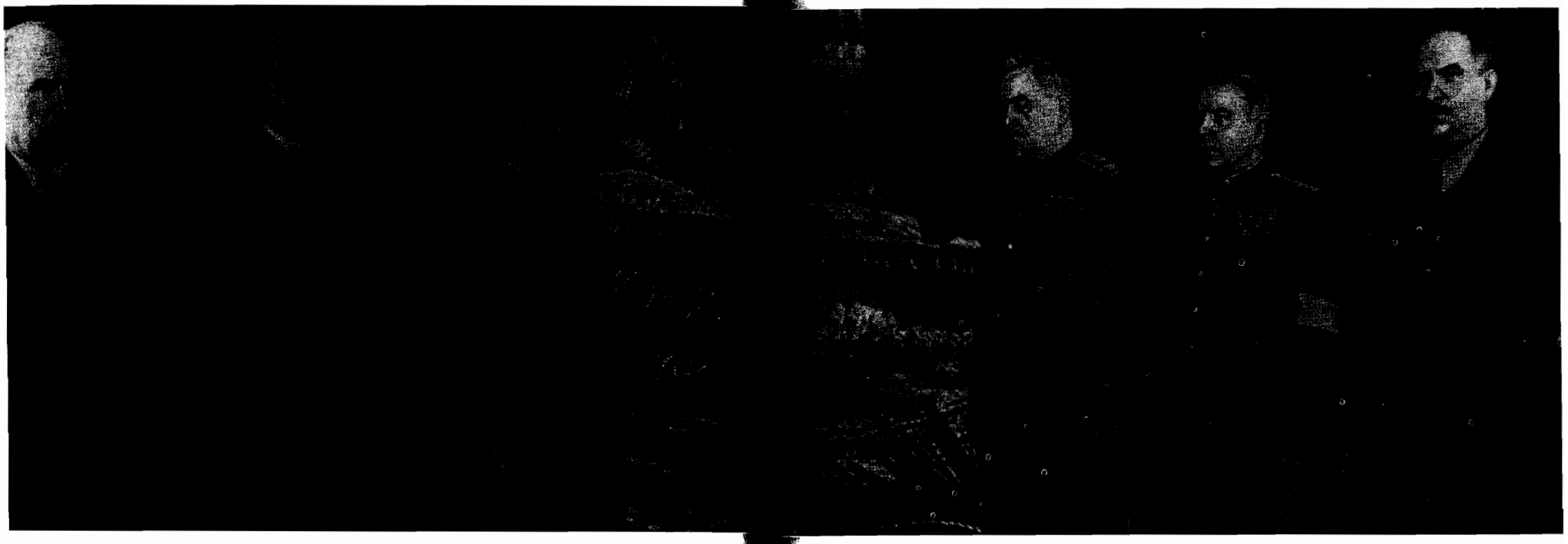
fighting for freedom and national independence. But, overall, the Soviet mission was to further the cause of peace, Malenkov emphasized. The U.S.S.R. would advance "a policy of international cooperation and development of business relations with all countries; a policy based on the Lenin-Stalin premise of the possibility of the prolonged coexistence and peaceful competition of two different systems, capitalist and Socialist. . . . We are true servants of the people, and the people want peace and hate war." The government wanted to prevent "the spilling of blood of millions of people and to ensure peaceful construction of a happy life. . . . The Communist Party and the Soviet Government insist that a policy of peace between nations is the only correct policy which corresponds with the interests of all nations."

Lest any listener forget that the mission of the Soviet Union was to configure a new way of life, Malenkov concluded with a peroration:

> Toilers of the Soviet Union . . . we have all that is necessary to build a Communist society. With firm faith in their limitless forces and possibilities, the Soviet people will proceed with the great cause of building Communism. There are no forces in the world which can stop the forward movement of Soviet society toward Communism.
>
> Farewell, our teacher and leader, our dear friend, our Comrade Stalin!
>
> Forward, along the road toward the complete victory of the great cause of Lenin and Stalin.[22]

Beria and Molotov reiterated Malenkov's key points, the commitment to peace and "a policy of international cooperation and development of business relations with all countries on the basis of reciprocity."[23]

Deeds followed words. Almost immediately, the Kremlin moved secretly to relax international tensions. Malenkov and the Council of Ministers sent instructions to China and North Korea to negotiate constructively in pursuit of an armistice agreement in Korea, where they had been locked in a dangerous, albeit limited, war for three years with American-led U.N. troops assisting South Korea.[24] Then, in a speech on 15 March at a meeting of the Supreme Soviet, Malenkov declared even more forcefully: "At the present time there is no disputed or unresolved question that cannot be settled

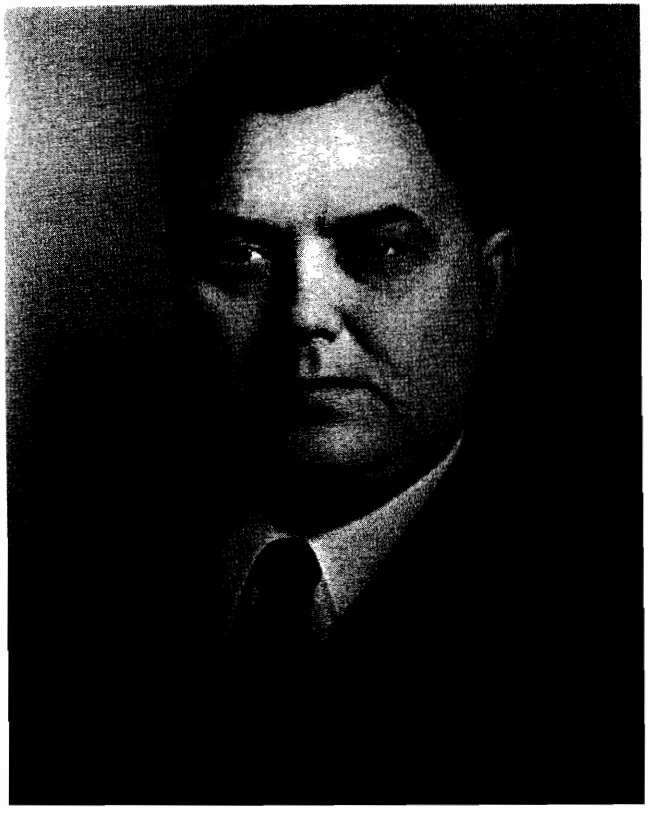


Funeral of Joseph Stalin, 1953. From left to right: Khrushchev, Beria, Malenkov, Bulganin, Voroshilov, Kaganovich. Stalin's anxious successors vowed to collaborate with one another and to seek peaceful coexistence with their foreign adversaries.

peacefully by mutual agreement of the interested countries. This applies to our relations with all states, including the United States of America."[25]

In the initial days after Stalin's death, the new leaders sought to present a united front. They distrusted Beria yet concurred with his wish to initiate domestic reforms, spur the production of consumer goods, and ease totalitarian controls. The challenge was to achieve these goals without having the regime unravel. "We were scared, really scared," Khrushchev remembered. "We were afraid the thaw might unleash a flood, which we wouldn't be able to control and which would drown us."[26] Malenkov was as fearful as Khrushchev. "To the best of my knowledge," wrote his son-in-law, "Malenkov had but one real interest in life and that was power." He did not want it to slip away.[27]

Malenkov was a shrewd and knowledgeable party man. Subsequently, after Khrushchev outmaneuvered him, Malenkov's historic role was discounted and his talents trivialized. Beria called him a billy goat, Khrushchev said he was an "errand boy," and Molotov scorned his indifference to theoretical matters.[28] But Stalin had trusted him and promoted him to higher and higher party positions in the late 1920s and 1930s. Malenkov managed people skillfully and worked prodigiously hard. He could assimilate massive amounts of information and execute orders efficiently. He was not well educated, but he had studied the Marxist-Leninist liturgy and adroitly used ideology to support almost any position. Despite his sociable demeanor and unimpressive appearance—he was short and fat, "pear-shaped, with narrow shoulders and a big bottom"—he could be tough-minded and ruthless. In the late 1930s he had worked with Beria and the security apparatus to arrest alleged traitors. He was often present when prisoners were interrogated and tortured. "When Stalin orders him to get rid of a man, he does away with a thousand so as to be more sure," Beria told his son. Stalin knew he could rely on Malenkov's absolute loyalty and consummate efficiency. During the war, Stalin had appointed him to the State Defense Committee, which coordinated all civil and



Soviet premier Georgi Malenkov, 1953. He was a shrewd and knowledgeable party man who sought to relax tensions without relaxing Soviet vigilance and hopes for revolutionary gains.

military power. Malenkov administered the aircraft industry and in 1943 assumed responsibility for the economic reconstruction of areas recaptured from the Germans. After the war, he oversaw the shipment of German reparations and was a leader in both the party secretariat and the Council of Ministers. Although openly humiliated by Stalin and briefly demoted in 1946, Malenkov regained his ascendancy in the party and the government and formed skillful alliances with Beria and several other party oligarchs. Stalin assigned him the leading role in the 1952 party Congress. When Stalin died, Malenkov was the heir apparent.[29]

As chairman of the Council of Ministers and leader of the Communist Party, Malenkov hoped to preserve harmony among the oligarchs while fashioning a more orderly government. Widely seen as a close colleague of Beria's, he was actually far more friendly with Khrushchev. Almost immediately after Stalin's death, Malenkov assented to relinquish key party duties to Khrushchev, whom he trusted and underestimated. Meanwhile, he spent many hours every day with Beria, making decisions and acting hastily to garner respect and legitimacy. He wanted to improve the quality of life in the Soviet Union and make the system work. To do this, he needed peace and a relaxation of international tensions.[30] He hoped the United States would give peace a chance.

Eisenhower's Response

Stalin's death posed a dilemma and an opportunity to the new administration in Washington. Little planning had been done in anticipation of the Soviet leader's passing, but Dwight David Eisenhower, the newly elected president of the United States, had given much thought to the problems of national security, as had his newly appointed secretary of state, John Foster Dulles. Indeed, few men since the Founding Fathers of the country had come to office with more experience or more knowledge of the problems of strategy, diplomacy, and war.

Eisenhower had won a smashing victory in the 1952 presidential election. He was one of the great heroes of World War II, the general who planned the Normandy invasion and defeated Hitler's armies on the Western front. Skilled in diplomacy, a master of human relations, he knew how to coax, cajole, compromise, and achieve fundamental goals. He was an able leader of men: determined, disciplined, organized, supportive, and self-confident. By nature an optimist, with a charming smile and a warm personality, the new president was also shrewd, smart, determined, and ambitious. Publicly, he often talked awkwardly and elliptically. Privately, he thought analytically and wrote lucidly. He could lose his temper, but he was usually discreet and tactful. He was adept at manipulating people, winning their trust and affection. He ceaselessly sent birthday cards to scores of friends and rarely lost an opportunity to offer praise or say something gracious.[31]

Eisenhower had grown up in Abilene, Kansas, at the turn of the century. Values and religion, history and ideas, were important to him. Abilene was small-town America, just one generation removed from its heyday as a cattle

town on the frontier. Life was quiet, uneventful, and hard. Ike's father worked in a creamery owned by the River Brotherhood, a Mennonite religious sect. The Eisenhowers were not poor, but their surroundings were modest. Ike was taught to be independent, hardworking, and frugal. He could shape his own future if he got a good education and exploited the opportunities that came his way. "Ambition without arrogance," he later recalled, "was quietly instilled in us."[32]

So was religion. Ike's parents believed in prayer and a merciful God. His mother memorized large portions of the Bible. Ike's values were rooted in religion and democracy. Men and women were created in the image of God. They had a duty to develop their intrinsic worthiness. In America, they were free to do so. The United States encompassed a way of life based on human freedom, individual self-worth, voluntary cooperation, and free enterprise. "I believe fanatically in the American form of democracy," he wrote to his childhood friend Everett "Swede" Hazlett in 1947, "a system that recognizes and protects the rights of the individual and that ascribes to the individual a dignity accruing to him because of his creation in the image of a supreme being which rests upon the conviction that only through a system of free enterprise can this type of democracy be preserved."[33]

Eisenhower had not expected to follow a military career. But a friend told him about an opportunity to enter the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis. Turned down because he was too old (twenty), he decided to apply to West Point, which admitted applicants until they were twenty-two. He did well, but not exceptionally, at the military academy and graduated in 1915. Despite his desires, he was not sent overseas during World War I, but he performed admirably in his wartime duties on the home front, mostly training officers and organizing a tank batallion. During the 1920s and 1930s he slowly climbed the military ladder and impressed many of his superior officers. He performed brilliantly at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth and served ably under General Douglas MacArthur in the Philippines in the late 1930s. When war erupted in September 1939, Eisenhower returned to the United States and rose rapidly as the U.S. Army expanded. Immediately after the attack on Pearl Harbor, General George Marshall, army chief of staff, asked Eisenhower to join his strategic planning staff. Ike greatly impressed Marshall, who subsequently asked him to assume command of the European Theater of Operations. Successively, Ike oversaw

the campaigns of Allied forces in North Africa, Italy, and Europe. By the end of the war, he was a celebrated military commander and one of the most famous people in the world. After victory, he served as army chief of staff, resigning in 1948 to assume the presidency of Columbia University. Responding to President Truman's personal request in late 1950, Eisenhower left Columbia and became supreme commander of NATO forces in Europe during the Korean War.[34]

When he ran successfully for the presidency in 1952, Eisenhower garnered the trust of the American people with his promise to extricate them from the hot war in Korea and to lead them in the Cold War against the forces of totalitarianism spearheaded by the Kremlin. Although Truman's policies of reconstructing Europe, integrating Western Germany, and joining NATO had thwarted the immediate Soviet threat in the Old World, communism was on the march in Asia. Mao Zedong and his comrades had seized power in China in October 1949 and were encouraging revolution throughout Asia, especially in Indochina. In June 1950, Kim Il Sung's communist government in North Korea had attacked South Korea, a move that Truman had countered by deploying U.S. troops to stop the aggression and getting U.N. backing. But when Americans went on the offensive, crossing the thirty-eighth parallel that marked the divide between North and South Korea, and tried to install U.S. power along China's borders, Mao intervened. Thereafter, the war in Korea stalemated, casualties mounted, and the American people grew disillusioned. Truman launched a mammoth rearmament program, developed the hydrogen bomb, and reconfirmed the nation's strategic goals in the most famous national security paper of the entire Cold War, NSC-68.[35]

