

GOLD WAR *VERSUS* EURO-ATLANTIC INTEGRATION? A CASE STUDY

CONSTANTIN BUȘE

- ◆ *The significance of the events of February 1948 in Czechoslovakia: The last assault led by Communism against the Central European strongholds of democracy.*
- ◆ *The struggle against Communist dictatorship, prompted the setting up of the most successful Alliance of the history, NATO.*
- ◆ *This struggle contributed to the inception of the European integration process as a political and economic line of defence against Communist disruption.*

Diploma in History and Ph. D. in History at The University of Bucharest.

Constantin Bușe is Vice-rector of Bucharest University,

Secretary General of the National Committee of Romanian Historians, Director of the Centre for Euro-Atlantic Studies and professor in international contemporary history at the Faculty of History, University of Bucharest.

His books include *Foreign Trade through the Harbour of Galați under the Porto-Frank Administration (1837-1883)* Editura Academiei, București, 1976; *Japan a Century of History*, Editura Humanitas, București, 1990; *Between Panama and San Francisco*, Editura Științifică, București, 1991; *Diplomacy During War*, Editura Universității București, 1995.

The Split: Former Allies/New Enemies

The events of February 1948, in Prague, have been considered for a long time - on well-founded reasons and in almost all historical studies - as being a decisive momentum both in the development of the Cold War and in the process of Euro-Atlantic integration and European unification.

The idea of European unification was old and well-rooted in the European political thought. Contrary to that, the phenomenon of Cold War was the result of the new, post-war realities, and firstly of the USA - Soviet Union bipolarity, the competition and confrontation between the two systems and philosophies of life and world.

The launching of both processes was fastened by the stimuli generated by the end of the second World War. Those responsible for it were the great winners - Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, to whom one can add General De Gaulle, due to the way in which, individually or together, they imagined and conceived the post-war world.

In 1944, Fall, in Moscow, Winston Churchill has put forward to Stalin, on his own initiative, the idea of dividing a part of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe in spheres of influence, which Stalin readily accepted. Thus, Churchill infringed upon his own principles enshrined in the Atlantic Charter, which was later regretted and disclosed by Churchill himself. This, in fact, encouraged Stalin to get more and give less - the Pact with the Devil (1).

In his honesty and simplicity Roosevelt hoped that *Pax Americana* and *Pax Sovietica* would not be different from each other, on the contrary, building on the same principles, some incorporated in the Atlantic Charter, they would complement each other.

In order to strengthen his position in relation to the Anglo-Americans, General De Gaulle counted on the Soviet support and, in December 1944, in Moscow, he raised the issue of building a United Europe, founded on the three pillars of power: Moscow, London and Paris (2). The Soviet leadership was hostile to any grouping of European states which placed themselves outside the control of the Three Big Powers. Kremlin's option was very clear on the establishment of a stable control over Eastern Europe, which started to become evident even before the end of hostilities.

The issue did not slip away from Churchill who confessed about his concern as soon as 12 May 1945, while asking President Harry Truman a question full of anxiety: „What will be the situation, in a year or two, when the British and American armies would be gone, the French army far from being recovered and Russia could decide to maintain 200-300 divisions active?" Probably confident that he was not right, Churchill reproached General Eisenhower the fact that he „accepted" the Soviet Army's penetration into Prague ahead of the Western ones and for the first time he used the formula „Iron Curtain" which, following the line reached by the Soviet military forces, „divided Europe, from the Baltic to the Adriatic sea, passing through Bohemia" (3).

Churchill did not hide his fear about the creation of a political vacuum on the continent, after the retreat of the Anglo-American armies. The conditions were extremely favourable for the increase of Soviet influence and for

encouraging the expansion of the Communist regimes.

In fact, he was right, because, in 1946, out of five million British and American soldiers, a mere number of 880.000 were still present in Europe, while the Soviets displayed six million military in the occupied area of Europe.

All the events that were developing beyond the „Iron Curtain" were a proof to his concerns. They are now well-known.

On the other hand, Truman's coming into presidential office at the White House meant an immediate cut in the American supply for the Soviets through the *Lend-Lease Act* and the atomic arrogance that led to the „freeze" in the relationship between Washington and Moscow. As it is widely known, the divergent views and especially the different manner of implementing the agreements on the German issue, of the Potsdam Conference (17 July - 2 August 1945) have essentially contributed to a increase in the adversity between the East and the West, between the Soviets and the Americans and to the starting of what has been rightly or wrongly called the „Cold War".

In the paper dedicated to her father, Margaret Truman makes some comments on the events and decisions that marked the beginning of the Cold War. Thus, she points out that in a speech made on 9 February 1946, Stalin launched a violent attack on the West: „It was a brutal, blunt rejection of any hope of peace with the West... Stalin declared that as long as capitalists controlled any part of the world, there was no hope of peace" (4).

A few days later, George Kennan, the US chargé d'affaires in Moscow, displayed, in a report to the Department of State, a very subtle and documented analysis of the specifics of the Soviet foreign policy „not from the viewpoint of Communism but from the far more profound viewpoint of Russian history": „At the bottom of the Kremlin's neurotic view of world affairs is the traditional and instinctive sense of insecurity - Kennan wrote - an insecurity based on the feeling which Russia's Communist rulers shared with the czar that << their rule was relatively archaic in form, fragile and artificial in psychological foundations, unable to stand comparison or contact with political systems of western countries" (5). The diagnosis formulated

by the American diplomat for the Russian-Soviet foreign policy was accurate and extended in very harsh terms. Kennan's report published as „The Sources of Soviet Conduct", in the July 1947 issue of the magazine *Foreign Affairs* „has been considered one of the primary documents of the Cold War and the assumption seems to have been made by numerous historians that it profoundly shaped the thinking of the Truman Administration" (6).

