

How did the USA react to Soviet expansion?

Not surprisingly, Truman was extremely concerned at the growth of Soviet influence in eastern Europe, but as most of the countries involved had been liberated by the Soviet Union and there were still Soviet troops in the area, there was little he could do.

In February 1947, however, Truman was informed by the British that they could no longer afford to station troops in Greece and Turkey. He knew that the withdrawal of British troops would almost certainly lead to the Soviet Union taking control of these two countries. He therefore paid for British troops to stay in the area and gave financial support to the two governments. This was the beginning of the American policy of 'containment' – preventing the further spread of communism. The policy was officially announced in a speech made by Truman on 12 March 1947. The views put forward in the speech have since become known as the 'Truman Doctrine' (Source I). In this speech, Truman let it be known that the USA was prepared to give help to any country under threat from communism.

The Marshall Plan

Truman did not intend to send soldiers to Europe to fight communism. Instead he would attack it at its roots. As he said in his 12 March speech, he believed that communism flourished where there was 'misery and want'. He was well aware that post-war Europe had plenty of misery and want. Governments were struggling to cope with the damage caused by the war and there was still rationing and shortages in many countries. On top of this, the USA was still owed almost \$12 billion by European countries.

Truman therefore decided that the USA should use its wealth to provide economic aid to Europe. Restored economies in Europe would be less susceptible to communism and also provide greater trading opportunities for American companies. The plan was announced in a speech made by the American secretary of state, General George Marshall, in June 1947. He claimed that the American policy was not aimed at any country, but just at ending hunger and poverty. The Soviet Union was not fooled – at a conference of Cominform in September 1947, one delegate described the Marshall Plan as 'an American plan to enslave Europe'.

SOURCE I

The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by any outside pressures. I believe that we must help free peoples to work out their own destiny in their own way.

Extracts from President Truman's speech on 12 March 1947.

A cartoonist's view of the Marshall Plan, drawn in 1947.

SOURCE J



NEIGHBOURS

"Come on, Sam! It's up to us again."

The countries of Europe, however, were keen to be enslaved, and between 1948 and 1952 the USA provided \$13 billion to sixteen western countries. President Truman would have been perfectly happy to provide aid for east European countries too, and Poland and Czechoslovakia were keen to apply. But Stalin realised that with the money would come a commitment to 'western' ideas. He forbade any communist countries from receiving aid under the Marshall Plan.

In September 1947 the Soviet Union formed the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) to strengthen ties between communist countries. The communist parties in western Europe (those in Italy and France were particularly strong) were ordered to try to wreck their countries' use of American aid by strikes, but they were unsuccessful. In January 1949, Stalin announced the formation of the Council for Mutual Economic Aid (Comecon) to rival the Marshall Plan. The communist countries, however, did not have surplus funds to provide financial assistance to each other.

What were the causes of the Berlin