While the country was mired in a protracted, limited war, on the home front, morale eroded. Senator Joseph McCarthy and his growing number of followers assailed the Truman administration and blamed its setbacks on communist infiltrators inside the American government. How else could one explain the successful testing of a Soviet atomic bomb in August 1949? How else could one explain the Chinese communist seizure of power in Beijing that same year? Traitors at home had to be imprisoned and communists abroad had to be vanquished, even if it meant using nuclear weapons. Lives and resources should not be squandered on a sideshow in Korea when the real menace resided in Beijing and Moscow. Eisenhower, Americans believed,

was the man who could cope with the dilemmas of the Cold War and the nuclear age. Eisenhower, they believed, understood the meaning of the Cold War and could design a strategy to win it.[36]

In his inaugural address, Eisenhower explained his shared understanding of the Cold War:

> We sense with all our faculties that forces of good and evil are massed and armed and opposed as rarely before in history.
>
> In the presence of God, we are called as a people to give testimony in the sight of the world to our faith that the future shall belong to the free.
>
> Freedom is pitted against slavery; lightness against the dark.
>
> Conceiving the defense of freedom, like freedom itself, to be one and indivisible, we hold all continents and peoples in equal regard and honor. We reject any insinuation that one race or another, one people or another, is in any sense inferior or expendable.[37]

Ike believed that "the purpose of America [was] to defend a way of life rather than merely to defend property, territory, houses, or lives."[38] The "way of life" meant personal liberty, free enterprise, and equality of opportunity—all "a gift from the Almighty." Religious faith, he said, was "the essential foundation stone of free government."[39]

The Soviet Union challenged this American way of life. Statism and authoritarianism challenged democracy and freedom. This was an ideological conflict, not a military contest. In this struggle, Eisenhower believed, "The greatest weapon that freedom has against the Communist dictatorship is its ultimate appeal to the soul and spirit of man." Americans had to have faith that as they built the military strength of their country, "the virtues and appeal" of their system would "triumph over the desperate doctrines of Communism."[40]

Eisenhower selected a secretary of state who shared his views. John Foster Dulles was the son of a minister and the grandson and nephew of two secretaries of state. He had been educated at Princeton, studied in Europe, and earned his law degree at George Washington University. Through his father's and grandfather's contacts, he had joined one of New York's most prestigious

law firms, Sullivan and Cromwell. He interrupted his law career to work for his uncle, Secretary of State Robert Lansing, served in the Wilson administration's Russian Bureau, and helped to orchestrate the initial American effort to defeat the Bolsheviks after the revolution of 1917. Before long, however, he turned his attention to the problem of German reparations, serving as legal adviser to the U.S. delegation to the Paris Peace Conference in 1919. Dulles struggled to limit French and British efforts to extract huge reparations from a defeated Germany. Their quest for vengeance, he believed, would ruin Wilson's peacemaking efforts. This view shaped his thinking for the rest of his life, even as he returned to Wall Street to make a fortune.[41]

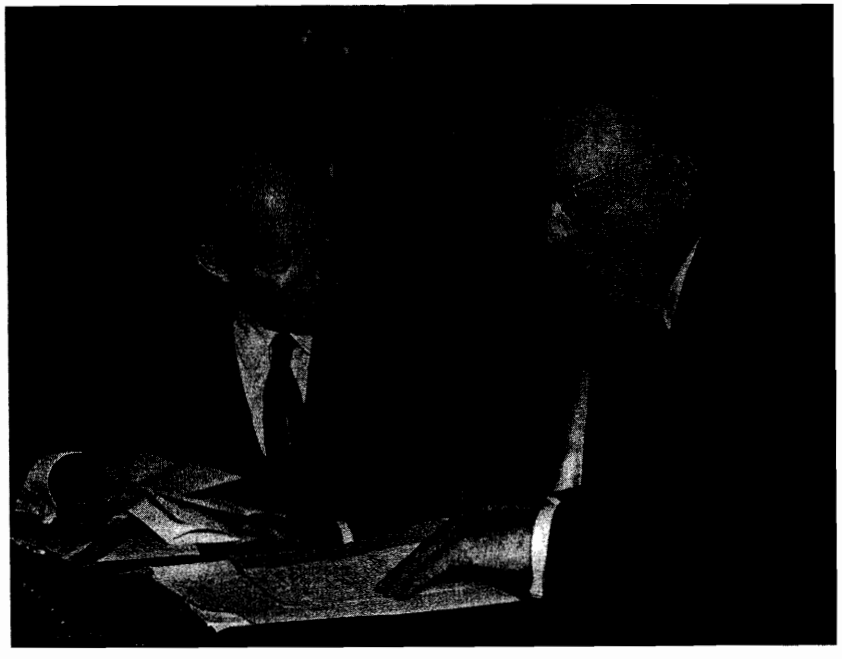
Dulles is often caricatured as a moralist in international relations, but he was more complicated. His views were an amalgam of idealism and realism. He believed that Christians should translate their views into realities. But he possessed a realistic view of things, at the center of which was the corporate internationalist view that America's free enterprise system was inextricably connected with and dependent upon the world economy, a view that President Eisenhower also held. Like his new boss, Dulles also believed that the competition with the Kremlin was essentially ideological. And like Ike, Dulles was not an early cold warrior, but his fears and anxieties gradually mounted during the early postwar years.[42]

A Republican internationalist, Dulles had worked for Truman and Acheson to muster bipartisan support for their containment policies, but he grew disillusioned with them, partly out of political expediency and partly out of conviction. The Soviets, he believed, were a more formidable foe than the Democrats realized. The Kremlin shrewdly used the rhetoric of freedom, equality, fraternity, and peace to appeal to aggrieved workers in Europe and Japan. Just as worrisome, the communists used Marxist-Leninist slogans to castigate the West for its imperial exploitation of less-developed nations, portraying themselves as champions of freedom and progress. For people around the globe struggling for independence, the communists appeared dynamic, progressive visionaries, offering a future that was dramatically better than the present. The United States, Dulles worried, had lost its dynamism. "There has been a very definite shift in the balance of power in the world, and that shift has been in favor of Soviet communism." The policy of containment, he declared in 1952, was spiritually bankrupt. More inclined toward pessimism than Eisenhower, Dulles warned that the Cold War would

be lost if the United States did not go on the offensive, if it did not seek to "roll back" communism.[43]

When Eisenhower and Dulles took office in January 1953, they wanted to make American foreign policy more vigorous and enhance national security at a lower cost. They believed that Truman and his advisers had been profligate. The real challenge, Ike maintained in one of his campaign speeches, "is to build the defense with wisdom and efficiency. We must achieve both security and solvency. In fact, the foundation of military strength is economic strength. A bankrupt America is more the Soviet goal than an America conquered on the field of battle." For the president, this was not mere rhetoric. He stressed these points time and again at meetings of the National Security Council. "I most firmly believe," Ike wrote his friend (and former ambassador to Great Britain) Lewis Douglas in May 1952, "that the financial solvency and economic soundness of the United States constitute together the first requisite to collective security in the free world. That comes before all else."[44]

Stalin's death provided a chance to recapture the offensive on the cheap.



Eisenhower and Dulles, 1956. They worked closely together to design strategies that would maintain NATO cohesion and thwart Soviet advances in the third world.

At a cabinet meeting on 6 March 1953, the president ridiculed the absence of plans. "We have no plan," he said. "We are not even sure what difference his death makes."[45] But there was considerable agreement among Eisenhower's psychological strategists and intelligence analysts that a great opportunity had arrived. "Our strategic guiding principle, as well as our secret goal," wrote William Morgan, acting head of the Psychological Strategy Board, "should be to do everything to encourage and promote chaos within the USSR."[46]

C. D. Jackson, the president's special assistant for Cold War operations, agreed with Morgan. Jackson was a personal friend of the president's as well as a wartime associate and former senior editor of *Life* magazine. He was eager to use psychological initiatives and covert actions to roll back Soviet power. He summoned outside experts such as political scientist Walt W. Rostow to help imagine what might be done. Stalin's death, Jackson and Rostow believed, had sent an emotional shock through the entire communist world. "Over the next days it constitutes a unique Soviet vulnerability." The United States could seize the overall initiative in the Cold War. The president, Jackson thought, should make a great speech, with diplomatic substance, outlining serious proposals consistent with U.S. national interests. He should call for a new meeting of foreign ministers to discuss key issues, including arms reductions, Germany, Austria, and Korea. "It is fundamental" that the initiative "strike the Russian peoples and the peoples of the Communist bloc, at a moment of emotional indecision and even bewilderment, with a new vision of possibilities."[47]

The State Department had its doubts. By aggressively heightening Cold War pressures, the United States might unintentionally help the Soviet Union's new regime to consolidate its position. "Significant opportunities to exploit Stalin's death by a speech are more likely to appear later on," said Under Secretary of State Walter Bedell Smith, a former general, CIA director, and one of Eisenhower's most trusted wartime aides. Moreover, Smith wrote, a meeting of the four foreign ministers might divide the United States, Britain, and France and set back ratification of the proposed European Defense Community (EDC). Creation of the EDC, as a framework for West German rearmament and the integration of West German forces into a Western European army linked to NATO, had been an overriding priority of the Truman administration, and Eisenhower and Dulles enthusiastically sup-

ported it. Nothing should be done, Smith argued, that might further delay French and West German ratification of the EDC.[48]

Jackson's idea for a presidential speech was discussed at a meeting of the National Security Council on 11 March. Jackson and Dulles presented their differing views. But the president was captivated by a proposal designed by the influential political journalist Samuel Lubell, who suggested that Eisenhower propose limits to be set on the amounts that governments could spend on armaments. The aim would be "to bring about the simultaneous demobilization of all the economies of the world, freeing immense resources, which are now being channeled into destructive purposes, into elevating living standards everywhere." The Russian people, Lubell thought, hungered for "better living conditions, for a little more goods in the department stores, for improved housing, for a little relaxation." Ike liked this line of thinking. Participants at the NSC meeting concluded: "Stalin's death presents an opportunity for the assertion of world leadership by President Eisenhower in the interests of security, peace, and a higher standard of living for all peoples." Jackson was instructed to take another crack at drafting a speech.[49]

Initially, U.S. intelligence analysts did not expect the new Kremlin leaders to shift course. Stalin's heirs, they thought, "would emphasize unremitting hostility to the West . . . , the enlargement of the Bloc economic base, and the increase of Bloc military power."[50] Consequently, the president and his advisers were surprised by Malenkov's statements, especially his speech to the Supreme Soviet on 15 March. Meanwhile, Ike fretted that Jackson, Dulles, and Emmet John Hughes, his speechwriter, were having so much difficulty drafting a speech for him. The president, not a little exasperated, wanted the United States to gain the international high ground, to be the champion of world peace. In a frank conversation with Hughes, Ike said he did not want to offer another indictment of the Soviet Union; that would be "asinine." He wanted to say something concrete. The armaments race made no sense. "Where will it lead us? At worst, to atomic warfare. At best, to robbing every people and nation on earth of the fruits of their own toil. . . . The past speaks for itself," Eisenhower continued, "I am interested in the future. Both their government and ours have new men in them. The slate is clean. Now let us begin talking to each other. And let us say what we have got to say so that every person on earth can understand it."[51]

Eisenhower told Hughes that the administration needed to design concrete proposals. If we "don't really have anything to offer, I'm not going to make a speech about it." Let's assume, Ike said, "that Malenkov was a reasonable man with whom we had some serious differences to iron out—we may know he isn't—but let's start with that assumption and talk accordingly." Hughes gently reminded the president that Dulles had serious reservations, and was not interested in exploring new ideas, regarding Korea, for example. Dulles did not expect a settlement of the war, said Hughes, "until we have shown—before all Asia—our clear superiority by giving the Chinese one hell of a licking." Ike snapped: "If Mr. Dulles and all his sophisticated advisers really mean that they can *not* talk peace seriously, then I am in the wrong pew. . . . Now either we cut out all this fooling around and make a serious bid for peace—or we forget the whole thing. . . . After all—I'm responsible for this country's goddam foreign policy. It's my job."[52]

In wanting to assume that there was a serious chance for peace, the president was not alone. The confluence of new leaders in Moscow and Washington could not but ignite discussion of new possibilities. In preparing for Dulles's testimony to Congress, State's policy planners noted that this may be a "pivotal point in history:—accession to leadership within same three months of new chiefs at Moscow and Washington, the two principal power sources in a bi-polar world."[53]

There were unmistakable signs of shifts in Soviet policy, irrefutable indications that Malenkov was probing for diplomatic openings. But Eisenhower's advisers could not agree on what to do or what type of speech should be given. In frustration, Jackson wrote the president on 2 April that for a month

> we have given a virtual monopoly to the Soviets over the minds of people all over the world—and in that month, they have moved with vigor and disarming plausibility. . . . They have hammered home the idea that they alone are responsible for peace. They have proposed a Four Power conference on German unification. They have succeeded in cooing so convincingly that shooting down American and British planes is considered an almost minor incident in Europe and the United States.[54]

Officials at all levels of the Eisenhower administration speculated about the magnitude and meaning of the change. "Since the death of Stalin," wrote Carlton Savage of the State Department Policy Planning Staff (PPS), "there have been more Soviet gestures toward the West than at any other similar period."[55] Louis Halle, Savage's colleague on the PPS, wrote:

> No one knows the relative positions, today, of Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, and Bulganin. A struggle for power could manifest itself in the successive temporary ascendancy of rival groups and individuals, none being able to make their ascendancy permanent. Under such circumstances one would expect, in the course of time, a transformation of the Soviet system and Soviet policy until, when stability had at last been achieved, the Soviet state was something quite different from what it had been.[56]

Intelligence analysts worked assiduously to learn more about Malenkov. They had pitifully little information, and what they uncovered was not auspicious. Their information, said the CIA, led to the conclusion "that Malenkov, like Beria and probably Khrushchev (whose biography would be of equal interest), has been during all his adult life engaged in suppressive and terroristic activities against the peoples of the USSR. When enough information is collected it will probably show that he has been an accomplice in heinous crimes against humanity."[57]