Stalin's speech of 9 February 1946 has been assessed by William Douglas, a politician very close to president Truman, as „the declaration of World War III" (7).

The Communist presence in the Governments of France, Italy and Belgium after 1944-1945 fed Moscow with satisfactions and illusions, and spread fear and anxiety beyond the Iron Curtain, especially in Washington. In Greece, the civil war broke out and in spite of the British military support, the anti-communist camp had minimum chances. In Turkey and the Near and Middle East, the Soviet pressure was increasingly visible and aggressive. The war wounds, poverty, political instability, foreign pressures could have led at unexpected and unwished changes any time, just in the same manner these phenomena were developing beyond the Iron Curtain.

It did not seem a surprise that on May 3, 1946, Truman received a query from General Joseph T. McNarcey, commander of the United States Forces in Europe, „asking for instruction if - it seemed very likely at the time - the Communists should attempt a coup d'état in France" (8).

Churchill's conferences and speeches from 1946, in America and Europe have marked a step forward both in the „Operation Cold War" and in the curdle of the first nuclei of European unification.

In the speech in Fulton, Missouri, on March 5, 1946, when he received the title Doctor Honoris Causa of the University of Westminster, in the presence of the US president, Winston Churchill remarked that: „from Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an Iron Curtain has descended across the Continent. From what I have seen of our Russian friends and allies during the war, I am convinced that there is nothing they admire so

much as strength and there is nothing for which they have less respect than for military weakness" (9).

Churchill believed that a close alliance between Great Britain and The United States was absolutely urgent and necessary, and that an air and sea cooperation between the two states represented: „the only path for our liberties" (10).

The British-American brotherhood alliance was, thus, meant to stop Russia's persistent aggression.

President Truman might have approved those said by Churchill, because, his daughter shows: „he (Churchill) was not a head of state" and Truman „in no sense considered that speech a break with Russia". Moreover, in order to prove his good faith, the American president „later invited Marshall Stalin to come to Missouri and deliver a speech stating Russia's point of view on the various disputes that were imperilling the peace" (11).

On April 5, 1946, General Walter Bedel Smith, the new American ambassador to Moscow, had a meeting with I. V. Stalin and, on President's Truman disposition, he asked „what does the Soviet Union want and how far is Russia going to go?". Stalin answered by accusing the United States that they joined Great Britain against Russia and by declaring that „Churchill's speech at Fulton was an unfriendly act" (12). Ambassador Bedel Smith rejected the accusations and finally asked Stalin once more „How far is Russia going to go?" „Cooley, Stalin replied, <<we're not going much further>>" (13).

The first steps toward European integration

On September 19, 1946, in Zurich, Churchill launched a pathetic appeal for the United States of Europe, by this, probably, having in view, due to the historical circumstances, mainly the Western part of the Continent. He, anyhow, thought that the unification of the European countries would make the 300-400 million people enjoy unlimited prosperity, glory and happiness. „The European family or at least the greatest possible part of the European family must

reform itself and renew its links, so that it could develop in peace, security and liberty" (14).

The setting up of a Council of Europe seemed necessary, but, above that, Churchill underlined, *France and Germany should reconcile*, and Great Britain and the Commonwealth, the United States and, he hoped, the Soviet Union be „friends and protectors of the new Europe" and „defend its right to life and prosperity" (15).

As one of the first great European statesmen, Churchill evoked the extremely important, and equally complicated, difficult issue, even theoretically, of the French-German reconciliation, having in view that this reconciliation represented the milestone of a new pattern of organizing European politics.

As it is already known, starting from the initiative of the former British Prime-Minister, but also independent and simultaneous to it, a broad movement in favour of European unification began to work, carried on by different economic and political circles, supporters of the federal and associative views. The activity of a large number of pan-European committees, societies and movements would prepare the ground and the spirit so that the political parties, Governments and Parliaments could later on act.

It is common wisdom to say that the way in which the issue of the defeated Germany has been approached and „solved", up to a certain moment, in the first post-war year, contributed in a significant way to the emergence and the development of the two major phenomena of the contemporary world - the Cold War and the organizing pattern of Europe. European unification - which mutually influenced each other.

The US-Europe relationship: The hectic years

On March 6, 1947 at the Paris meeting between the president of the French Republic, Vincent Auriol and the US Secretary of State, George Marshall, the French leader talked, among others, about the threat to peace posed by a central power in Germany (18). Hence, the need of France for US commitments on its security, even through a treaty among the four Big Powers. On the other hand, this would-be

The evolution of the political thought and of the attitude of the leaders and Great Powers' Governments towards what represented and was going to become Germany for the destiny of Europe is extremely interesting.

In the speech delivered on July 28, 1946, general De Gaulle declared outspokenly that he was in favour of European unity, foreseeing, remarkably, a French-German rapprochement (16). We noticed that, by the beginning of Autumn the same year, it was Churchill's turn to invite to the setting up of the United States of Europe, on the basis of the French-German reconciliation, among others.

On September 6, 1946, in Stuttgart, the US Secretary of State, Byrnes, already announced a modification in the US policy on and for Germany, by abandoning the punishment measures. He declared that it is neither in the interest of the German people, nor of the world peace that Germany become a partner or a pawn in the power struggle between East and West (17). This meant that the policy towards Germany would be carried on, mainly pending on the evolution of American-Soviet relations.

The change in the approach on Germany - defeated and divided - from an enemy to a peaceful state and then to a likely partner, has evolved substantially and one might say fast enough. The reasons behind that are to be seen both in the way the agreements by the Three Big Powers to be applied in their respective occupied zones were thought necessary, and in the largely sterile debates in the Foreign Ministers Council, during 1947, as well as in the „private" performances of the West European states.

