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Frenemies: Churchill and The Soviet Union

Winston S. Churchill was a decided anti-communist, and was by no means quiet about it. He had made his name in politics first with the Conservatives, and then with Liberals, but never near anything resembling Socialism. His ideas of Tory Democracy, and those of his father, were meant to be common sense social programs to prevent the kind of government encroachment present in socialism and communism. He valued peace, democracy, and above all else freedom, in his never-ending dedication to protect Great Britain. The relationship between Churchill and the Soviet Union was marked by moments of both bitter hatred, and even a loose idea of friendship. Churchill never gave up his ideas and opposition to communist ideology, but during his life he realized the necessity of making a deal with the devil. As he aged, he went through three distinct phases of opposing the Soviets, allying with them, and finally settling for peace with them. Through it all, he never gave up his values, he just had to preference some over others. Churchill was one of Britain's greatest statesman, and in his dealings with the Soviet Union, he persevered to serve his country as best as he could.

Stage 1: Anti-Communism

The post-WWI years were marked by a great deal of anti-communist action by Churchill. The mid-war uprising in Russia had led to the fall of the Russian Empire, and their subsequent withdrawal from the war. Following the war, Churchill opposed the plans for complete withdrawal from the continent, seeking instead to intervene in Russia and destroy the Bolshevik forces. He would later lament that "the strangling of Bolshevism at its birth would have been an untold blessing to the human race" and "If I had been properly supported in 1919, I think we

might have strangled Bolshevism in its cradle"¹. Alas, Churchill's efforts would be opposed by the government, and the Bolshevik's would succeed in creating the Soviet Union.

At the conclusion of the First World War, Prime Minister David Lloyd George called a general election for early December 1918. During the campaigns in his constituency of Dundee, Churchill spoke of the dangers that Bolshevism presented to civilization. On November 26, he described the Bolshevik advances as "troops of ferocious baboons amid the ruins of cities and the corpses of their victims"². The collapse of the Russian Empire and the Romanov family had not taken much of Churchill's attention during the war, as he was obviously focused on the defeat of Germany, but with the war over, the threat of Bolshevism became far more important to Churchill. As evidenced in his speech to his constituents, he was not afraid of speaking out against what he felt was the new threat to European freedom and prosperity. His views led him to support a more interventionist role in the Russian Civil War, and he advocated further support of the more moderate White Russians. Unfortunately for Churchill, this support of intervention conflicted with his directive as the newly appointed Secretary of State for War.

In the War office, Lloyd George tasked Churchill with demobilizing the nearly three and a half million British soldiers³. While Churchill was clearly capable of handling this task, having managed three million workers under the Ministry of Munitions, he didn't believe full demobilization was in Britain's interests at the time. Rather, Churchill was afraid of having a massive communist-controlled state like Russia in Europe, especially considering the unstable state of the continent in the early post-war years. After Russia's exit from the war, the British troops in Russia had begun assisting the anti-Bolshevik armies with military supplies, advising,

¹ The Churchill Project, "Bolshevism: 'Foul baboonery...Strangle at Birth'" last modified March 11, 2016. <https://winstonchurchill.hilldale.edu/bolshevism/>

² Martin Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*. (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1991), 403

³ Ibid 404

in some situations even participation, and Lloyd George was in favor of reducing such intervention⁴. Such was the state of Britain's involvement upon Churchill's entrance to the War Office. Despite Lloyd George's opposition to intervention in the Russian Civil War, Churchill advocated during meetings of the Imperial War Cabinet that direct action would lead to a rapid collapse of the Bolshevik armies. While Churchill was "all for negotiation" in Russia, he also believed that "there was no chance of securing such a settlement unless it was known we had the power and the will to enforce our views" on the need for a democratic solution in Russia⁵. However, the government's position was set, and the matter of demobilization was far more demanding of Churchill's time, so no decision was reached immediately.

The problem returned to Churchill's desk in late January of 1919, and the demand for a decision increased due to pressure from the senior British officers in Russia. Churchill saw it not just as an individual conflict, but an extension of the efforts for post-war peace, as "What sort of Peace (!) should we have if all Europe & Asia from Warsaw to Vladivostok were under the sway of Lenin?"⁶. A Europe falling under the sway of communism would constitute a failure of the peace efforts, and to an extent an invalidation of all the sacrifice that went into fighting the war. Churchill wanted a lasting peace for the continent, and saw the Bolsheviks as a force for future disruption. Meanwhile, the Paris Peace Conference presented an opportunity for international cooperation on the subject. Churchill saw the talks as a "quest of a just peace and a lasting peace" rather than one of revenge like many of contemporaries⁷. The decision was between withdrawal, which Churchill thought would have consequences in the future, and staying in Russia, which

⁴ Ibid 405

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid 408

⁷ Winston S. Churchill, *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat: The Great Speeches*, Ed. David Cannadine. (New York: Penguin, 2007), 86

was becoming increasingly unfeasible from a logistical standpoint. Britain, as well as the other allied nations, were weary from war, and further fighting would be tough to sell domestically. Nevertheless, Churchill spoke out against Bolshevik movement and their atrocities in Russia. While somewhat apocalyptic, the situation in Russia was still uncertain as Churchill said, "Of all the tyrannies in history, the Bolshevik tyranny is the worst, the most destructive, and the most degrading" and even worse than that of recently defeated Germany⁸.