Yet Malenkov was doing surprising things. Allen Dulles, director of the CIA and Foster's brother, told the NSC on 8 April that "there were quite shattering departures . . . from the policies of the Stalin regime. The Soviet peace offensive had come much earlier and was being pursued much more systematically than the CIA had expected." Dulles thought the Kremlin's aim was to "lessen the danger of global war." Soviet leaders, he had previously noted, "really BELIEVE this business of their being encircled—it's not true but I think they think it is. And they see no way out, and maybe would welcome one." The Soviets, he thought, did want to derail the EDC and did seek to retard the rearmament program in the United States. While these external policy changes could be seen purely as a change in tactics, not policies, Dulles was more puzzled by the meaning and significance of "the relaxation of domestic pressures." Some Soviet actions, he told the NSC, like the renunciation of the doctors' plot, were "astonishing." Dulles concluded that the succession crisis was not yet over, that "there was obviously deep tension and discontent in the Soviet Union," that the new regime needed a "breathing spell," and that there was "no ground for the belief that there would be any change in the basic hostility of the Soviet Union to the free world."[58]

But Eisenhower took issue with these conclusions. He agreed that "there was no ground to anticipate a basic change in Soviet policy toward the Western powers," but he also said

> there was also no ground for believing that no basic changes in Soviet policy were in the offing. It seemed to the President quite possible that the Soviet leaders may have decided that the time had come when a larger share of the wealth and resources of the Soviet Union must be diverted to civilian use and enjoyment, with the object of raising standards of living for the Soviet people. It was obvious to him, said the President, that discontent was rife in the Soviet Union, and it therefore behooved us to study the problem constantly in an effort to determine whether the Soviets were really changing their outlook, and accordingly whether some kind of modus vivendi might not at long last prove possible.[59]

The question was whether there was a chance for peace, and, if so, how to grasp it. The Soviet ambassador, Georgi Zarubin, invited Charles Bohlen for a talk just before Bohlen left Washington to take charge of the U.S. embassy in Moscow. Zarubin greeted Bohlen warmly, saying it was the obligation of ambassadors to improve bilateral relations. He alluded to positive steps that Moscow was taking in the armistice negotiations in Korea and hoped that progress in Korea could lead in other positive directions.[60]

Yet Ike's advisers remained deeply divided. Jackson simply wanted to exploit the opportunity of Stalin's death to capitalize on Soviet vulnerabilities. Dulles was willing to assent to a presidential speech but did not want Western priorities like the EDC to be compromised or jeopardized. Ike was determined to move ahead. "Damn it," he said to C. D. Jackson when his friend claimed that Kremlin leaders would never be mollified in their global ambitions by talk of schools and hospitals:

> I don't know that you're right. I still remember that 4 hour session I had with Stalin. Why damn near all he talked about was "We have to get along with the US because we can't afford not to"—and he talked about all the things they needed, the homes, the food, the technical help. He talked to me about 7 people living in a single room in Moscow just as anxiously as you or I'd talk about an American slum problem. Hell, these boys HAVE to think in material terms—that's all they believe in.[61]

Ike's advisers knew there was deep public support for a peace initiative in the United States.[62] Amid the red scare and the McCarthy onslaught, there was a paradoxical yearning to explore the possibility of new directions. By no means a majority, but nevertheless a good many influential American journalists and newspapers believed that Malenkov might be seeking to change direction and engage the United States in constructive talks. A Gallup poll revealed that 78 percent of Americans supported a meeting between Ike and Malenkov to discuss contentious issues.[63]

No doubt, opinion was swayed by knowledge that Winston Churchill, once again the prime minister of England, was vigorously pushing for a summit meeting with the Russians. In a series of private letters to the president, "my dear Ike," as well as in public speeches, Churchill emphasized the opportunities that had emerged after Stalin's death. "Great hope has arisen in the world," he wrote. We must be cautious, he advised, not to derail the "natural growth of events."[64]

The question was whether the desire for peace could be effectively harnessed. In fact, the deeper question was whether the American administration, even Ike himself, really wanted to relax tensions or to win victories. There were clearly conflicting sensibilities and aspirations, not easily resolvable. Emmet Hughes pointedly asked Dulles whether his intent was to stir revolution and win the Cold War or to nurture East-West negotiations and relax tensions. One could not do both at the same time, Hughes emphasized. But Ike was trying to do just that, to square an impossible circle.[65]

On 16 April, Eisenhower finally delivered his speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors. He began, "In this spring of 1953 the free world weighs one question above all others: the chance for a just peace for all peoples." At the end of World War II, Ike recalled, Russian soldiers and those of the Western Allies had met in the center of Europe. They were triumphant, joyous. All peoples yearned for peace. But their hopes had been dashed. The "common purpose lasted a minute and perished." The United States chose one direction and the Soviet Union, another. The path chosen by Americans was shaped by a belief in the self-determination of free peoples, their quest for justice and peace, a commitment to international cooperation, and an aversion to armaments. The Kremlin had a different vision, said the president, a vision of security preserved through force, armies, terror, and subversion. "The goal was power superiority at all cost. Security was to be sought by denying it to all others."

Soviet actions prompting Western reactions had led to a spiraling cold war and an arms race. Neither the Soviet Union nor its adversaries benefited. And if the trend continued, the scenarios were bleak. "The worst is atomic war." The best would be "a life of perpetual fear and tension." An arms race would drain the wealth of all peoples and prevent both the Soviet and American systems from achieving "true abundance and happiness for the peoples of this earth. . . . Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed. . . . This is not a way of life, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron."

And then the president beckoned for a better future. "This is one of those times in the affairs of nations when the gravest choices must be made, if there is to be a turning toward a just and lasting peace. . . . The whole world knows that an era ended with the death of Joseph Stalin. . . . Now a new leadership has assumed power in the Soviet Union. Its links to the past, however strong, cannot bind it completely. Its future is, in great part, its own to make." But a new era could evolve only if the Soviet Union demonstrated real deeds in the cause of peace, not rhetoric but concrete actions in Korea, Germany, Austria, and Indochina. If progress on these matters bred trust, "we could proceed concurrently with the next great work—the reduction of the burden of armaments now weighing upon the world." On this issue, the president talked concretely. We could agree, he said, on the limitation of the size of military forces, either by absolute numbers or by agreed international ratios; we could agree to limits on the production of certain strategic materials allocated to

military purposes; we could agree to international control of atomic energy to promote its use for peaceful purposes and "to ensure the prohibition of atomic weapons"; we could agree to limits on other weapons of mass destruction. To enforce the agreements, Eisenhower said it was important to configure "a practical system of inspection under the United Nations."

If the United States, the Soviet Union, and their allies succeeded in seizing the opportunity, a new world order could be constructed. Peace could be fortified, said the president, "not by weapons of war but by wheat and by cotton, by milk and by wool, by meat and by timber and by rice. These are words that translate into every language on earth. These are needs that challenge this world in arms." The United States wanted to take the lead, as it had with the Marshall Plan, the president maintained. A substantial portion of the savings achieved by disarmament could be used to fund reconstruction in the underdeveloped areas of the world, "to stimulate profitable and fair world trade, to assist all peoples to know the blessings of productive freedom."

Progress waited upon only one question, Eisenhower declared: "What is the Soviet Union ready to do?" Would the Kremlin use its influence on its allies to bring about a truce in Korea and a genuine peace in Indochina and Asia? Would it allow self-determination in Eastern Europe? Would it agree to arms limits, safeguards, and "stringent U.N. control and inspection?"

Let us seize the chance for peace, Eisenhower concluded. Otherwise, "the judgment of future ages would be harsh and just." He spoke, he said, "without ulterior purpose or political passion, from our calm conviction that the hunger for peace is in the hearts of all peoples—those of Russia and of China no less than our own country." God "created men to enjoy, not destroy, the fruits of the earth and of their own toil. They aspire to this: the lifting, from the backs and from the hearts of men, of their burden of arms and of fears, so that they may find before them a golden age of freedom and of peace."[66]

The speech resonated broadly and engendered a profoundly favorable response.[67] But two days later, Secretary of State Dulles went before the same Society of Newspaper Editors and conveyed a different message in a different tone. The United States was acting from strength, he insisted. Since Eisenhower assumed the presidency, he had brought vigor and imagination to U.S. foreign policy. The Soviet leaders were engaged in a "peace defensive," not a

"peace offensive." They were signaling changes in direction but could not be trusted. Their intentions remained inscrutable, and hence it was prudent for the United States to continue to insist on concrete demonstrations of their good intentions. "President Eisenhower's address is a fact which will inevitably influence the course of history," but how that course would go, Dulles would not predict. "That must always remain obscure so long as vast power is possessed by men who accept no guidance from the moral law."[68]

Several days later, Kremlin leaders responded in sober, thoughtful, modulated tones. First, they published Eisenhower's address in full, including the president's accusations that Stalin bore responsibility for the division of Europe, the onset of the arms race, and the Cold War. Then they published a long and respectful, albeit critical, rejoinder in *Pravda*. Eisenhower had asked for Soviet deeds, this editorial said, but had failed to outline what actions he would take in Korea, Germany, and Asia to effectuate the peace so dear to his heart. Likewise, Eisenhower blamed the Kremlin for the postwar trajectory of international relations but failed to acknowledge how Washington's own actions had disrupted the great wartime coalition. Worse yet, Dulles's address seemed belligerent and insulting, and had wrongly stated that Soviet leaders were responding to U.S. strength. The government of the Soviet Union had to protect its homeland and its friends, but it sought to negotiate all outstanding differences. The Kremlin invited the United States to communicate what it would do in behalf of the peace it sought. So far, Washington's intentions appeared conflicted and inscrutable. In the past, it had tried to dominate the world arena and endanger the interests of the Soviet Union. It was not clear what Eisenhower and Dulles intended for the future. But the Kremlin was determined to be constructive. "There are no grounds for doubting its readiness to assume a proportionate share in settling controversial international issues." The Kremlin was ready "for a serious, businesslike discussion of problems by direct negotiations and, when necessary, within the framework of the U.N."[69]

George Kennan and Charles Bohlen, the United States' two most eminent Kremlinologists, were impressed by this Soviet response. Kennan thought that "the present Soviet leaders are definitely interested in pursuing with us the effort to solve some of the present international difficulties," though it was not likely that they would negotiate publicly. "They are extremely sensi-

tive lest people take their willingness to negotiate as a sign of weakness." In this respect, Secretary Dulles's comments were not helpful. But the new Kremlin leaders were saying, in their own peculiar way, "Put out your feelers: we will respond." For the Russians, Kennan reminded everyone, Germany "looms . . . as the most important of all U.S.-Soviet differences. . . . They are very conscious of the weakness of their position in eastern Germany. . . . They feel that if anyone is going to defend their interest in the solution of the German problem, it has to be they themselves."[70]

Writing from Moscow, Bohlen agreed that the editorial was important, thoughtful, and carefully conceived, yet conflicted. "The article is cautious and wary even to point of indecision and may reflect either the uncertainty of the present leadership or a compromise of differing views with it." For the moment, the best course was to use the themes expressed in the president's speech to keep the Soviets "off-balance" and to encourage them to reveal their intentions.[71]

At a meeting of the National Security Council on 28 April, the president and his advisers discussed what to do next. C. D. Jackson stressed that Washington, having seized the initiative, must keep it. Americans needed to work on plans for Austria and Germany. They had to show even greater strength in Korea. They must decide how to deal with China should an armistice agreement be concluded in Korea. Dulles was chagrined that so many of America's allies wanted to recognize the government of the People's Republic of China. When he emphasized that the United States had to display strength, the president concurred, saying also that we "must do our best to anticipate absolutely everything that the Russians were likely to do in the next weeks and months."[72]

But Dulles continued to be pessimistic. At a small meeting with the president on 8 May, he confided that

> practically everywhere one looks—Africa, Middle East (except British at Suez), India, South East Asia (except for U.S. at Korea and Japan), there is no strong holding point and danger everywhere of Communist penetration. South America is vulnerable. West Germany might take the Communist bait and block EDC, thus risking a NATO collapse. In the world chess game, the Reds have the better position.

Although new factors could alter current trajectories, "the existing threat posed by the Soviets to the Western world is the most terrible and fundamental in the latter's 1000 years of domination. The threat differs in quality from the threat of a Napoleon or a Hitler. It is like the invasion by Islam in the 10th century. Now the clear issue is: can western civilization survive?"

Dulles emphasized that the "present course we are following is a fatal one for us and the free world. It is just defensive: we are always worrying about what the Soviets will take next. Unless we change this policy, or get some break, we will lose bit by bit the free world, and break ourselves financially. . . . It is necessary to take a new different line." He spelled out briefly several possibilities. The administration could warn the Soviets that if one additional country were subverted, Washington would see it as a casus belli; or it could draw the line through a whole area, like Asia, and tell the Chinese that if another country fell to communism, the United States would take measures of its own choosing. The first option, in Dulles's view, risked global war; the second might not. A third possibility would be to go on the offensive and try to win back one or more areas—for example, all of Korea, or Hainan, or Albania. A fourth was to foment subversion within the Soviet empire, especially in Eastern Europe. The goal: "disturb the Kremlin; make it think more of holding what it has, less of gaining additional territory and peoples; turn the Soviet bloc into a loose alliance, without aggressive capacities, far different from Stalin's monolith."