German threat accounted for the slow pace of the French in joining the Anglo-Americans in the unification of the three zones.

Otherwise, the Americans were growing sensitive to assuming some commitments concerning the West European defence. Thus, by the end of January 1947, George Bidault, the French Foreign Minister, extended to the US ambassador in Paris his belief that the

Communist forces intended „to do away with the Western civilization in Western Europe" (19).

The serious internal economic and financial problems as well as the increasing difficulties faced by the British colonial Empire, due to the growing scale of the national liberation movements forced the United Kingdom, in February 1947, to give up some major military commitments. This was mirrored by the withdrawal of the 90.000 soldiers from Greece and by cutting the financial support to Turkey, which was so needed by the 600.000 soldiers of the Turkish Army in charge of supervising the straits and the Turkish-Soviet frontier. This fact together with the taking over by the United States of the burden, outlined by the request addressed to the US Congress, in this respect, by president Truman, on March 12, 1947, were considered by the historians and world politics analysts as the beginning of the Cold War. It was, however, only a moment in the shaping of this phenomenon. While the Soviet involvement in Greece was not too evident, the Communist partisans were receiving a considerable support from the so-called democratic-popular regimes in Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria (20).

Truman asked Congress to back his declaration that „it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures (...). This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States" (21).

In order to support Greece and Turkey, Truman immediately asked for 300 million dollars and, respectively, 100 million dollars. Military and economic missions, councillors and experts were also to leave for the two South-East European countries with a military and strategic position of maximum importance.

Although the American Administration had in view the Communist threat and Soviet Union's imperial ambitions, „nowhere in the speech did Truman mention Russia". The omission had a double explanation: „By placing the emphasis on the fight between totalitarianism and freedom, Truman was

attempting to rally the same emotional commitment that had fired America in the war against Hitler. Second, he was still hoping to avoid a complete break with Russia" (22).

Even so, it was clear that the gesture of the United States was well understood in Moscow, and the politico-diplomatic developments following after were a proof to that. „It was the real beginning of the cold war, on our side of the Iron Curtain, the moment when the leader of the free world said << No more >> to the men from Moscow. That is why Truman called it << this terrible decision >>" (23).

The Truman Doctrine was launched and it was going to become „the cornerstone of a new interventionist policy in European affairs" (24).

Almost simultaneously, the United Kingdom and France began taking some measures for preventing, in the future, hostile actions from the part of other powers, mainly from Germany, as one knows that the notion of Western defence was still identified with the alliance against it.

In the forefront of these measures, we can identify the Treaty of Alliance between France and Great Britain, drawn by Leon Blum in January and signed at Dunkerque, on March 4, 1947. The references to Germany were abundant in what was relevant for the anti-German attitude of the leading circles in Paris and London. The Treaty set forth the objective of preventing Germany becoming again a threat to peace, as well as a new German aggressive policy, in order to avoid hostilities with Germany or a German attitude of not observing some of its economic obligations (25).

This defensive alliance „proved the way for the idea of an enlarged organization, which would establish the foundations of a European defence organization" (26).

It took almost a year to achieve this objective, because the changes in Europe were fast, numerous and extremely serious. The misunderstandings between the Soviets and the Anglo-Franco-Americans were more and more frequent and the failures registered by the Foreign Affairs Ministers Council in Moscow (March-April 1947) and London (November-December 1947) in respect to the German question - where the course towards the

dismantlement of the defeated and occupied state was final - were proofs to that.

Destroyed by the war, Europe needed both to be defended from aggressions and convulsions, and to be helped to recover economically and financially. This support could exclusively have been provided by the United States, but only under certain conditions. For France and Italy, one condition was the expulsion of the Communists from the Governments, a condition fulfilled in May 1947, clearly to Moscow's and to the European Communist movement's discomfort.

The Truman Doctrine had to be complemented economically and this need was met by what was called the *Marshall Plan*, launched on the occasion of the Secretary of State's speech at the University of Harvard, on June 4, 1947. The American support was offered to all European countries, including the Soviet Union which was in a desperate need of it. Marshall emphasized the core of Truman's idea - „that it was not a program of relief but of revival, not an offer of perpetual support but of temporary cooperation" (27).

With a view to eliminate the probability of any biased interpretation and the appeal to ideology, General Marshall pointed out that: „Our policy is directed not against any country or doctrine but against hunger, poverty, desperation and chaos" (28).

A conference to which representatives of 16 countries, including a Soviet delegation led by V. Molotov, was summoned in Paris, between June 27 - July 15, 1947, in order to discuss the modalities of taking over and the management of the American aid. It is far too known why and how the Soviet Union and the Eastern countries stood aside the Marshall Plan which gradually became „an instrument of the Cold War" (29). It is also clear to all of us that Truman Administration had to change the initial aim of the programme, introducing it to the American Congress as the „economic complement of the military program of Truman Doctrine" (30).

The attractiveness of the American offer and the concern for a loss of influence or control

over the „popular democracies" have determined the Soviets to declare, in Paris, that the British and the French who have summoned up the Conference, had in view to divide Europe in two groups of states. This goal belonged more likely to Moscow who „preferred the division of Europe in two blocs, dominated by the United States and respectively by the Soviet Union" (31). Once the Marshall Plan was accepted by the Western countries and refused by the East Europeans the division in Europe grew constantly.

The events of 1947 and of the beginning of 1948 have put an end to the generous ideas about the unification of the entire Europe or about the Great Europe.

Undoubtedly, the Marshall Plan „radically changed Stalin's calculus and led him to shift away from this more moderate line and adopt a policy of confrontational unilateral action to secure Soviet interests" (32).

At the same time, Stalin understood that the United States were decided to use a weapon „stronger than the nuclear one in order to stop the Communist flow towards the West: the economic assistance which they were the only able to provide to the countries in need" (33).