Despite his best efforts, Lloyd George still opposed further intervention in Russia. Despite his personal opinion that "we ought to intervene," Churchill waited for the cabinet to decide before taking any action in the War Office⁹. Lloyd George told the cabinet that half a million men would be needed to make an effective intervention, and would need the United States to support the effort as well. Proving his importance and involvement in the matter, Churchill was sent as the emissary to Paris to represent Britain in the decision of how to handle Russia. He had no success in swaying the major powers to join him in fighting the Bolsheviks. Despite what Churchill described as "atrocities...more hideous, on a larger scale, and more numerous" than those committed by Germany, the people of the world were tired of war¹⁰. Churchill's efforts for direct intervention had come to naught. Nevertheless, he would continue to fight for anti-Bolshevik support and other less direct types of support.

Churchill would not give up in his attempts to defeat the growing Bolshevik armies. With his hopes of a more direct intervention made impossible from a lack of support and resources, he turned instead to military aid. He would not give up in his quest to destroy the Bolsheviks. When Lloyd George showed support for Churchill's new plan, he said in a speech as a guest at the

⁸ Ibid 88

⁹ Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*, 409

¹⁰ Churchill, *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat: The Great Speeches*, 88

Mansion House that "If Russia is to be saved...she must be saved by Russians," but Churchill hoped would be with extensive British support¹¹. With Lloyd George's approval, Churchill oversaw military aid, and advice from volunteer forces, being sent to the anti-Bolshevik forces. Churchill would continue to remain heavily involved in the Russian civil war, but after this victory his duties would become more divided on his various duties in the War Office. The Russian Civil War would see every anti-Bolshevik success followed by a greater failure. Mutiny and general anarchy, which Churchill compared to that "which French Jacobism assumed after the fall of Robespierre," led to growth in the Bolshevik movement¹². Ultimately, Churchill's "private war on Russia" would be a failure, and another black mark on his reputation¹³.

Churchill's opposition to the Bolsheviks came in part from their nature as a disturbing force in the world order. Churchill, ever the supporter of the British Empire, was of the opinion that Bolshevism would lead to its fall. In Britain, "In every city there were small bands of eager men and women, watching with hungry eyes any chance to make a general overturn...and these miscreants were fed by Bolshevik money," but according to Churchill, were prevented in succeeding due to the enlightened and free British society¹⁴. Unions in Britain became increasingly bold in their actions while being supported by the Soviet Union, However, the rest of the empire was even more restless, and not as dedicated to the ideals of freedom. India, Egypt, and Ireland were listed as places of rising discontent by Churchill as he spoke an attack on Bolshevism during a luncheon at the United Wards' Club of the City of London. He further made the connection between increased disturbances and money coming from Lenin. Addressing the

¹¹ "Churchill on Russia," *winstonchurchill.org*, last modified Spring 2011, <https://www.winstonchurchill.org/publications/finest-hour/finest-hour-150/churchill-on-russia/>

¹² Churchill, *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat: The Great Speeches*, 91

¹³ Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*, 419

¹⁴ "Bolshevist Threat To The Empire," *The Times* (London, England), Nov. 5, 1920.

possibility of loss of the empire to a "world-wide conspiracy...designed to deprive of us our place in the world," he reminded his audience that Britain had defeated the greatest military empire in the world, and this would not take them down¹⁵. Churchill had made his early career off his adventures through the Empire, and it was very dear to him. The idea of losing the Empire would be both damaging to the prestige of Britain, but also to his own image. It is no surprise that he used fears of the Bolshevik fifth column to inspire increased opposition. To him, the chaos of the Bolshevik rise was the antithesis of the civilized British Empire. From a more realist view, the success of Bolshevik efforts would lead to a shift in the balance of power away from the victorious (and capitalist) Allies, and would allow the Bolsheviks to rise. Thus, Churchill believed Britain had to oppose their growing network as a matter of both identity, but also of practical foreign policy.

In addition to the international repercussions of Bolshevism's rise, Churchill was ideologically opposed to socialism as a system of governance. His ideas were based in capitalism, and thought Britain only "by capitalism...could possibly maintain alive on the surface of this small island so great a population as 45,000,000," and socialist ideas overpromised¹⁶. He was an early opponent of the Labour Party, and their ideas, believing in 1924 that "British Socialists had always been the stupidest in the world"¹⁷. This early opposition is interesting, considering the later importance of the Labour Party to his wartime coalition during the Second World War. Nevertheless, in the interwar years it underscores his disdain for socialist ideology. He did however, believe that there was difference between British socialism, and Russian communism. The difference being "the Communist thought he could smash his way

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ "Soviet Designs On Britain," *The Times* (London, England), Oct. 27, 1924.

¹⁷ "The Fallacies Of Socialism," *The Times* (London, England), Oct. 18, 1924.

through by violence, and the Socialist believed he could do it by humbug"¹⁸. This difference can be seen in the violent Russian revolution, as opposed to the more sensible policies of Labour. Once the pressure of World War Two came, Churchill would be forced to work with both groups to defeat the Nazis.