Eisenhower listened intently. We needed, he said, to study alternative options and convince ourselves and our friends of the wisdom of whatever course we adopted. He did not pretend to know what should be done, but he stressed the importance of allies and frowned on the idea of "drawing a line." He noted that Dulles seemed to omit another option: "that we should depend less on material strength and think more of improving standards of living . . . as the way to gain true indigenous strength. We want people to see freedom and communism in their true light. . . . [I]t will take time, but it must be done or we will lose in the end." Dulles interjected: talk of liberty did not stop people from becoming communist. The president dismissed this view. "It's men's minds and hearts that must be won."[73]

Yet both men recognized that the dynamics of the international system made it difficult to win those hearts and minds. The future of Germany was still unknown, particularly so long as the EDC was not ratified in either West

Germany or France. There was "no hope" for Europe, Dulles said, "without integration," yet integration was imperiled by domestic political exigencies, especially in France.[74] If West Germany were not soon tied to the West, one of his experts wrote, "Germans may be tempted to adopt a more independent policy, which might be accompanied by a rapid growth of extreme nationalism, or an increase in Soviet-Communist influence, depending on the circumstances."[75] Germany could still escape the lure of the West. Instead of serving as a magnet to draw the Kremlin's East European satellites westward, Germany might slip into the Soviet orbit or spin out of control.[76]

Failure to integrate West Germany could set back West European recovery. And, in turn, economic stagnation could reignite the threat of communist political victories in France, Italy, Greece, and even Franco's Spain. "Lethargy and inaction in Europe," Eisenhower constantly worried, might "allow that Continent to fall into Soviet hands."[77]

More worrisome still was the unrest and uncertainty in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. At NSC meetings, there was constant talk of Indochina, Iran, Egypt, and Korea. "Bitterness" pervaded the Arab world, Dulles wrote Eisenhower, after visiting several countries in mid-May, where "the United States suffered from being linked with British and French imperialism."[78] Reflecting on the overall situation as the president's special assistant for Cold War affairs, C. D. Jackson lamented that the "world picture" was "deteriorating at an extraordinary rate." Every "ounce of skill and determination" had to be mustered, he wrote, "to bring the French to the realization that they must produce a global political plan . . . for the freedom of all these peoples."[79]

Conscious of America's vulnerability, Eisenhower reiterated that his commitment to his peace initiative was contingent on demonstrations of Soviet goodwill. He wrote Jiang Jieshi, now heading the Nationalist government on the island of Taiwan, on 5 May:

> We cannot assume that the threat posed by aggressive Communism has passed, or that it is passing. To the contrary, it appears that the recent Soviet posture is evidence of a change merely in tactics, of indeterminate degree and duration, dictated largely by necessity. I shall certainly consider it to be no more than this, until the Soviet Union demonstrates, by action rather than words, that it has abandoned its plan of world conquest, and that it is willing to join with the rest of the world in building a world community in which all can enjoy the fruits of their labor in peace and security.[80]

Yet the chance for peace could not be ignored. The reputation of "the free world" would be tarnished, Ike also wrote Jiang, if its leaders disregarded "seemingly friendly moves on the part of the Communist bloc." Moreover, such moves offered an opportunity to reduce defense costs. If there was a chance for peace, Ike could ease the budget crisis in his own country and translate savings into tax reductions for the American people. He was under tremendous pressure from leaders of his own party, who ridiculed him for not doing more to cut spending. Senator Robert Taft told the president at a legislative leadership meeting that he "could not possibly express the deepness of his disappointment" about the budgetary situation.[81]

The president firmly believed that security depended on solvency as well as preparedness. Immediately upon assuming office, he had reconfigured the National Security Council in order to include the secretary of the treasury, George Humphrey, and the director of the budget, William Dodge, in its meetings. Eisenhower regularly attended these sessions, participated vigorously in the discussions, and invested tremendous importance in them. During the entire spring of 1953, the NSC grappled with the problem of reconciling defense requirements with fiscal imperatives. The president would not compromise national security, but he also feared that if the United States had "to live in a permanent state of mobilization our whole democratic way of life would be destroyed in the process."[82]

Suspicious though he was of the new men in the Kremlin, Ike could not abandon his hope that after Stalin there was a chance for peace. A relaxation of tensions might enable dollars to be saved at home and converted to investment and production, catalyze a program "of world betterment," and nurture "cooperation of all people, without recrimination or vindictiveness."[83] Yet when Ike launched a systematic study of the options that Dulles had presented on 8 May, none of them envisioned the chance for peace. The president was torn between conflicting impulses. And since he said he would be swayed by Soviet deeds, much depended on the attitudes and actions of the new leaders in the Kremlin.

Turmoil in the Kremlin

Stalin's heirs were active and anxious, suspicious and collegial. They knew the Americans wanted to take advantage of their vulnerability and inexperience during the transition. To muster domestic support, they focused special attention on releasing prisoners and increasing the production of consumer goods. Yet they never ceased to warn of the likelihood of domestic subversion by foreign capitalists seeking to overthrow their state, which represented the future of humankind.[84]

While there was considerable substantive agreement among them about the need for reform, they distrusted one another, especially Beria. They distrusted his dynamism, his initiative, his power, and believed he was styling himself as a great reformer in order to muster public support and take over the regime.[85] They knew intimately his record of brutality and murder. They also knew that he was putting together dossiers on them and on their own former crimes. "Think yourself happy that these documents are in my hands," Beria supposedly said to Malenkov, "but behave reasonably in future."[86] "I understood that Beria was playing a double-game with me," Khrushchev recalled, "reassuring me while awaiting the moment to make short work of me as soon as he could."[87]

Meanwhile, they focused attention on Eastern Europe and especially on East Germany, where there was turmoil and disarray. They knew that Stalin had imposed far too much of an economic and military burden on the satellites. Reforms were imperative, and if the material conditions of life were not improved and repression softened, upheaval was likely. They summoned the East European leaders to Moscow, scheduling separate meetings with them.[88]

The remarkable records of these sessions reveal that Malenkov, Beria, and their comrades were intent on significant liberalization. In mid-June 1953, for example, the entire collective leadership of the Kremlin—Malenkov, Beria, Khrushchev, Molotov, Anastas Mikoyan, and Bulganin—met with the Hungarian party and state leader Matyas Rakosi and his entourage from Budapest.

Malenkov began with economic conditions. "We view Hungary's situation with a critical attitude. . . . Our impression is that the Hungarian comrades underestimate the problems. . . . The facts that we are familiar with indicate that the situation in the field of agriculture is not good. . . . There are

problems in the area of trade as well. They provide few commodities for the population." Then he turned to the political oppression, which for years had been very severe in Hungary. "Persecutions were initiated against 250,000 people in the second half of 1952" alone. Seventy-five percent of these were stopped, "yet, the number is still rather high. . . . All these provoked dissatisfaction among the population."

When Beria took over, he lambasted Rakosi for both the economic failures and the political repression. Poor investments, he said, caused hardship in the countryside and diverted capital from light industry, "the industry that serves the population." And how could it be that in a country of 9.5 million people, "persecutions were initiated against 1,500,000 people?" The American and British imperialists, Beria warned, would capitalize on the discontent of the common people. "They have one goal: to overthrow the existing authorities and to restore the power of the capitalists." Arresting and beating people were countereffective; Rakosi would be feared but not respected. The loyalty and affection of the people had to be won. Then Bulganin moved in: Hungarian communists had abused their power and worsened the population's standard of living. "This is not the road to socialism but the road to a catastrophe," he said. "Today the Red Army is still in Hungary," Beria concluded, "but it will not be there forever. Therefore, we must prepare and become stronger so that nobody can do any harm to us."

"Why do we bring these things up so harshly?" Malenkov asked, drawing the session to a conclusion. "We, as Communists, are all responsible for the state of things in Hungary. The Soviet Union is also responsible for what kind of rule exists in Hungary. . . . We admit to the extreme military demands, but the [Hungarian] comrades executed these demands even beyond what we expected. Why should an army be maintained with such a size that it bankrupts the state?"

When Rakosi tried to defend himself, however meekly and politely, Beria responded: "We like you and respect you, that's why we criticize you." There was no excuse, repeated Malenkov and Beria, for the size and cost of the Hungarian army. The Hungarians carried Soviet wishes to an extreme. "Comrade Stalin gave incorrect instructions," Beria asserted. "If the great Stalin made mistakes," he said, "Comrade Rakosi can admit that he made mistakes too. . . . People must not be beaten." The government's policy toward the middle peasantry, he peremptorily added, "must be changed."[89]

A catastrophe, such as Bulganin warned, did occur—but not in Hungary. On 17 June, workers in East Berlin went on strike. Aggrieved laborers protested against the East German regime's demanding work rules, low wages, and tight regimentation of the economy. People were fed up with Walter Ulbricht, the leader of the East German communists, and with his government's attempt to "build socialism rapidly" in the German Democratic Republic. Hundreds of workers stormed a government building, and about twenty-five thousand demonstrated in the streets. Strikes and riots spread quickly throughout East Germany. By the late afternoon, Soviet commanders called out their troops and declared martial law. Russian soldiers and tanks fired on the protesters, dispersed the crowds, arrested hundreds of people, and executed several of them.[90]

The new leaders in the Kremlin had foreseen the possibility of such an uprising and had been seeking to avert it. Malenkov, Molotov, and Beria realized that Ulbricht's efforts were a disaster. The seething hostility of the people to his regime was perfectly apparent to Soviet occupation officials as well as to Beria's secret police. Moreover, during the previous two years almost five hundred thousand East Germans had fled to the West. In May, Soviet officials had agreed on a "new course" for East Germany that would relax the work rules, halt the formation of agricultural cooperatives, stop the squeeze on small private enterprise, and increase the production of consumer goods. Summoning Ulbricht and his colleagues to Moscow on 2 June, Kremlin leaders had warned that if conditions were not ameliorated, "a catastrophe will happen."[91]

But what Stalin's successors had in mind for Germany over the long run is not clear. The reforms they insisted on were intended to allay unrest among East Germans and gain more support among West Germans. And Soviet officials, just like policymakers in Washington, knew they had to champion German unification if they were to have credibility in either part of Germany. So the Soviet reform program aimed "for the construction of a single democratic peace-loving independent Germany."[92] But whether Molotov, Malenkov, and Khrushchev intended to negotiate seriously for a unified Germany is unclear. At the very least, they tried to blame Washington for splitting Germany, which they hoped would undermine the willingness of West Germans to join an integrated defense community in Western Europe.

Beria may well have wanted to explore a real settlement of the German question, given his wish to reduce Moscow's burdens and relax East-West tensions. One of his subordinates recollects that he "ordered me to prepare top-secret intelligence probes to test the feasibility of unifying Germany. He told me that the best way to strengthen our world position would be to create a neutral, unified Germany run by a coalition government. Germany would be the balancing factor between America and Soviet interests in Western Europe." Beria allegedly did not "want a permanently unstable socialist Germany whose survival relied on the support of the Soviet Union."[93] At a meeting of the Politburo, he incensed Molotov and offended Malenkov when he exclaimed, "The GDR? What does it amount to, this GDR? It is not even a real state. It's only kept in being by Soviet troops." The Kremlin needed a peaceful Germany, Beria said, "and it makes no difference whether or not it is socialist."[94] Beria's son also says that his father wanted to unify Germany, thinking that a "reunified Germany would be grateful to the Soviet Union and would agree to help it economically. We could even put up with a bourgeois Germany."[95]

Whether Beria would have acquiesced in the creation of a unified, independent, bourgeois Germany, or simply wanted a unified Germany in the Soviet orbit, as did most of his colleagues in the Kremlin, remains uncertain. But what is not uncertain is that at the same time that Soviet troops were putting down the uprising in East Germany and Kremlin leaders were pondering a long-term policy, Khrushchev and Malenkov, with Khrushchev in the lead, decided to get rid of Beria. They especially feared the reforms he was undertaking in the security apparatus, the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD). Secretly, Khrushchev and Malenkov approached each member of the leadership and garnered a consensus that Beria should be dismissed from his key posts. Even more stealthily, they got the army to side with them and arranged for Beria to be arrested.

Totally unsuspecting of the plot against him, Beria arrived at a meeting of the Presidium on 26 June. He was shocked when Malenkov opened the meeting saying it would focus on Beria's activities. He was guilty, Malenkov charged, of seeking "to place the MVD organs above the party and the state." He had abused power and sought to foment dissent among the collective leadership. Malenkov proposed that Beria be dismissed from his key positions. All the members attending supported this proposal. Malenkov then pressed a button. As planned, Marshal Zhukov and several uniformed offi-

cers entered the chamber and surrounded Beria. Malenkov then asked for calm and declared that Beria "is so cunning and so dangerous that only the devil knows what he might do now. I therefore propose that we arrest him immediately." All agreed, although few had expected matters would go this far.[96]

Within a week the plotters convened a meeting of the Central Committee to consider the charges against Beria. Malenkov, opening the session, assailed Beria's criminal activities, his efforts to divide the collective leadership, and his schemes to usurp power. Beria wanted to undermine the collective farms and jeopardize the food supply, he claimed. Overall, he "lost the face of a Communist," became a "bourgeois regenerate," and operated as "an agent of international imperialism."[97]

No issue consumed more attention at this Central Committee meeting than Beria's position on the German question. Beria, said Khrushchev, "most clearly showed himself to be an instigator, an agent of the imperialists, during the discussion of the German question, when he raised the question of rejecting socialist construction in the GDR and making concessions to the West." All the leaders, said Khrushchev, had acknowledged mistakes in their policies toward the GDR. All had agreed that the "construction of socialism" had moved too swiftly, alienating the Germans themselves. Yet they had all insisted, except Beria, that socialism in the GDR could not be forsaken, since to do so would jeopardize the security of the Soviet Union and the future of communism. "Can a democratic bourgeois Germany truly be neutral?" Khrushchev railed. "Is this possible?" Germany loomed as the great threat, ready to wreak revenge if Soviet leaders were not vigilant. "I gave [Beria] examples," said Bulganin, "on the neutrality of Germany in its time. . . . I pointed out that . . . Germany was disarmed, and then what happened? Germany rearmed and attacked the Soviet Union."[98]

Nobody voiced his concerns more clearly than Molotov. "None of us could forget," he said, "that Germany should be held responsible for unleashing the First World War, and that bourgeois Germany is responsible for unleashing the Second World War." For Marxists, he continued, the idea that a bourgeois Germany could be peaceful was impossible to contemplate. How could a bourgeois Germany not have aggressive and imperialistic aspirations? How could it not have ties to other imperialist countries? We must not repudiate "everything that had been won by the blood of our soldiers, the blood

of our people, in a difficult struggle against Hitlerism. . . . Under the correct political course, the German Democratic Republic will become an ever more reliable friend of the Soviet Union, and will become a serious obstacle to the realization of imperialist plans in Europe."[99]

The invective against Beria illuminated how past experience, ideology, and the distribution of power in the international system militated against an agreement on the unification of Germany. "Comrades," Malenkov bellowed at the closing session of the plenary meeting on 7 July, "we must not for a minute forget the international situation, the existence of the Capitalist countries around us." The imperialists "cannot be reconciled to the fact that more and more countries and peoples are leaving their sphere of influence." Hence the Kremlin could not relax its guard. It would have to reaffirm its backing for Ulbricht and rekindle its support for socialism in the GDR. It would have to recalibrate its reform efforts throughout Eastern Europe, making certain they did not spark unrest. Revolutionary vigilance would have to be enhanced. "We must remember and never forget the Capitalist countries around us, who are sending and who will be sending into our midst their agents to undermine us."[100]

Beria pleaded for forgiveness. "Dear Georgi," he wrote to Malenkov, "I am seeking for your understanding, since you know me better than others." Yes, he acknowledged, his behavior at Presidium meetings had been insolent. His rudeness toward Comrades Khrushchev and Bulganin was inadmissible. "I am guilty [on this matter] without question and have to be denounced thoroughly." But, he beseeched,

> dear comrades, you should understand that I am a faithful soldier of our Motherland, a loyal son of the party of Lenin and Stalin and your loyal friend and comrade. Send me wherever you wish, to any kind of work. . . . See me out, I will be able to work ten more years and I will work with all my soul and with complete energy. I am saying this from the bottom of my heart.[101]

Several months later, Beria was formally tried. The sentence was prearranged. He had no counsel, no right to appeal. He had betrayed the motherland and sought to restore the bourgeoisie. Immediately, the guards tied his

hands, ripped off his prison shirt, and gagged him with a towel. Standing in an undershirt, still struggling to plead his innocence, he was shot in the head at point-blank range by a three-star general.[102]

Arresting and executing Beria did not mean that the Kremlin leadership rejected his ideas. Neither security nor ideology would allow them to betray socialism in East Germany. But they realized that the Soviet Union's domestic priorities still demanded a relaxation of international tensions. As Malenkov closed the Central Committee plenum, he repeated that many tasks lay ahead if they were to fulfill their historic mission to build communism. They had to strengthen the party's contacts with the masses, he said, respond more sensitively to the demands of the workers, "show daily concern for the improvement of the material situation of the Soviet people, remembering that concern for the interests of the Soviet people is the Party's most important obligation."[103]

On 8 August, Malenkov gave a speech to the Supreme Soviet outlining the trajectory of Soviet domestic and foreign policy. He framed it in the ideological maxims of Marxism-Leninism. "The Communist party and the Soviet government know where and how to lead the people, because they are guided by the scientific theory of social development—Marxism-Leninism—the banner of which has been raised so high by our great father and teacher, Lenin, and the continuer of his cause, Stalin." In the past, the party had had to invest great effort in the development of heavy industry, fuel, power, and machine tools. Otherwise, the motherland would have been attacked, the revolution doomed, and capitalist encirclement triumphant. But now it was imperative to shift course. "The task consists of making a drastic change in the production of consumer goods and to ensure a speedier development of the light and food industries." The state had failed to spur the production of potatoes, vegetables, milk, and meat, Malenkov admitted. Housing was shoddy. School construction was inadequate. Hospitals were too few. Many enterprises were run incompetently and inefficiently. These shortcomings needed to be acknowledged, as well as the fact that the system had enormous potential. "The source of our strength is the mighty activity and initiative of workers, collective farmers, and intelligentsia. We have enormous possibilities for the implementation of our main task—the maximum satisfaction of the steadily growing material and cultural demands of the people."