It is thus clear that „the threat posed by the American aid programme seems to have convinced Stalin that predominant influence in Eastern Europe was not a sufficient guarantee of Soviet Security" (34).

Reactions and counter-reactions which forged the Cold War multiplied.

On July 11, 1947, the American Occupation Charter in Germany, one of a very tough and repressive character - Joint Chiefs of Staff-1067, was replaced by another document - Joint Chiefs of Staff-1779, of a mild character. It focused on the central idea of „an orderly and prosperous Europe which asks from a stabile and effective Germany for an economic contribution" (35).

The second day, the participants in the Paris Conference for the Marshall Plan admitted that „the German economy should be integrated in the European economy so that it could help to improve the living standard" (36).

The Soviets' reaction

During September 22-27, 1947, in Syklarska Poreba, Poland, the Conference of nine European Communist parties representatives took place, in secret. Six representative came from Eastern Europe and two from France and Italy. The **Cominform** was set up - The Informative Bureau of the Communist and Workers Parties - an instrument of the Soviet Union, portrayed in the West as a reconstruct of the **Comintern**.

In the Conference Declaration, a document which belongs to the Cold War Archives, it is written, among others, that the world had been divided in two camps „imperialist and anti-democratic", whose essential goal was „the establishment of the rule of American imperialism and the ruin of democracy" and the „anti-imperialist and democratic" camp, whose fundamental aim was to „undermine the imperialism, strengthen democracy and destroy the remnants of fascism" (37).

What really happened was a fast and very practical action of subduing the countries beyond the Iron Curtain, which represented for the Soviets „a strategic and prevailing necessity" (38).

The first and foremost objective of the Communist Parties from the Soviet zone of influence was - under the internal objectives set forth by the inaugural conference - to conquer the entire political power through the dissipation of the National and Popular Fronts or the „Democratic" Blocs and by eradicating the other political parties, a process that had already started in the satellite countries in 1946, under the surveillance of the Soviet military forces.

Forceful blows needed to be organized in the West too, a fact accomplished in November-December 1947, in France, by the means of a general rebellion strike - in factories, railway stations, mines - which posed a danger for the IV-th Republic.

Over the ocean, on president's Truman dispositions, Charles Murphy has submitted a report on Marshall Plan, asking for a special session of the US Congress to approve it,

because, due to Murphy's plead: „Europe could not survive another winter aid", and the issue „took precedence over all other questions and consequences of failure" (39).

On November 19, 1947, the Congress approved the Marshall Plan, passing the amounts submitted for the assistance to the Europeans. It is said that between October 17 and December 19, 1947, Truman and his main advisers and ministers „had spent incredible numbers of hours working out a rational balance between how much Europe needed and how much the American economy could afford to give" (40).

By asking the Congress and the American people to commit themselves to deliver a massive aid to European states, Harry Truman risked to lose the presidential elections in 1948. He had done so, aware of the consequences and without hesitation, as we have later found out from a letter to his sister: „It is more important to save the world from totalitarianism than to be President another four years" (41).

At the same time, „the Russian reaction to the Marshall Plan was savage" and the French and Italian Communists increasingly agitated the people - as a result of Moscow and newly born Cominform encouragements („the possibility of civil war in Italy and France was discussed in Truman's office") (42). Western Europe felt more and more the need not only for financial and economic aid but also military aid, due to the deterioration of the East-West relationship. At the end of 1947, at the Foreign Affairs Ministers Council in London, the Russians accused the United States, Great Britain and France „of every sort of treachery in Germany" (43). On the same occasion, George Bidault and Ernest Bevin told Marshall that Western Europe felt increasingly threatened by the Soviets' aggressiveness and needed the military support of the United States. The American Government asked the Europeans to stick together against the danger, to cooperate at a higher degree in the field of defence and the American support might come.

Having this in mind, Ernest Bevin, in a speech before the House of Commons, on January 22, 1948 „denounced the Soviet threat”, underlining that „the time had come to consolidate the Western Europe” by tightening the links between „the free nations of Western Europe” (44).

For the beginning, the „free nations” taken into consideration were Great Britain, France and the Benelux, who could set up „an important nucleus in Western Europe, to which other countries will later join, among them Italy and later on Germany, when it becomes a democracy” (45).

In January 1948, Bevin confined himself to speak about a rather spiritual union, less political and military, a community „of the fundamental freedoms and moral principles we all share” (46).

The 1948 February of Prague would be the answer of the Soviet Union, the Cominform and the Czechoslovak Communists to the West’s policy, but also a new beginning in reconsidering the West’s attitude towards the East, and equally to its own universe, to its own defence.

The events of February 1948 in Prague, more than other previous and subsequent events, had a significant impact on the European and international political environment, on the relationship between the East and the West, and between the two camps on the way of being shaped.

All the circumstances of the February 1948 events in Prague, their foresight and consequences are far too known.

Without pretending of adding new evidence to what has already been revealed on the topic, and which we all share, I would dare stop over some remarks made by Romanian diplomats posted to Prague, who were witnessing those events, in 1947 Fall and at the beginning of 1948.

A communication of October 1, 1947, on the international status of Czechoslovakia, revealed that the Foreign Secretary of State, Clementis, had presented at a conference Marienbad „the key-elements of the Republic’s foreign policy, which focuses on the Slav and

progressive countries”. The same ideas were expressed by the Head of Government, on September 19, in an interview to the Associated Press news correspondent. On September 26, Clementis declared at Hradec Kralove that „no one in Czechoslovakia would like to isolate from the West from a cultural, economic or political point of view, but there <<is a tough problem, that in the political field, in very important issue for us, above all in the German question, we could not agree with the West, as long as the Western ideas about solving the German question are considered by us dangerous - and on such good reasons>>” (47).

The minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Masaryk, denied again, in an interview to the daily *L’Humanité*, the idea that the Czechoslovakia retreat from the Paris Conference had been done at Moscow’s pressures. „The world must understand that we, Communists or not, are all friends of Russia... During Munchen, it was only Russia who treated us well and Romania. Yes, Romania which nobody said a word about” (48).

In the Masaryk’s speech at Flushing Meadow, at the UN meeting, it is again underlined that „Czechoslovakia is against a privileged aid for the economic recovery of Germany, ahead of other European states” (49).

The Romanian chargé d’affaires in Prague, wrote, on November 27, 1947, that „the Czechoslovak political life has lately experienced a growing tension, due to some special economic and political situations”. Among others, it was revealed that the right-winged parties, to which the Social-Democratic Party joined, „considering that the imports from the USSR are not enough to solve Czechoslovak difficulties”, proposed to apply for a loan from the US, which - the Romanian diplomat showed - „actually the Foreign Minister, Jan Masaryk, was just trying to get” (50).

A Romanian diplomatic report from November 1, 1947, highlighted that the domestic political disputes might have been escalated by the Czech Communists participation in the inaugural conference of Cominform, a situation that reverberated inside the other Czechoslovak political parties.

Thus, the Populists, by the voice of MP Duhacek, president of the Foreign Policy Commission of the National Assembly „believed that the unrevealed aim of <the international nationalism> was the creation of an organization of the Communist nations in case the UN would fail". On the other hand, the Socialists considered that - in the Cominform Declaration - „the revival of the Communist International, to which former Reich satellite countries took part and <specially Hungary, was one of the main enemies of the Czechoslovak independence>". The Socialists' officious, *Svobodne Slavo* pointed out that the Czech Communist Party, controlling the Government, „joined the front against Great Britain and United States, < against the Allies and friends in the Second World War >" (51).

The Social-Democratic Party and his leader, Fierlinger, as well as the officious *Pravo Lidu* declared outspokenly they were against Cominform. „We are against any International", Fierlinger said, and the newspaper wrote: „The Warsaw Proclamation is a disappointment, because it will stir the fears about Communist Parties plans of resuming their old campaign of abetment not against the real reactionary, but against the Socialists" (52).

On the other side, the Communist minister of the secret services, Kopecky, appreciated the Declaration of the Cominform Conference in Poland as „the beginning of a new era in international politics, that of an offensive of the democratic and progressive forces in Europe against the Western imperialist plans orchestrated by the American reactionary forces" (53). What is interesting is that the same Kopecky did not hesitate to announce that „a similar offensive will begin at home against the reactionary forces, traitors and surrenders" (54).

When, in 1947 Fall, the Government of Chile broke off the diplomatic relations with Czechoslovakia, a gesture interpreted by the left-wing press as „the result of US pressure over popular democracies" (55), the right-wing press noted that this accident in the Czechoslovak-Chilean relations was „the result of <Cominform > setting up, in Warsaw" (56).

In February 1948, „the last Western bridge head" in Central Europe, a world in the process of Sovietization, was obliterated. That was a proof that Stalin knew Bismarck words: „who rules Prague, he rules Europe".

Unlike other countries where the Communist regimes came into power in the presence of the Soviet military forces, the overthrow in Czechoslovakia took place without the presence of any occupation troops but, it was very likely that „without an express order from Stalin the coup could not have taken place. The foreign intervention was absent on the scene, but decisive behind it" (57).

The overthrow in Prague, in February 1948 revealed the „threats that stood behind the Western democracies door, where a large part of the population joined the communist doctrine or were flirting with marxist-leninist slogans; it destroyed the fiction regarding the parliamentary, constitutional and democratic character of the communist movement; it was the proof that the Soviet expansionism was on the march" (58).

The reactions coming from the political, diplomatic, economic and financial circles to the events of 1948 February, in Prague, were diverse, ranging from consternation, regrets, protests to rather coercive measures against the Communist bloc as a whole, and the new authorities in Prague, in particular. On the last aspect, the Washington office of „Reuter" News Agency learned from „an authorized source" that the delegation of International Bank that was about to leave for Prague to carry on an investigation related to the decision on the Czech Government's request for „a loan of 350 million dollars, was ordered not to leave anymore" (59).

„France Press" noted that the Communist coup in Czechoslovakia could have led to a negative reaction from the United States, as the Truman Administration was studying the possibility of „imposing a rigid control on all exports of goods to Czechoslovakia", showing a clear preference for „friendly countries" at export, which was no longer the case for Czechoslovakia.

At the same time, it was already known that the US representative to the World Bank would oppose the Czechoslovak request for a loan of 97 million pounds. A similar decision was taken by the American Bank for Export and Import, regarding the loan of 5 million pound asked for by Prague (60).

In an opening speech to a debate on foreign policy, in the National Assembly, on February 26, 1948, George Bidault submitted a declaration on Czechoslovakia, stating that: „the French should now realize more than ever the need for unity of all those fighting for freedom and independence". Bidault was of the opinion that the events in Czechoslovakia „changed the balance on the international arena", and posed bluntly the „question of survival of democracy and freedom". „Ten years ago the name of Prague announced the start of Hitler's offensive. Some methods do recall the past. United States, Great Britain and France had to face a crisis that marked the accession to power of a totalitarian party. Once again Bohemia was covered by darkness, and the events of an uncountable significance are mocking at all efforts made for Europe's liberation from a dangerous tyranny" (61).

John Gordon, reporter to *Sunday Express* signed an article, on February 27, in which noted that the Russian coup was a new answer to the Marshall Plan. Rightly or wrongly, Russia desperately fears a recovered Europe. Above all, it fears a united Europe, based on the principles of freedom and democracy.