Malenkov emphasized that international issues could not be ignored in

Lavrenti Beria, 1946. Stalin's brutal police chief inspired fear, yet apparently he wanted to negotiate a deal with the West over Germany. His comrades arrested and killed him after Stalin's death.

examining domestic problems. The Soviet Union and its democratic allies were a force for peace, he reiterated. The Kremlin had no territorial claims. The new leaders had taken steps to ease tensions with its neighbors—Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, and Finland. They restored diplomatic relations with Israel. Most important, they labored behind the scenes to orchestrate the armistice in Korea, signed on 27 July. And they wanted to do more, he said. They wanted to settle the German question. They were prepared to meet with the foreign ministers of the other great powers. There were "no objective grounds for a collision" between the United States and the Soviet Union. "We firmly believe that at the present moment there is no disputable or outstanding issue that could not be settled in a peaceful way on the basis of mutual agreement between the countries concerned. . . . We stood and stand for a peaceful co-existence of two systems."

However, Malenkov made it clear that the Soviet Union would not be in-

timidated. Some Americans stressed their determination to negotiate from strength, yet the United States had wanted to preserve an atomic monopoly and couldn't. Now Malenkov proudly announced that the Soviet Union had its own hydrogen bomb. "As you see, convincing facts are shattering the wagging of tongues about the weakness of the Soviet Union." The language of force would not work against the Kremlin. Compromise and conciliation were essential. President Eisenhower said there was a chance for peace. There *was* a chance, Malenkov emphasized, but it demanded deeds from the United States as well as the Soviet Union. "It would be a crime before mankind if the certain relaxation which has appeared in the international atmosphere should be replaced by a new intensification of the tension." The United States would have to acclimate itself to a new world order in which eight hundred million people—one-third of humankind—had embraced socialism. Those people "cannot be compelled to abandon their historic achievements won with their blood and sweat."

In other words, there still was a chance for peace notwithstanding the crackdown in East Germany, the arrest of Beria, and the allegations that the Americans had been responsible for the ferment behind the iron curtain. Malenkov and his colleagues well understood that the achievement of their domestic priorities and the security of their state depended on a relaxation of the arms race, the settlement of the German question, and a more quiescent international atmosphere. They would try to give peace a chance. But the world needed to know that "Our cause is invincible. We shall proceed confidently forward, along the path of building Communist society in our country."[104]

A Chance for Peace?

The uprising in East Germany and the arrest of Beria tempted Eisenhower and Dulles to go on the offensive and practice Dulles's strategy of "rollback." At National Security Council meetings in late June and July, they and their colleagues ruminated on the significance of the recent events. Dulles thought the Russians had been caught "completely off guard." Since he considered their position in Germany untenable, he wanted to convene a four-power conference on the future of Germany. Dulles's brother reported that "the ousting of Beria [was] a tremendous shock to the Russian people." Jackson

agreed: it was a "great opportunity for nurturing passive resistance throughout the bloc." Now was the time, he thought, to breed confusion and capitalize on the disarray in the Kremlin, and he submitted a detailed plan of psychological initiatives and covert actions to exploit the unrest in satellite states.[105] He thought the United States should try to undermine the puppet regimes the Kremlin had installed, but without fomenting mass rebellion. It should convince the free world, particularly Western Europe, that "love of liberty and hatred of alien oppression are stronger behind the Iron Curtain than it has been dared to believe and that resistance to totalitarianism is less hopeless than has been imagined."[106]

Eisenhower and Dulles carefully calibrated the U.S. response, however. They decided to work with Konrad Adenauer's government in West Germany to distribute food packages to East Berliners and East Germans. By mid-August, 865,000 East Germans had flocked to centers in West Berlin to pick up food, and by early October more than 5.5 million packages had been distributed. The East German and Soviet governments, embarrassed and infuriated, did all they could to stop the food program, confiscating identification cards and cracking down on organizers of the excursion trips to West Berlin. But the Kremlin also lightened its demands on the East German economy, canceled reparation obligations, and agreed to join a four-power foreign ministers' conference on the future of Germany.[107]

For U.S. policymakers, these events in East Germany were both tantalizing and sobering. American diplomats in Eastern Europe warned that "stirring up resistance elements or incitements to revolt might have the long-range effect of retarding a Soviet military withdrawal." Psychological warfare operations, they reminded their superiors in Washington, "should never be allowed to run ahead of our political and military policies." Moreover, the British and French feared that the food program and the psychological offensive might provoke a crisis, perhaps even triggering a Soviet move against West Berlin. U.S. officials knew their actions toward East Germany and in Eastern Europe had to be integrated into an overall assessment of how to deal with post-Stalinist Russia. But they were uncertain what should be done.[108]

Since early May, when Dulles had confided his anxieties to the president, Eisenhower had been orchestrating the most systematic review of national security policy since the onset of the Cold War. Under the direction of his assis-

tant for national security affairs, Robert Cutler, three task forces were assembled to outline alternative courses of action. After weeks of careful preparation, the teams presented their ideas at an all-day meeting at the White House on 16 July attended by the president and his most important advisers.

Task Force A, under George Kennan, postulated that time was not running against the free world. It presented a program to augment and sustain U.S. military capabilities over the long run. Looking back to the containment policies that Kennan had designed in 1947 and 1948, Task Force A sought to increase the cohesion of the free world while fomenting subversion within the Soviet bloc. It aimed "to weaken Soviet power and bring about its withdrawal within traditional Russian boundaries," without risking global war.

Task Force B, under Major General James McCormack, outlined how the United States might draw a line around the existing Soviet bloc. Should the Kremlin or its partners try to advance beyond that line, they would risk global war: if communists seized power on "our side of the line," the United States would reserve the right and develop the means to take whatever actions were necessary to restore conditions compatible with U.S. national security interests. But Task Force B did not like the idea of peripheral wars, considering them uneconomical.

Task Force C, under Admiral Richard L. Conolly, assumed that the United States "cannot continue to live with the Soviet threat. So long as the Soviet Union exists, it will not fall apart, but must and can be shaken apart." Conolly and his team delineated how the United States might take aggressive actions in the near future to subvert the Soviet bloc and erode Soviet power, even if such actions increased the risk of general war.[109]

Eisenhower was impressed by the presentations. He said he had never attended "a better or more persuasively presented staff job." He hoped that the three task forces could meet and integrate their ideas into "a unified policy." Although members of the task forces disagreed with one another strongly, Ike believed that their disparate findings needed to be discussed more systematically by the National Security Council and integrated into an overall national security program.[110]

What was striking in the presentations of the three task forces was the absence of any emphasis on the chance for peace or the pursuit of détente. As discussions proceeded in late July and as the disarray in the Soviet camp became more apparent, hopes mounted that a "climate of victory" could be created. The president and his staff thought they could take more risks because the Soviets seemed more timid and defensive. The United States might even initiate "moderately increased risks of general war by taking some of the aggressive actions against the Satellites proposed by Task Force 'C.' "[111]

Yet their deliberations were confounded by their growing realization that the costs of the national security programs would break the budget. The president kept insisting that national security must be built on sound fiscal policy and domestic economic vitality. "We are in a hell of a fix," he exclaimed at an NSC meeting on 14 July, when he learned of the escalating national deficit that would exceed eight billion dollars in fiscal year 1955 and require congressional action to raise the debt limit.[112] As Soviet strategic capabilities increased and the requirements of continental defense mounted, U.S. capacity to sustain its commitments overseas was squeezed. In July, Ike appointed new men to head the military services and asked them to develop new ideas and concepts that would enable the United States to be secure without bankrupting itself.[113]

In the late summer, the president went on vacation in Denver while the new chiefs of staff designed their plans and presented them to an NSC meeting on 27 August, presided over by Secretary of State Dulles. The chiefs proposed to cut the nation's overseas deployments and to focus on strategic air power and continental defense. This posture would cost more in the short run but would produce significant savings in the long run, said the new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Arthur Radford. After some questioning and discussion, Secretary of the Treasury Humphrey declared that the report was "terrific. . . . This was the most important thing that had happened since January 20." Finally, the NSC had a strategic concept that was new and bold yet fiscally prudent. Unable to contain his excitement, Humphrey insisted that the next move was up to the State Department.

Dulles immediately saw that this new concept would adversely affect U.S. relations with its allies, especially in Europe. He acknowledged that the concept would be wildly popular at home, but "could result in a grave disaster if we were not allowed sufficient time to prepare public opinion abroad for this change." General Matthew Ridgway, the new army chief of staff, added to Dulles's anxieties when he said precisely what the secretary was thinking: should the NATO allies get an inkling of this, they would "construe it as abandonment and the consequences would be terrifying." Yet neither Dulles

nor Ridgway could ignore their colleagues' palpable excitement. Suddenly
the National Security Council had a concept, embraced by the JCS, that
promised to reconcile security and economy, preserve national solvency, and
animate Republican constituencies with new tax reductions.[114]

Cutler flew to Denver to brief the president. Ike was enthusiastic, but
stressed that it must never be said that these views were new. He had always
regarded the stationing abroad of large numbers of U.S. troops as temporary.
He agreed that protecting the homeland from a surprise attack must be an
overwhelming priority. The United States must be able to deter an attack and
retaliate massively. When Cutler mentioned Dulles's anxieties, Ike said he
was eager to hear the secretary's ideas. Ike was very concerned about the re-
cent news of the Soviet hydrogen bomb, clearly reinforcing his worries about
homeland defense and underscoring the need to avoid war. It made him won-
der about "how much we should poke an animal through the bars of the
cage."[115]

Dulles decided to make a quick trip to see the president himself. On
6 September, he flew across the country to spend a few hours in intimate dis-
cussions with his boss. Dulles appreciated the need for economy and for con-
tinental defense, for "budgetary balance and monetary stability," he said. He
realized the anxieties America's allies had because of Soviet possession of
hydrogen bomb. But, he said, the new strategic concept advanced by the JCS
would intensify those fears, rekindling allied assumptions that the United
States was returning to its isolationist past.

How could the divergent imperatives of U.S. economic, strategic, and for-
eign policy be brought together? Dulles presented a new view to the presi-
dent, one that reflected a stunning reversal of his previous inclinations.
Perhaps it was time, he acknowledged, to explore "the possibility of taking
this occasion to make a spectacular effort to relax world tensions on a global
basis and execute . . . mutual withdrawals of Red Army forces and of U.S.
forces. . . . The Plan would include limitation of armament and control of
weapons of mass destruction." Lest the president think the secretary was to-
tally repudiating his past ideas, Dulles argued that the time was propitious
for this. The United States would be negotiating from a position of strength:
the Korean armistice had been signed; a radical government in Iran had been
overthrown with the aid of covert American and British actions; Adenauer
had just won a decisive victory in the West German elections; and France

willing to go on the offensive against the Vietnamese communists in
Indochina. If ever there was a chance for peace, this was the time, he said.[116]
Eisenhower was supportive. "I am in emphatic agreement," he wrote
Dulles after the secretary returned to Washington, "that renewed efforts
should be made to relax world tensions on a global basis. Mutual with-
drawals of Red Army and United States forces could be suggested as a step
toward relaxing these tensions." At the same time, Americans had to be in-
formed of the vastly more dangerous world they were living in as the Rus-
sians developed hydrogen weapons and strategic air power. The United
States might have to spend more than previously thought to establish a deter-
rent and defend the homeland; tax cuts might have to be delayed. The trade-
offs were excruciatingly difficult. Ruminating on unhappy scenarios, the
president speculated that if the country had to maintain a huge defense bur-
den for an indefinite future, it might have to resort to preventive war or ac-
cept some "form of dictatorial government." But Ike encouraged Dulles to
go ahead and keep an eye on possibilities to advance "the cause of conciliation
and understanding." Knowing that it had been trying for Dulles to make
the trip to Denver, Ike thanked him profusely for the chance to review "the
real international problems that cry out for study and contemplation and
action."[117]

National men and women needed to explore whether there was a chance
for peace. The State Department's Policy Planning Staff was already grap-
pling with these matters. Over the past six years, the staff had won great
influence and earned enormous respect under the leadership of George
Kennan and Paul Nitze. Now, Louis Halle, one of its brightest members, ar-
gued that it would be a mistake to ignore the significance of developments
in the Kremlin. The future was of course uncertain, and the United States
needed to build strength, but it should speak more softly while carrying a
smaller stick. "In the present (temporary) state of Soviet history, we might well
find ourselves able, if we act wisely, to obtain rather large concessions from
the Soviets now, by negotiation, in return for relatively small concessions on our
part."[118]

The overriding problem concerned the future of Germany. "This is the
crux of the problem," wrote Dulles's policy planners. "German power and
resources added to either scale would be decisive in the balance, and such a
shift either way would be adamantly resisted by the side that stood to lose."