Assuming the role of a Western politician, the British analyst asked the same question as the American ambassador asked Stalin some months before: When will Russia stop? And the answer was: It will stop the very minute it has gone so far, that the democracies would have said: Stop, otherwise the war will start. If at that moment the United States were ready to go to war, you would see Russia willing to negotiate (62).

In the newspaper *News of the World* of late February 1948, it was rightly assessed that we should not feed up any illusions unless the democratic nations did unite, did consolidate not merely through pathetic speeches being satisfied by useless protests. The people in power at

Kremlin are planning again Hitler's story. The victims would be chosen one by one. The only medicine is unity and organization - as long as it is not too late. It is only in this unity, that all those who worship their heritage of civilization can find hope which should inspire them during these gloomy days (63).

Finally, *Sunday Times* wrote about the concern that dominated Nordic countries, Finland, Denmark, Norway and Sweden which although did not want to deteriorate their relations with Soviet Union discretely met in order to take the measures meant to bring them closer to the Western European Union. The paper also stated that the events in Czechoslovakia proved that the choice had to be taken without hesitation and delay. In order to avoid becoming mere Soviet satellites, the Nordic countries had to take a decision on being part of the West, and after opting for that crucial decision, they had to do exactly as the rest of Western countries. That is to make all efforts to help the West stay strong and united (64).

On March 3, 1948, president Truman wrote to his sister the following: „ (...) We are faced with exactly what Britain and France were faced in 1938-1939 with Hitler. A totalitarian state is no different whether you call it Nazi, Fascist, Communist or Franco Spain" (65). On March 17, 1948, he addressed a message to the Congress in firm terms about the expansionist Soviets' policy. He bluntly said: „The Soviet Union and its agents have destroyed the independence and democratic character of a whole series of nations in Eastern and Central Europe", he condemned „this ruthless course of action" and deplored „the tragic death of the Republic of Czechoslovakia" (66).

The same day, in New York, the President declared: „We will have to take risks during the coming year - risks perhaps greater than any this country has been called upon to assume. But they are not risks of our own making, and we cannot make the danger vanish by pretending that it does not exist. We must be prepared to meet that danger with sober self-restraint and calm and judicious action if we are to be successful in our leadership for peace" (67).

The Western Alliances

The February events in Prague determined a change in the way Paris and London, but not only them, considered the need to a closer cooperation among the West European countries. Beyond the emergence of Cominform, the overthrow in Prague has consolidated „the notion of a danger that is not German" (68).

The negotiations between Britain-France-Benelux took another lead, a more realistic one, which is the tendency towards the military approach prevailing over the economic and cultural cooperation. Great Britain and France proposed, in a first stage, on February 19, to Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg a project on a system of bilateral defensive treaties, having as a model the British-French one signed at Dunkerque. The treaty provided for military assistance, in case of aggression or threat of it, but did not provide automatically for the need of diplomatic consultations in the case of an emerging threat. The Benelux partners have considered - on good reasons - the Anglo-French proposals unsatisfactory and on February 29, have submitted the idea of a „multilateral treaty consisting of a military agreement of mutual, automatic and immediate assistance in case of aggression, a political agreement providing for a system of regular consultations on all issues of common interest, an economic agreement having as an ultimate goal an economic union" (69).

The suggestions of the three small allies were accepted and after a short conference, on March 17, 1948, Great Britain, France, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg signed a fifty-year political, economic, and military alliance in Brussels (Treaty of economic, social and cultural collaboration and collective self-defence). It reminded the essential values of Western civilization which had to be defended: human rights, democratic freedoms. It also affirmed the will of the five states to cooperate in order to rebuild the European economy and ensure their security.

Unlike the treaty of Dunkerque, the new treaty mentioned Germany as a possible

aggressor only once in all eight declarations of intention from the preamble.

Article 9 stated that the signatories could „decide in common to invite all other states to accede to the present treaty" (70). It was thus decided some years later when Italy and then Germany acceded to the treaty. The Treaty of Brussels led to the emergence of a new international organization - *The Western Union*, lead by an *Advisory Council*, of the foreign ministers of the five member states, which met in turn, in the capitals of the member states. Practically, it was directed by a *Permanent Committee*, placed in London and made up of the ambassadors of the four continental states, plus a representative of the British Government. Although it was meant to monitor economic and military affairs, the Treaty of Brussels has been, in substance, a system of collective defence.

On March 17, in his address to Congress, urging the swift passage of the Marshall Plan, Truman praised this significant step toward European unity, and declared that „the determination of the free countries of Europe to protect themselves will be matched by an equal determination on our part to help them to protect themselves" (71).

The Treaty of Brussels, in fact, represented an important step forward in the process of Western Europe's unification and in ensuring the security of the five signatories. Still, it was far too less in regard to the latter aspect, a reality well-known in London and Paris, but equally across the Ocean. On April 28, 1948, Louis Saint-Laurent submitted to the Canadian House of Commons the organization of a system of collective defence that would encompass and replace the Treaty of Brussels. The idea was quickly embraced by Ernest Bevin who initiated, together with the other four European allies contacts and negotiations in order to set up a common defence of Western Europe with the support of the United States. The problem faced by this was that the Government and the President of the United States could not conclude an alliance at a time

of peace outside USA. Under these circumstances, Truman and Under-Secretary of State Robert Lovett „spent long hours working with senator Arthur Vandenberg on the problem of persuading Congress” (72). By resolution 239 adopted on June 11, 1948, the Senate cancelled the interdiction and stated that „the sense of the Senate” supported „regional and other collective arrangements for individual and collective self-defence” and the association of the United States by constitutional process „with these regional defense organizations” (73).

The author of the resolution, senator Vandenberg rightly called the treaty „the most important step in American foreign policy since the promulgation of the Monroe Doctrine” (74).

The Senate’s advice „made it clear to our friends and our enemies that we were determined to defend the free nations of Western Europe against the kind of aggression that had swallowed Czechoslovakia” (75).

While the last obstacles in the way of building a new alliance, Western Europe-United States, were removed other crises were at work on the continent. By posing a threat, these crises helped, in fact, the process of Western continent’s unification and of identifying new means of defence. They also represented typical manifestations of the Cold War and led to a deeper split of Europe. The first crisis spread in Italy where, in April 1948, the legislative elections were won by the coalition led by Christian-Democrats, at a rate of two thirds (2/3). In June, after an attempt of assassination of the Communist leader Palmiro Togliatti, the general strike was launched, the crowds poured in the streets and barricades were raised in the Northern cities. The resort to armed forces led to the retreat of the Communist assault. At a smaller scale a movement of miners, directed by Communists against the Marshall Plan took place (76).

The Berlin crisis - induced by the Soviets as a reprisal against the Marshall Plan and the measures taken by Great Britain, France and the United States in the Western Germany that led to the foundation of a separate state (monetary reform, Constitution a.s.o.) - was much more

serious and dangerous. As it was already noticed, „in the spring and summer of 1948 a real change of pace was effected in the formation of the Soviet bloc” (77).

On April 30, 1948, a meeting of the military representatives from the Brussels Treaty countries was held in London, in order to ensure the means of defence from their own resources or by a recourse to the American arsenal, the latter having the assent of Washington and Ottawa.

On June 24, 1948, Stalin ordered the Soviet military authorities from East Germany to make use of a Berlin blockade, to interrupt the links between the German capital and the zones occupied by the West. The blockade lasted 323 days and was extremely tough for the Berlin population. It failed in the end due to the West effort to establish a air passage that largely met the various needs of the population. On May 9, 1949, the Soviets had to give up the blockade, and their action did nothing but to strengthen the West determination to stick together, to closely cooperate and find new means of defence. It is thus evident that „the Berlin crisis... appeared to be a decisive factor in the formation of << blocs >>” (78).

On July 6, 1948, the negotiations started in Washington, among the five Europeans, the US and Canada in order to build jointly a strong system of defence. On September 9, 1948, the negotiators approved a report to be submitted to their Governments, which these approved and the Advisory Council of the Brussels Treaty „could announce by the end of October, 1948, a complete identity of views on the main defensive pact for the North Atlantic area” (79).

On March 15, 1949, the five plus the United States and Canada officially invited Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Portugal to accede to the Treaty, and on March 18, the text was made public. The formal meeting of endorsement took place in Washington, in spite of the Soviet pressures and protests. The North Atlantic Treaty was not born out of United States wish to dominate the Europeans, but out of their need and persistent request for „guarantees against the Soviet expansionism” (80).

Alongside its fundamental mission - the military one, ensuring the mutual protection of the signatories - the North Atlantic Treaty was at the origin of a common policy that took the shape of the European movement for unification, to which the Marshall Plan largely contributed, as well as the US encouragements (81).

On April 16, 1948, the *Convention* for the creation of the *European Organization for Economic Cooperation* was published, in Paris, a document signed by the representatives of 16 states and also by the commanders in chief of the occupied zones of Western Germany (82).

NATO „was more than a dam to hold back the threatening Communist flood. In Truman's view it was another step toward achieving the necessary economic and military strength to negotiate with the Russians as equals" (83).

A Europe from Atlantic to Urals, dreamed and wished for, and conceived for many decades before and after the second world war was not to be achieved.

The fact was recognized by the creation of the first (only Western) European political organization, the Council of Europe, on May 5, 1949, in London, by 15 states, which aimed at building a closer Union among its members. It was meant „to safeguard and promote the ideals and principles that constitute their common asset and to enhance their economic and social progress" and to „safeguard and develop human rights and fundamental freedoms" (84).

The Cold War, a often too tensed dispute between East and West, between the two sides of the Iron Curtain, made difficult the forging of this work. The unity was only partial. Europe was and is still divided, although the Cold War ended.

The title of this text is questioning because I believe there was however an incompatibility if not a strong opposition between the idea of European unity - in what regards the building of a united Europe - and what the Cold War represented and gave way to: disputes, quarrels, adversities, conflicts, lack of cooperation, division, unequal development a.s.o.

And it seems clear for me that some of these tragic moments of torment and distress in Europe were the events of February 1948, in Prague.

In this sense I made use of the formula *Cold War versus Euro-Atlantic Unification?*

Beyond any analytical speculations that might be made, I believe the events of February 1948, in Prague, represented a „test" by which the two superpowers - resulted from the second world war - checked up their intentions of future conduct and those regarding the observance of the agreements on the spheres of influence in Europe.

At the end of the second world war, Moscow's foreign policy objectives knew two trends. A radical one, which aimed at exploiting the situation of crisis in Western Europe and the superiority in the balance of force and to „export" the Socialist revolution beyond the „line" agreed upon; and a conservatory trend, that considered the Soviet Union regained the territories lost by the Russian Empire and that it was necessary to consolidate those benefits.

Western analysts contemplated only the first trend in the Soviet foreign policy. The documents published up to now from the Soviet archives do not confirm Stalin's intention to make use of the „advantage" and advance towards the Atlantic and Mediterranean, although it is very strange that the Kremlin did not deny the speculations present in a series of studies and public declarations.

Therefore, Washington entered what the political and military analysts call the „security dilemma" and elaborated a geo-politics strategy under the formula of *CONTAINMENT*, that took the shape of „Truman Doctrine", on political level, and „Marshall Plan", on the economic one.