Détente, however, might be achieved if the Cold War adversaries could find a way to agree on creating a unified, neutral, peaceful Germany that would enable Soviet and American forces to withdraw from the heart of Europe. The division of Germany might end, and the iron curtain severing Europe might be lifted. By settling the German issue and reducing U.S. forces in Europe, huge sums of money might be saved and the budgetary crunch eased.[119]

Try as they might, policy planners could not find a formula to solve the problem of Germany. A unified, neutral Germany would not relax tensions or enhance U.S. security. For the moment, democracy was working in West Germany. Unlike the Weimar Republic, as Eisenhower wrote French president Joseph Laniel, "the Bonn regime has struck roots. . . . [T]he forces of democracy and common sense have grown considerably in strength."[120] But the trajectory of German politics was uncertain. "The institutions of democracy," said the NSC paper on Germany, "have yet to undergo a real test. Within the population there are maladjusted and, to some extent, disaffected elements which might prove politically unreliable under stress." James Conant, the U.S. high commissioner for Germany, warned Dulles, "The basic German political situation is too unstable and the German governmental structure is too new to trust the final command of a national army to the hands of the unknown German leaders of the future."[121]

Hence Germany had to be integrated, bound, and riveted within a West European community. Ike reminded Laniel that the "spectre of a Germany rapidly increasing its strength outside the ties of Western European unity" was the worst possible scenario.[122] A united, neutral Germany might seek to manipulate Cold War adversaries to serve its own purposes or, worse, be subverted and enticed into a Soviet bloc. Such a scenario was a nightmare because German forces were essential for the defense of Western Europe and for the viability of the NATO alliance. The Joint Chiefs of Staff starkly warned, "Any agreement which would preclude Germany from rearming and aligning itself with the West would be militarily unacceptable."[123]

After very careful assessments, U.S. officials concluded that they had to work for German integration into Western Europe—all of Germany, it was hoped, but at the very least West Germany. They knew they had to stand for German unity because Germans wanted it. The American position vis-à-vis the Adenauer government would be discredited if Washington were seen as opposing unification. But the prerequisite for unification was free elections

in both the eastern and western parts of Germany, not the merger of the existing East and West German governments, as the Kremlin seemed to want.[124]

U.S. officials knew that their position made a settlement of the German issue impossible. The Soviets, wanting to sow division among the NATO allies by calling for German unity and a pan-European security pact, feared German power and would never accept a unified Germany linked to NATO. "With the memory of recent German aggression," the NSC acknowledged, "the USSR undoubtedly fears revival of German military power as a threat to its security." The Russians were unlikely to relinquish their position in East Germany lest they jeopardize their access to the uranium resources in Saxony or precipitate a move for independence among all the satellites. "In short," concluded the Policy Planning Staff, "no solution of the German problem seems available so long as Europe remains a theater of rivalry and possible war. [Germany] is so inherently important as an aggregate of power that the only solution would seem to be contingent upon a general East-West détente in this area."[125]

In short, the configuration of power in the international system made a German settlement impossible. Germany was such an important unit within that system, and its future evolution so uncertain, that the United States could not do anything that would jeopardize the integration of German power into the Western alliance. This negotiating posture might prolong the Cold War, but that was more acceptable than running the risks of a prospective settlement. A neutralized Germany simply could not be tolerated.

Nor would unrest in the third world—in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Latin America—allow for a settlement. The "forces of unrest and resentment against the West are strong," the president's top advisers agreed. "Among these sources are racial feelings, anti-colonialism, rising nationalism, popular demand for rapid social and economic progress, over-population, the breakdown of static social patterns."[126] Communist ideology, C. D. Jackson wrote, "despite all the evidence of the realities of life in the Soviet system—still has a significant appeal to many peoples outside that system."[127] Eisenhower and Dulles agreed. Eisenhower wrote in his diary,

> Nationalism is on the march and world communism is taking advantage of that spirit of nationalism to cause dissension in

> the free world. Moscow leads many misguided people to believe that they can count on communist help to achieve and sustain nationalistic ambitions. Actually, what is going on is that the communists are hoping to take advantage of the confusion resulting from the destruction of existing relationships . . . to further the aims of world revolution and the Kremlin's domination of all people.[128]

Chances for peace could not be risked so long as revolutionary nationalist movements might be captured by Chinese or Soviet communists. During the early months of his administration, Eisenhower became alarmed by the drift of events in Iran. In Tehran, President Mohammad Mosaddeq was a populist and charismatic leader who had nationalized the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company in 1951. When London had tightened the economic screws against him, the political situation in the country grew volatile, and Mosaddeq appeared to become dependent on the communist Tudeh Party. Fearing that the communists would outmaneuver Mosaddeq and that Iran's oil resources might slip into the Soviet orbit, Eisenhower decided on 11 July 1953 to authorize an elaborately conceived Anglo-American covert operation to overthrow Iran's leader. As a result of a fortuitous sequence of events, the plot succeeded. Mosaddeq was imprisoned and then put under house arrest. Thousands of his colleagues and communist supporters were arrested, and a few were executed. By the end of 1954, an authoritarian regime under the leadership of Shah Reza Pahlavi was firmly ensconced and beholden to the United States. Iranian oil was placed under the management of a new multinational consortium over which American corporations exerted significant influence. "A year ago," Eisenhower wrote his brother Edgar in November 1954, "we were in imminent danger of losing Iran, and sixty percent of the known oil reserves of the world. . . . That threat has been largely, if not totally, removed."[129]

The success of the covert operation in Iran encouraged Eisenhower and Dulles to employ similar tactics elsewhere. In Guatemala, a reformist government under Jacobo Arbenz Guzman introduced an income tax and promoted land reform that threatened the holdings of U.S. companies in that country, especially the United Fruit Company. Arbenz associated with leftists and brought communists into his administration. He wanted social justice,

President Eisenhower and the Shah of Iran, 1954.
U.S. covert action ensconced the Shah in power.

economic growth, and the autonomy to set Guatemala's priorities without interference from the United States. Louis Halle wrote:

> This typical underdeveloped country is now undergoing the social revolution that typifies underdeveloped countries generally in our time. . . . Social reform and nationalism are its two principal manifestations. We see the same revolution at various stages of development in Asia and Africa. . . . The international communist movement is certainly not the cause of the social revolution in Guatemala, but it has made the same effort there that it has made elsewhere to harness the revolutionary impulses—nationalism and social reform alike—and exploit them for its own purposes.[130]

Eisenhower and Dulles felt they could not tolerate such a regime in their neighborhood, especially when Arbenz defied an American boycott on arms shipments and purchased military supplies from the Soviet bloc. In Decem-

ber 1953, they allocated three million dollars to initiate a covert operation to topple him, and in June 1954 they put it into action. Arbenz, like Mosaddeq, was overthrown.[131]

Ike and his assistants recognized that Moscow and Beijing were not responsible for these revolutionary nationalist movements in the third world, which were the product of backwardness, colonialism, and imperial exploitation. Looking at Indochina, policymakers acknowledged that "with only a modicum of Chinese Communist assistance," the communist-led and nationalist-inspired forces of Ho Chi Minh were successfully contesting French control of the region. Ho's political organization, the Vietminh, had fought the Japanese occupiers of Indochina during World War II and organized an independent government in Vietnam at the end of the war, which officials in Paris had refused to recognize. Since 1946, the Vietminh had been fighting the French for recognition of Vietnam's independence. If elections took place, Ike's assistants recognized, Ho would win not because of external aid but because of indigenous support. This outcome was regarded as unacceptable. There was no alternative, State Department policy planners concluded, but to destroy the organized armed forces of the Vietminh as "a precondition of achievement of U.S. objectives in Indochina."[132]

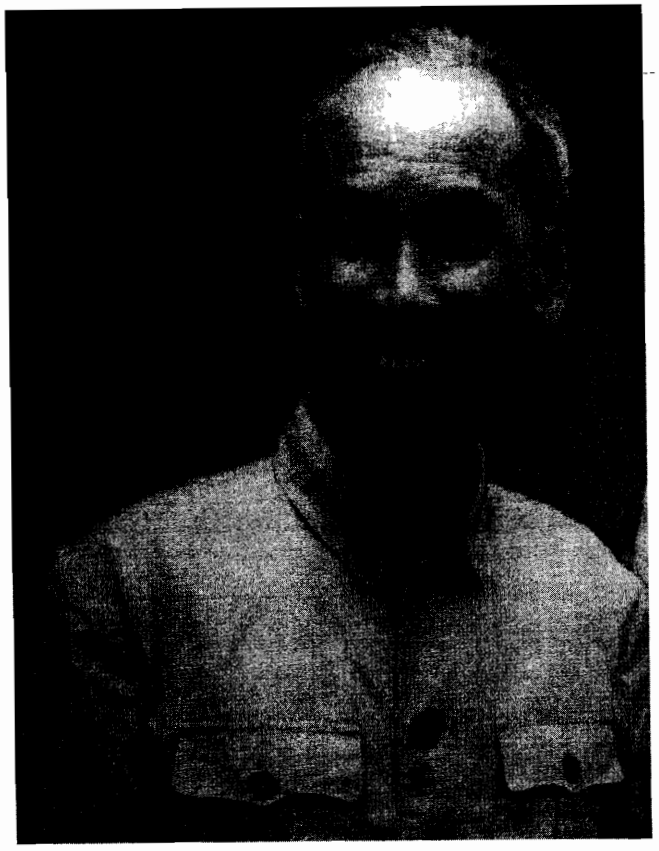
These officials deemed fighting revolutionary nationalism in Southeast Asia and the Middle East essential because the areas' raw materials and natural resources were indispensable for the economic health and political vitality of Japan and Western Europe. The United States might get along without these resources—although the president did not think so—but America's allies certainly could not. Communist success in Indochina, for example, would encourage all of Southeast Asia to cooperate with China and the Soviet Union and "would equally encourage Japanese political tendencies toward accommodation." Without markets and raw materials in the third world, Japan and Western Europe might be sucked into the Soviet orbit, and the balance of power in the world would move in the Kremlin's direction. Loss of Southeast Asia, concluded the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the State Department, would "result in such economic and political pressures upon Japan as to make it extremely difficult to prevent Japan's accommodation to communism." The president agreed. It is "absolutely mandatory," he emphasized, "that the Japanese nation does not fall under the domination of the

Iron Curtain countries, or specifically the Kremlin. If the Kremlin controls them, all of that great war-making capacity could be turned against the free world."[133]

Eisenhower and Dulles wanted to explore the parameters of détente, but it was immensely difficult to imagine satisfactory terms of peace. Since the Kremlin was populated by men who still fanatically believed in an alternative way of life, the risks of settling with them seemed to outweigh the potential benefits. Although they appeared to want to relax tensions, they might take advantage of any pause in the competition to lure a unified, neutral Germany into their orbit or to subvert nations that possessed vital raw materials or were situated in strategic locations in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, or even Central America. While the Cold War was costly and increasingly risky, and nuclear war was a growing prospect, the clash of ideologies and the dynamics of the international system militated against the chance for peace.[134]

When Ike and his advisers settled on a national security policy statement at the end of October 1953, they acknowledged that the Kremlin might seek a relaxation of tensions. Thus far, however, Malenkov had not demonstrated a "readiness to make important concessions to this end." The Soviet rulers were still basing their policy "on the conviction of irreconcilable hostility between the bloc and the non-communist world." Their basic objective was unchanged: to consolidate and expand their sphere of power and, eventually, gain "domination of the non-communist world."[135]

The United States, therefore, needed to prepare to win the Cold War. The views of all three task forces plus the new JCS concept were integrated into an overall strategy that presumed strategic superiority, deterrence, containment, and a calculated, prudent rollback. The United States had to have a strong military posture "with emphasis on the capability of inflicting massive retaliatory damage by offensive striking power." It also had to "retain the cooperation of our allies" and "seek to win the friendship and cooperation of the presently uncommitted areas of the world, and thereby strengthen the cohesion of the free world." Within the Soviet orbit, the United States should not risk global war, but should take "feasible political, economic, propaganda, and covert measures designed to create and exploit troublesome problems for the USSR, impair Soviet relations with Communist China, complicate control in the satellites, and retard the growth of the military and eco-



Ho Chi Minh, 1954. A communist and nationalist, he typified a generation of postwar leaders in Asia and Africa who wanted independence and rapid modernization for their countries.

nomic potential of the Soviet bloc." Overall, the U.S. aim was to prevent Soviet aggression, end Soviet domination of other nations, and establish an effective arms-control regime with proper safeguards.[136]

The United States should not ignore the prospect of negotiating agreements with the Kremlin, Eisenhower's national security advisers concluded, but those agreements had to comport with U.S. security interests.[137] Otherwise, Eisenhower and Dulles preferred to use America's superior power to win the Cold War rather than settle on terms that might prove dangerous.[138] Rather than agree to a unified Germany, Eisenhower wanted to integrate West Germany into Western Europe, certain that a viable Federal Republic

would attract east Germans and East Europeans westward. Rather than accept communist expansion in the third world, Eisenhower and Dulles wanted either to coopt or subvert revolutionary nationalist movements.

It would take time, of course, but perhaps time was not on the communists' side. With its superior power, Eisenhower and Dulles believed the United States could take risks to bring about the type of world it wanted; those risks were more sensible than the risks that inhered in relaxing tensions. Soviet expansion must be stopped, Dulles told his NSC colleagues, "even at the risk of war." The administration's "new look" strategy, based on brinksmanship and massive retaliation, would enable the United States to prevail in a crisis. If the Soviets wanted to choose war, let them do so. Dulles did not think they would. He predicted they would back down, as they had in the past.[139] Shirking his recent pessimism, the secretary of state told his colleagues on 1 October that the most recent evidence suggested that the United States was winning the Cold War, and the Kremlin knew it. The United States, therefore, needed to be smart and tough, bold yet prudent. It should build strength in West Germany and Western Europe, contain Soviet expansion in Southeast Asia and the Middle East, and probe for weaknesses inside the Kremlin's orbit without provoking war. It could win the Cold War without having to fight a hot war.[140]

But the pressures on the president would not cease. Eisenhower realized that he could not allow the chance for peace to slip away. Malenkov and his colleagues were waging a tireless peace campaign. The Russians represented themselves as champions of disarmament, relentlessly seeking to avoid a nuclear holocaust. The effect of their propaganda on peoples reared in war and familiar with hardship could not be disregarded. In the struggle for the soul of mankind, Ike did not want the Kremlin to hold the high ground.