The leaders in Kremlin did not understand, at the beginning, the substance and the target set forth by the geo-politics strategy of *CONTAINMENT* and wrongly perceived that the Americans wanted to meddle along their sphere of influence. As a consequence, they forced the countries in their field of influence to apply a Stalinist type of Socialist regime in

order to be in full control of the situation. The Soviet model was imposed by Moscow brutally without any consideration of the opinion of the „imperialist bloc". Due to these reasons, I consider that the 1948 „test", in Prague, was a successful one for Stalin!

„The Iron Curtain came down across the continent, each side determined to protect itself from contamination and danger, and the division remained until 1989" (85).

-
1. Arthur Conte, *L'après Yalta*, Plon, Paris, 1982, p. 42.
 2. Pierre Gerbet, *La construction de l'Europe*, Notre Siècle, Paris, 1983, p. 52.
 3. *Ibidem*, p. 56.
 4. Margaret Truman, *Harry S. Truman*, Pocket Book, New York, 1974, p. 336.
 5. *Ibidem*, p. 337.
 6. *Ibidem*.
 7. *Ibidem*, p. 338.
 8. *Ibidem*.
 9. *Ibidem*, p. 340.
 10. Arthur Conte, *op. cit.*, p. 103.
 11. Margaret Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 340-341.
 12. *Ibidem*, p. 341.
 13. *Ibidem*.
 14. Pierre Gerbet, *op. cit.*, p. 56.
 15. *Ibidem*, p. 57.
 16. H. Stuart Hughes, *Histoire de l'Europe contemporaine*, 2, Marabout Université, f.a., f.1, p. 202.
 17. Margaret Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 375.
 18. *Ibidem*.
 19. *Ibidem*.
 20. H. Stuart Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
 21. Pierre Gerbet, *op. cit.*, p. 74.
 22. Alfred Grosser, *Affaires Extérieures. La politique de la France 1944-1989*, Flammarion, 1989, p. 50.
 23. *Ibidem*.
 24. *Ibidem*.
 25. *Ibidem*, p. 74.
 26. Western European Union, *Information Report*, submitted on behalf of the Committee for Parliamentary and Public Relations by Sir Russell Johnston, Rapporteur, March 1995, p. 6.
 27. Margaret Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 385.
 28. *Ibidem*.
 29. H. Stuart Huhges, *op. cit.*, p. 203.
 30. *Ibidem*.
 31. Francois Fejtö, *Histoire des démocraties populaires. L'ère de Stalin 1945-1952*, Editions du Seuil, Paris, 1; 972, p. 177.
 32. Scott D. Parrish, *Soviet-American Relations, the Marshall Plan and the Division of Europe, 1947*, Paper Prepared for a Conference on the Emergence of Communist Regimes in Eastern Europe, Moscow, 1994, p. 3.
 33. Francois Fejtö, *op. cit.*, pp. 183/184.
 34. Scott D. Parrish, *op. cit.*, p. 4.
 35. Alfred Grosser, *op. cit.*, p. 53.
 36. *Ibidem*.
 37. A. Fontaine, *Istoria războiului rece. De la Revoluția din Octombrie la Războiul din Coreea, 1917-1950*, vol. 2, București, 1992, p. 110.
 38. Francois Fejtö, *op. cit.*, p. 186.

39. Margaret Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 387.
40. *Ibidem*, p. 388.
41. *Ibidem*, p. 389.
42. *Ibidem*, p. 390.
43. *Ibidem*.
44. Alfred Grosser, *op. cit.*, p. 87.
45. *Ibidem*.
46. *Ibidem*.
47. Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Archives (RMFAA), Fond problema 70-71/Cehoslovacia, vol. 6; 1947 (no page number).
48. *Ibidem*.
49. *Ibidem*.
50. *Ibidem*.
51. *Ibidem*.
52. *Ibidem*.
53. *Ibidem*.
54. *Ibidem*.
55. *Ibidem*.
56. *Ibidem*.
57. Stanislav Andreski, *Revolutions, Dictatorships, Studies of Historical and Contemporary Problems from a Comparative Viewpoint*, Frank Cass, London, Portland, 1992, p. 21.
58. Francois Fejtö, *op. cit.*, pp. 291-220.
59. RMFAA, Fond Problema 70-71/Cehoslovacia, vol. 2/1947/1948 (no page number).
60. *Ibidem*.
61. *Ibidem*.
62. *Ibidem*.
63. *Ibidem*.
64. *Ibidem*.
65. Margaret Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 392.
66. *Ibidem*, p. 393.
67. *Ibidem*, p. 394.
68. Alfred Grosser, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
69. Pierre Gerbet, *op. cit.*, pp. 87-88.
70. Alfred Grosser, *op. cit.*, p. 75.
71. Margaret Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 442.
72. *Ibidem*.
73. *Ibidem*, p. 443.
74. *Ibidem*.
75. *Ibidem*, p. 444.
76. H. Stuart Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 205.
77. Silvio Pons, *The Twilight of the Cominform*, in Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli „Annali”, 1994, The Cominform, Minutes of the Three Conferences 1947/1948/1949, Edited by Giuliani Procacci, p. 503.
78. *Ibidem*.
79. *L'Alliance Atlantique, Données et Structures*, Publié par Le Service de l'Information OTAN, Bruxelles, 1989, pp. 11-12.
80. Alfred Grosser, *op. cit.*, p. 76.
81. H. Stuart Hughes, *op. cit.*, p. 206.
82. *Documents d'histoire*, t. 2 1851-1967, Armand Colin, Paris, 1967, p. 318-319.
83. Margaret Truman, *op. cit.*, p. 444.
84. *Documents d'histoire*, t. 2, p. 320.
85. Patrick Brogan, *Eastern Europe, 1939/1989*, Bloomsbury, London, 1990, p. 84.