Nor would Prime Minister Churchill permit the president to turn his back on the chance for peace. Since Stalin died, Churchill had been calling for détente and advocating a summit meeting with the new Soviet leaders. He had wanted to come to Washington in the spring to persuade Eisenhower to agree to this, but they could not get their schedules to mesh and then Churchill had been afflicted with a stroke. When he recovered, he resumed his efforts.[141] In early December, Eisenhower and Churchill and their top advisers finally met in Bermuda, along with French premier Joseph Laniel and foreign minister Georges Bidault.

At the first plenary meeting in Bermuda, on 4 December, Churchill emphasized one "supreme" question: "is there a new Soviet look" in the Kremlin? He thought so. U.S. strength and Soviet economic aspirations "may well have brought about a definite change in Russian policy and outlook which may govern their actions for many years to come." Our guard should not be let down, Churchill admonished, but "let us make sure that we do not too lightly dismiss the possibility" that there was a new disposition in Moscow.[142]

But President Eisenhower and his advisers decided that the Kremlin had not changed its mind-set. Under a new "dress," Ike said, there was "the same old girl." "Bath, perfume, and lace" had not changed her. In short, "he did not want to approach this problem on the basis that there had been any change in the Soviet policy of destroying the Capitalist free world by all means."[143]

Rather than discuss means of relaxing tensions, Eisenhower and Dulles wanted to build strength in Europe and shore up vulnerabilities in Southeast Asia. The European Defense Community must be ratified, they kept insisting. Bidault explained why ratification was so difficult, why allowing the West Germans to develop a new army was so hard for the French to stomach, and why integrating West German forces into a European army was causing indigestion. Dulles listened but would not budge. The Russian menace, along with other factors, he said, made it imperative for the French and Germans to heal their "age-old quarrel." "If concrete steps were not taken in the near future to heal the breach that had torn the heart of Western civilization for so many years," Dulles warned, "it would be quite impossible to sustain the interest and support of the American people." Churchill supported Dulles. There was no way that France could prevent the formation of a West German army directly or indirectly incorporated into NATO, he told Bidault. The logic was simple: West German forces were required to defend Western Europe; West Germany had to be integrated into Western Europe; German power had to be harnessed in behalf of western civilization.[144]

Strength had to be built in Asia as well. No more communist advances could be tolerated. Just before the Bermuda conference, Ike's national security advisers agreed that the aim of U.S. policy was to reduce, by means short of war, "the relative power position of Communist China in Asia."[145] If the armistice in Korea were to collapse, Dulles confided to Churchill and Bidault, the United States would strike the Chinese directly, perhaps even with atomic weapons.[146] Likewise, if China were to intervene in Indochina, its regime might face retaliation in China herself.[147] France had to prevail in Indochina, Eisenhower and Dulles believed, because the defense of the "free world" was at stake. The United States, Britain, and France would "work together to restore peace and stability in this area."[148]

Eisenhower and Dulles departed from Bermuda frustrated by Churchill's conciliatory disposition to the new leaders in the Kremlin and by Bidault's indecisiveness over the EDC. Yet Eisenhower immediately went to New York to give one of the most memorable speeches of his presidency. He knew he had to combat the Kremlin's peace campaign and inspire hope that war could be avoided; he knew he had to gain the high ground in world public opinion so that the United States could negotiate from strength.[149] He also knew that Senator McCarthy's anticommunist crusade—his attacks on State Department officials for their alleged disloyalty, his investigation of American libraries abroad for possessing books written by communist authors, or "fellow travelers," and his reckless charges against reputable public servants for their beliefs and behavior—was despoiling America's image abroad and arousing doubts about the vibrancy of American democracy.[150] Eisenhower needed to show the world that America's technological superiority could be harnessed to ameliorate poor living conditions; that its free-enterprise system could bring peace, not war; that its values could inspire liberation, not repression.

"Never before in history," the president told a plenary meeting of the U.N. General Assembly on 8 December 1953, "has so much hope for so many people been gathered together in a single organization," the United Nations. Yet the hopes for universal peace and human dignity were endangered by the progress of science and technology. An atomic age had dawned, and America's arsenal was growing daily. Its stockpile of weapons "exceeds by many times the total [explosive] equivalent of the total of all bombs and all shells that came from every plane and every gun in every theater of war in all of the years of World War II." But that gave the president scant satisfaction. He did not want to contemplate the "hopeless finality . . . that two atomic colossi are doomed malevolently to eye each other indefinitely across a trembling world."

Washington wanted agreements, not war; Americans wanted freedom for themselves and self-determination for others. Now that the Soviet Union had

dropped a number of preconditions for a conference, the foreign ministers of the United States, France, Britain, and Soviet Russia could meet to discuss the problems of Germany and Austria, Korea and Indochina. But the president hoped for more. He announced that the United States was willing to meet privately with key nations to discuss solutions to the atomic arms race "which overshadows not only the peace, but the very life, of the world." Wanting to do more than merely reduce or eliminate atomic materials for military purposes, he proposed that the "governments principally involved, to the extent permitted by elementary prudence," make contributions from their atomic stockpiles to an international atomic energy agency. The agency would be established under the auspices of the U.N., and its principal mission would be "to devise methods whereby this fissionable material would . . . serve the peaceful pursuits of mankind." By donating "atoms for peace," the United States and the Soviet Union could join together in a common enterprise to build trust and to enhance the aspirations of humankind for peace and prosperity.[151]

Arms Control, Germany, and Indochina

The Russians appeared interested. On New Year's Day 1954, Prime Minister Malenkov released a statement wishing the American people well and beckoning for peace. "I hold that there are no objective obstacles to an improvement in relations between the Soviet Union and the United States in the New Year, and to the strengthening of the traditional ties of friendship between the peoples of our countries." Nothing was more important, he added, than an agreement not to employ weapons of mass destruction, which was a prerequisite to reaching "an understanding on the complete prohibition of atomic weapons and the establishment of strict international control over the fulfillment of the ban on the use of atomic energy for military purposes." Parallel to these efforts should be negotiations to reduce all other armaments. "All this," he concluded, "would undoubtedly reduce state expenditures for military requirements and would ease the economic condition of the population." Relaxing tensions made sense, Malenkov was indicating, when Soviet priorities were focused on ameliorating domestic living conditions.[152]

The Soviets were ready to talk. When Ambassador Georgi Zarubin met with Dulles a few days later, he was constructive and conciliatory. His government wanted to cooperate, and his own job was to improve relations, he said, but Eisenhower's proposal did not go far enough.[153] It did not ban the use of atomic and hydrogen weapons. In fact, it did nothing to halt the escalation of arsenals. Numbers of weapons could increase even while small amounts of atomic materials were handed over to the proposed international agency. More needed to be done and greater risks for peace taken; the Kremlin was willing to explore all angles.[154]

Yet Eisenhower and Dulles were not prepared to enter a serious round of negotiations to ban the use and prohibit the possession of atomic weapons. In fact, at that very moment, they were reaching consensus on their "new look" strategic posture based on massive retaliatory power. The president would not use atomic weapons in a preventive war and could imagine the eventual outlawry of all weapons of mass destruction.[155] But for the time being his strategic policy depended on the capacity to retaliate with and threaten the use of atomic weapons. "Since we cannot keep the United States an armed camp or a garrison state, we must make plans to use the atom bomb if we become involved in a war," Eisenhower said.[156]

The president and Dulles regarded the shadows cast by American strategic weapons as indispensable for their policy of containment on the Soviet periphery as well as for the defense of Western Europe and the American homeland. This is what strategic analysts meant when they talked about extended deterrence. The consequence was that the United States could not ban nuclear weapons. "Although we are perfectly prepared to listen to anything they may have to say," Dulles emphasized to the president, "we do not intend to let ourselves be drawn into separate negotiations with the Soviet [*sic*] on the elimination or control of nuclear weapons." Eisenhower concurred. There was, then, no follow-up to the president's U.N. proposal and no serious engagement with the Russians.[157] Trust was the prerequisite to arms control.

To build trust, Soviet officials would have to demonstrate goodwill. Their attitude on Germany was deemed critical. Dulles went to the foreign ministers' conference in Berlin at the end of January 1954 with little anticipation that the Russians would agree to the unification of Germany on terms the United States could accept.[158] Yet from the very first days of the conference, what struck U.S. delegates was Molotov's affability and the evident goodwill of Soviet diplomats. This was the first meeting of foreign ministers in five

years, and the new leaders in the Kremlin seemed determined to make it a success. Soviet diplomats—even the habitually taciturn Foreign Minister Molotov—were eager to impress the Americans with their "desire to bring about some tranquility in international relations."[159] The Russians invited the American delegation for dinner at the residence of the Soviet high commissioner. Molotov's humor, C. D. Jackson reported, was sharp and subtle. He "talked quietly," wrote another American diplomat, seeking "to create an appearance of friendly objectivity."[160]

Yet the substance of what Molotov said throughout the conference gave the Americans heartburn. From the first days to the last, he dwelled on the consequences of German power and German militarism and objected to U.S. efforts on behalf of a European Defense Community tied to NATO. "It is well known that German militarism started World Wars I and II. The Soviet peoples cannot forget the sufferings and sacrifices of themselves and others. . . . Attraction of Germany into EDC not only would prevent attainment of German national unity but would also seriously increase the danger of a new world war in Europe." The Soviet Union "felt a grave responsibility," Molotov insisted, to prevent the rebirth of German militarism and to avert another war.[161]

What Molotov said privately resembled what he said publicly. After the Berlin Conference, when he returned to Moscow and reported to his colleagues on the Central Committee of the Party, he recapitulated how Dulles ceaselessly talked about free elections in all of Germany as a prelude to unification, an idea on which he heaped scorn. We all know that not all words about freedom really mean freedom, he said. Some people want freedom that privileges militarists and exploiters. Hitler, too, he recalled, came to power through free elections. The U.S.S.R. had suffered the most from Nazi aggression and could not and would not overlook the revival of German militarism.[162]

Molotov's statements reflected the reports being prepared by the Kremlin's experts on Germany, who meticulously described every sign of German militarism and revanchism. They used reams of statistical data to show the increases in West German coal and steel production. The West Germans, Soviet experts claimed, were developing the industrial infrastructure to produce weapons geared to the strategic requirements of NATO and the EDC. Notwithstanding the prohibitions on the production of weapons of mass destruction, the Soviets thought that West German scientists were developing methods of bacteriological warfare. They were also building strategic roads, reviving their shipbuilding industry, and constructing naval vessels. They were reputed to have plans to build torpedo boats, light cruisers, submarines, tankers, and even an aircraft carrier, all of which would initially sail under an American flag.[163]

In his annual report for 1953, the deputy high commissar in East Germany summarized similar developments, with a particular stress on the preparations to raise a German army, and he made many comparisons to the Nazi period. Four West German ministers in Adenauer's new cabinet were, he alleged, former Nazis. They were preparing to militarize the country and ensconce it firmly in the Western alliance structure either through the EDC or directly in NATO. The composition of the German working class had changed dramatically, now incorporating many former peasants, petit bourgeois, migrants, and former fascist soldiers, all of whom lacked class consciousness and were inclined toward nationalism and revanchism. Overall, the report alleged, the German bourgeoisie was seeking more independence in both internal and external affairs, and would support an army whether or not the EDC were ratified in France. Adenauer was determined to make Germany the decisive factor in world politics, and the Western powers were determined to bring about unification in their own way. They were working, moreover, to subvert the German Democratic Republic.[164]

Ideology and memory dramatically shaped these Soviet perceptions of developments in Germany. The Americans were firmly leading the imperialist camp, Molotov explained. They sought world supremacy. Toward this goal, they had formed NATO, which, he said, resembled the anti–Comintern Pact. From a position of strength, U.S. officials yearned to accrue even greater strength, even though it meant the restoration of German militarism and Hitlerism. When the army was recruited in West Germany, Molotov asserted, it would have Hitlerian generals at its head and would be aggressively revanchist. There was no doubt, he said, that Washington and Bonn were preparing a new war. "It can mean nothing else."[165]

The Russians were not alone in feeling anxious about the trajectory of German politics. The French and Americans also were worried. Nobody could be certain about the future of German democracy. As one American analyst on the Policy Planning Staff pointed out shortly before the Berlin

Conference: "We must recognize that we are dealing with a fluid society [in Germany], an inchoate political community, a people of dynamic and assured purpose but not too sure of their ultimate direction. . . . The Bonn Republic presents an impressive façade to the world but beneath the surface are dynamic forces which may imperil its stability."[166] This made it all the more important to integrate West Germany into the European community, for this would bind German power and help nurture German democracy.

But the Soviets, driven by their Marxist-Leninist axioms, could have no faith in such a community because they postulated the hostile intent of the entire capitalist camp. Molotov explained to his colleagues that his aim at the Berlin Conference had been to thwart Western plans for the EDC, champion the unification of a neutral Germany, and call for the negotiation of an all-European security treaty—aims that conformed with the collective goal of the Kremlin's new leadership: to relax international tensions without capitulating to Western demands. He was pleased to report, moreover, that the Americans had been leveraged into attending yet another conference, to be held in Geneva, on the problems besetting Korea and Indochina. At this meeting, U.S. officials would have to deal with representatives from Beijing notwithstanding their policy of nonrecognition of communist China.[167]

Although Molotov was pleased with the outcome of the Berlin Conference, U.S. officials were not dismayed. Dulles's "virile diplomacy," C. D. Jackson informed President Eisenhower, had thwarted every Soviet move, every possible maneuver to divide the French, British, and Americans. In Jackson's view, the Soviets seemed weak and defensive. Their overriding desire was now to hold East Germany and Eastern Europe. They had nothing positive to offer except their amorphous plan for an all-European security treaty and their call for yet another conference to discuss the problems of Asia.[168]

Their very weakness whetted the American appetite to gather more strength. "If, during 1954, we have the guts and skill to maintain constant pressure at all points of the Soviet orbit, we will get dividends from such a policy," said Jackson.[169] From Moscow, Ambassador Bohlen reported that the Russian disposition to relax tensions offered opportunities the United States should exploit. "If they can be made to recognize that a genuine reduction in tension is only possible by serious concessions on their part, I believe we can present Soviet leadership with a choice which is almost certain to provoke dissension and even real division."[170] By solidifying the integration of West Germany into Western Europe, U.S. officials hoped to get the Kremlin to relax its grip on Eastern Europe. When "there is a really united and strong Western Europe," Dulles told Adenauer, "the Soviets will not be able to maintain their total control of the satellite states by their present methods but will probably have to transform them into buffer states."[171]

Given an ideological foe whose animus toward the West seemed relentless, the United States could not risk the existence of a unified independent Germany in the heart of Europe. This would set back U.S. hopes for a Franco-German rapprochement, for the integration of the West European economy, and for the stability of European politics. The Soviet Union would have more opportunities to divide the West, and communist parties would have more opportunities to exploit social ferment. For Eisenhower and Dulles, relaxing tensions was less important than achieving their objectives in Western Europe. Now was the moment to capitalize on U.S. strength.

But whereas the American position appeared strong in Europe, its vulnerability in Asia seemed palpable. The French were losing the war in Indochina against the Vietminh. In May, they suffered a stunning defeat at Dienbienphu. After that defeat, a new government came to power in Paris under Pierre Mendès-France that was committed to negotiating a peace agreement by the end of July. At the Geneva Conference, France agreed to withdraw from Indochina and to recognize the independent states of Vietnam, Cambodia, and Laos. The Vietnamese communists, under pressure from Moscow and Beijing, agreed to regroup their forces above the seventeenth parallel and accept a temporary division of Vietnam. Free elections were supposed to be held under international supervision within two years.[172]

This outcome of the Geneva Conference was more favorable than Dulles had anticipated, yet he loathed the negotiations. He stayed only a few days at Geneva and left most of the negotiating to Under Secretary Walter Bedell Smith. When Dulles was actually at the meeting, his contempt for the Chinese communists was palpable. He refused to shake the hand of Foreign Minister Zhou Enlai and would not allow himself to be seated near any communist. One British observer commented that Dulles seemed beset "with almost pathological rage and gloom." He sat at the meetings with his

"mouth drawn down at the corners, and his eyes on the ceiling, sucking his teeth."[173]

But he was very involved in formulating policy at home. If southern Vietnam was lost, all of Southeast Asia would go communist, he and Eisenhower believed, in which case vital raw materials would be relinquished to the adversary and Japan's position in the Western orbit would be endangered. The Japanese needed markets and raw materials in the free world. If they did not get them there, they would be forced to reach an accommodation with the Chinese communists. The world balance of power would be imperiled. We must not lose Japan, Eisenhower wrote Churchill. "The moral, political, and military consequences" would be calamitous.[174]

The United States could not permit revolutionary nationalist turmoil to follow its natural course. The British might think that the Russian danger was primarily nationalist, but Eisenhower and Dulles thought they were wrong. "Communism, in control of Russia," they were certain, "seeks world domination." They therefore could not tolerate the idea of the Vietminh taking over Indochina because they believed that this would endanger the world balance of power. They did not intervene unilaterally in May 1954 to assist the French or to attack the Vietminh, as Admiral Radford, the chairman of the JCS, wanted them to do, but Eisenhower and Dulles were not prepared to forsake southern Vietnam and the rest of Indochina.[175]

U.S. officials knew they were just beginning to face an era of revolutionary nationalism in the third world. The United States, C. D. Jackson wrote, must not be naïve about the future. "Colonialism is today a moribund duck," but power vacuums must not be allowed to emerge. American officials needed to give careful, serious, sophisticated thought to finding ways to entice or to force nationalist leaders to join the free world. We must get over "our complex," Jackson wrote, "that every little brown or black man with a tommy gun is automatically a 16-carat patriot on his way to becoming a local George Washington."[176] Henry Byroade, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, explained:

> This movement toward self-determination is one of the most powerful forces in 20th century affairs. When the history of our era is finally written it may prove to have been the most significant of all. . . . It will be one of the great tragedies of our time if the peoples of Asia and Africa, just as they are emerging from generations of dependence, should be deluded by the fatal lure of the new imperialism and return thereby to an age of slavery infinitely more miserable than they have ever known before.[177]

Eisenhower and Dulles struggled to thwart the Vietminh's triumph in southern Indochina. Publicly, they said that the United States would not undermine the results of the Geneva Conference; privately, they immediately went to work to keep southern Vietnam and the rest of Southeast Asia from falling into communist hands. "The great problem from now on out," Dulles confided to his colleagues on the National Security Council, "was whether we could salvage what the Communists had ostensibly left out of their grasp in Indochina."[178] U.S. officials were under no great public pressure to take this position, nor were allies forcing it on them.[179] Indeed, the British now "seemed complacent about their ability to hold Malaya even if Indochina and Siam are lost," a judgment that Dulles did not share.[180] But Dulles and Ike did share the view that they must "prevent a Communist victory through all-Vietnam elections."[181] In addition, the United States had to be prepared to use force, even unilaterally, to thwart communist advances.[182] But by forming a regional defense alliance in Southeast Asia (SEATO), the Eisenhower administration hoped to be able to work with allies to deter aggression.[183]

In May 1954, just as the situation in Vietnam was unraveling, Eisenhower received another proposal to seek a global settlement with the communists. He talked it over with Dulles, and they decided against it. The time was not ripe. The threats were too great.[184] So long as the United States had superior power, it had to employ it to deter, contain, and roll back communism.

Notwithstanding the new leadership in the Kremlin, U.S. intelligence analysts concluded that the Soviet threat would grow.[185] Yet for the time being, U.S. power far exceeded Soviet power. "As of right now," said Admiral Radford, "and for the next few years . . . a very few years . . . the military posture of the Free nations is strong . . . tremendously strong . . . compared to that of the Soviet."[186] The United States, defense analysts concluded, would reach an era of atomic plenty at around 1955; the Soviets would not reach it until 1959, or later. Until then, the United States had to capitalize on its superior

strength, not simply to deter and contain, but also to undermine Chinese communist control of the mainland and capitalize on Soviet weaknesses.[187] But this had to be done carefully, thoughtfully, unprovocatively.

At the end of 1954, Robert Cutler forwarded to the president the most original national security paper he had read since the onset of the administration. Opposition to the Soviet system had to be maintained, it said; it was evil. But the key to victory in the Cold War was to assume an evolutionary approach, not a revolutionary one. The overriding goal was to shape the conduct of communist regimes "and to encourage tendencies that lead them to abandon expansionist policies." Covert actions to subvert them were permissible, but only in conjunction with efforts to alter their overall behavior. Meanwhile, strength needed to be built in Western Europe. Peoples had to see that there were "constructive and attractive alternatives to Communism." In the struggle for the soul of mankind, democratic capitalism had to appear more attractive than the communist alternative.[188]

Over time, if the West could build strength and demonstrate its superiority, the adversary might change.[189] This was not likely in the near future, with the international environment so volatile, the future of Germany so uncertain, and revolutionary nationalist ferment so clearly in its infancy. So long as these conditions were embedded in the international system, there could be no more than an armed truce. The Kremlin would not desist from trying to capitalize on such opportunities. "We must adjust ourselves mentally and physically for a long period of such conditions," wrote Robert Bowie, the influential director of Dulles's Policy Planning Staff.[190]

But the Soviets might change in the long run, when circumstances evolved and ideological competition faded. For the moment, there had been no fundamental transformation in the Kremlin. But the U.S.S.R., said Charles Bohlen, had "entered a new phase with unforeseeable results."[191] In this context, the United States could not take a chance for peace, but it could watch the Kremlin closely, build strength, integrate German power, foment unrest behind the iron curtain, coopt revolutionary nationalism, and become an exemplar of a better way of life. The United States needed to demonstrate that its way was a superior way, that democratic capitalism was not destined for the ashbin of history.

Fear and Power

After Stalin's death, the ray of hope that the Cold War might assume a different trajectory sparkled briefly, but then went out. Ike declared that there was a chance for peace but did little to make it a reality. Why?

Fear and power provide the answers. Eisenhower and Dulles would not take big chances for peace because they worried about the trajectory of German power and because they feared that revolutionary nationalists, such as Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, would seize power and align with Beijing and/or Moscow.

On the eve of his presidency, Ike had outlined his approach to foreign policy. The "preponderance of the world's resources," he wrote Lewis Douglas, must "not pass into the hands of the Soviets." The United States had to have access to the areas of the world producing vital raw materials. The governments in those areas must be "friendly to our way of life" and believe in free enterprise and open trade. The United States must use its superior power, so long as it lasted, to shape a world order amenable to America's domestic institutions.[192]

Malenkov, wanting to relax international tensions, in March and April 1954 continued to deliver major speeches stressing that every dispute could be settled peacefully. It was not true, he emphasized, that humanity had only two choices, either a new world war or perpetual Cold War. The Soviet government "stands for the further easing of international tension, for durable and lasting peace." Prevailing policies might "spell the destruction of civilization," he warned. "Our position is clear. We stand for the peaceful economic competition of the Soviet Union with all capitalist countries, including, of course, the United States."[193]

Malenkov's motives were unambiguous. The new leaders required time to introduce domestic economic reforms. In their internal deliberations, their discussions in the Central Committee, and the resolutions of their Politburo (or Presidium, as it was then called), they expressed their overriding concern to make more food, clothing, and housing available to the people of the U.S.S.R. Even Foreign Minister Molotov, talking to his domestic audience, stressed that the new leadership would not only accelerate production but also improve the quality and reduce the price of goods.[194]

Yet Stalin's heirs could not yet imagine an end to the Cold War. The

documentary record suggests that they believed, as Stalin had, in the fundamental hostility of the capitalist world. Communist ideology postulated a protracted struggle, and Malenkov and the others needed to be no less vigilant than their predecessor in rooting out enemies and thwarting emerging threats. The American imperialists, Molotov told the Central Committee, behaved arrogantly and sought to rearm Germany, build positions of strength, and encircle the Soviet homeland with military bases.[195] Assuming the existence of a formidable foe bent on destroying their way of life, these Soviet leaders could not take big risks for peace. "When necessary," Malenkov explained, "we will negotiate with the imperialists, . . . [but] we will not allow unilateral concessions. . . . We firmly believe in our might."[196]

Of course, U.S. actions reinforced this axiomatic Soviet thinking. The United States would not negotiate a ban on nuclear weapons, would not agree to limit strategic armaments, would not recognize the People's Republic of China, would not accept a communist victory in all of Vietnam, and would not settle the German question except on its own terms. In other words, history and experience seemed to confirm the veracity of Marxist-Leninist thinking. If communists appeared weak, the adversary would seize the opportunity to crush them.[197]

And the new leaders in the Kremlin knew they were weak. They were aware of the problems besetting their system and of the turmoil in their bloc. They knew they needed to reform at home, boost productivity, expand food production, and buttress their allies in the social democracies. Indeed, their claim that Beria had wanted to sell out socialism in East Germany made Malenkov, Khrushchev, and their colleagues all the more determined to make socialism work in the part of Germany they controlled.[198]

Domestic political considerations dictated a relaxation of tensions but also reinforced the Kremlin's commitment to defend socialism and to make it function successfully in their bloc. Soviet leaders deeply resented Dulles's suggestions that their peace overtures reflected weakness, and they thought if they made too many concessions, the Americans would stiffen their demands.[199] And nothing frightened them more than the prospect of revived German militarism, of a strong Germany firmly ensconced in the American camp or acting independently to regain territory lost in the war.[200]

Ideology taught Russian leaders that history was on their side. They believed that socialism represented the future. "More than a third of mankind,"

Malenkov rejoiced, "has forever broken with capitalism."[201] The two world wars had contracted the capitalist sphere. The Chinese revolution had brought hundreds of millions of additional people into the realm of socialist democracy. Revolutionary nationalist turmoil in Asia, Africa, and Latin America portended additional victories. "The forces of Communism grow stronger every day," said Malenkov. "Our Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, the countries of the People's Democracy, the German Democratic Republic are all a mighty, ever-growing stronghold of people and democracy."[202] While beckoning for peace, Malenkov had no doubt about the trajectory of history. "It is clear to the whole world that aggressive forces will not succeed in turning back the course of history."[203]

Malenkov readily acknowledged that Stalin had made significant errors. Formidable challenges lay ahead. "It would be wrong to forget," he and his comrades agreed, "that we still have unresolved, pressing economic tasks. . . . We still have . . . the giant task of maximally satisfying the ever growing material and cultural demands of the workers."[204] But the Soviet peoples, under the enlightened leadership of the Communist Party, had great recuperative powers. They were building "a new society in which there is no exploitation of man by man, no political and national oppression." They shared similar hopes and aspirations. They wanted "a rapid rise in the material and cultural standards of the people." The leadership of the party, Malenkov assured his listeners in Leningrad on 12 March 1954, would "work tirelessly in order that all Soviet men and women should live better and better." Together they were building a new way of life.[205]

Eisenhower, too, believed he was building a way of life. At meetings of the National Security Council, he talked emphatically about protecting basic values and institutions, which would be endangered if the distribution of power in the international system changed dramatically. Soviet inroads in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America would affect core industrial areas in Japan and Western Europe. If the industrial heartlands of Europe and Asia were pulled into a Sino-Soviet orbit, the world balance of power would be altered and the United States might have to become a garrison state, with its values and institutions compromised.[206]

Eisenhower talked of a chance for peace, and Malenkov yearned to relax international tensions. Yet there could be no real détente or peace so long as ideological presuppositions shaped the two sides' perceptions of threat and

opportunity in a dynamic international system. The United States and the Soviet Union possessed the most powerful weapons the world had ever known, but neither of their leaders could liberate himself from his fears or transcend his ideological makeup. The world seemed too frightening; it also seemed too full of opportunity.

III

RETREAT FROM ARMAGEDDON, 1962–65

Khrushchev, Kennedy, and Johnson

At the Brink

They went eyeball to eyeball during the missile crisis of October 1962. Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev, first secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and prime minister of the Council of Ministers, tried to slip missiles into Cuba. He was caught when an American surveillance flight over the Caribbean island detected the missiles being constructed. In a dramatic television speech to the nation on 22 October, U.S. president John F. Kennedy said the Kremlin was being "deliberately provocative" and testing American "courage and commitments." The United States would enforce a quarantine around Cuba to prevent any further deliveries of offensive military equipment, he announced. If Soviet ships proceeded and if the missiles were not withdrawn, the United States would stop the vessels. "I have directed the armed forces to prepare for any eventualities," the president declared.[1]

On 24 October, the Joint Chiefs of Staff ordered the Strategic Air Command to its highest level of alert preceding general war. U.S. military officials