To some extent, this can all be shown as political rhetoric since Labour was a rising party opposed to Churchill's own return to the Conservative Party. He even went as far as to declare that Labour's rise represented "masses of our countrymen being seduced and corrupted into offering their allegiance...to the foul red flag of international Communism," and ultimately a disrespect of Britain, and all that had died in the name of the empire¹⁹. His statements reveal an opinion that socialism was more a threat to Britain and her empire, than an inherently wrong system. Churchill himself, as well as his father, were proponents of Tory Democracy, and the idea that government ought to make use of practical social policies to help the people of Britain. This view also makes it more understandable of how Churchill allowed Labour into his coalition, as well allying with the Soviet Union as a matter of practicality during the Second World War. At the time, the election of 1924 put Labour at odds with the Conservatives, and Churchill framed his campaign against Labour as an extension of his efforts in defeating Bolshevism. He highlighted this connection to his Epping constituency in a speech at Loughton, hoping that the vote would represent "condemnation and repudiation of the vile Russian...doctrine" of socialism that had begun to spread in Britain²⁰. His efforts returned him to the Parliament, and solidified his place amongst the Conservatives.

¹⁸ "The Dark Power of Moscow"

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ "Soviet Designs On Britain"

Stage 2: Forced Alliance

"I cannot forecast to you the action of Russia. It is a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma," but Churchill sought to handle them anyways. His efforts would be made irrelevant with the rise of Hitler and the Nazis in Germany. His statements, just after the British declaration of war on Germany, can show the difficulty in handling Russia's position in the Second World War. While Churchill had demonstrated a staunchly anti-communist and anti-Soviet stance in the interwar years, the need to defeat Germany changed that all. Churchill would have to reconsider his stance, and ultimately, his pragmatism and desire to save Britain would result in choosing the best of two bad options. While he would never retract his statements on communism and the Soviet Union, he would advocate in favor of allying with them to defeat what he saw as the ultimate evil in Europe, the Nazis.

Churchill, demonstrating his foresightedness, reached out early to the Soviets to determine their willingness to oppose Hitler. As early as 1936, Churchill had "invited the Soviet Ambassador, Ivan Maisky, to lunch with him," and Churchill was investigating the possibility of establishing an "effective union" against Germany²¹. Even before his return to the cabinet, he lobbied the government in favor of closer relations with the Soviet Union. This marked a sharp reversal from his position fifteen years earlier, as the greatest proponent of destroying the Soviet Union. He still showed great disdain for Communism, but the timing of this reversal shows a more calculated decision. Churchill, ever the forward thinker, knew that Hitler's rise marked the greatest threat to European sovereignty. The earliness of his movement in support of a Soviet alliance demonstrates a deeper understanding of the balance of power in Europe, rather than a reactionary need for military security. Unfortunately, his relationship with Chamberlain, and his

²¹ Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life*, 553

reputation in European affairs, led to calls for a relationship to amount to little change at first, but in true Churchillian fashion, he did let that silence him.

In the years preceding World War Two and his return to the government, Churchill wrote extensively advocating his view on the state of Europe. Calls for stronger opposition to Hitler's rise were common in his writing. The revanchism present in Germany, and the increasing authoritarianism of Hitler, led Churchill to claim that fascism and Nazism were more destructive than communism or socialism. Churchill only wanted peace for Europe, and thought democracy was the best way to guarantee that. The rise of Stalin over Trotsky represented a shift in Soviet relations with Europe because of the abandonment of the desire for international revolution. In France, "the official Communists, Moscow pattern, Stalin brand, present themselves as active, competent agents for the strength of France" as opposed to the Trotskyites that were "surpassing all others in hate"²². Furthermore, the more disruptive Trotsky communists were being funded from Berlin, not Moscow. This communist schism represents the larger Soviet-Nazi rivalry playing out in other countries. The Soviets determined it would be in their best interests to be cooperative with the democratic European states for the time, knowing they would be needed in the coming conflict. The Nazis on the other hand, publicly claimed to be the greatest opponents of communism, while at the same time using them to destabilize their neighbors. Churchill saw this as proof that Hitler would be the one to destroy democracy in Europe, whereas the Soviets would be much more reasonable to cooperate with.

In their involvement in Britain, Churchill also considered the communists as a more acceptable alternative to the growing Nazi party. While both groups were supported by foreign governments, the communists had become more assimilated to British society, and were more

²² Winston S. Churchill , *Step By Step: Political Writings, 1936-1939*, (New York: Bloomsbury Revelations, 2015)
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focused on ideology. The Nazis on the other hand were more dedicated to Germany than of their home government in Britain. Churchill considered the "Communist machinations comparatively harmless" as opposed to the actions of British Nazis²³. His article *A Plain Word to the Nazis* addresses this difference, and even puts forth the idea of monitoring foreigners in Britain. The article is an example of Britain's common fear of fifth column subversion of their democracy. It also represents a softening of Churchill's view of communist ideology. His aversion to Germany was not merely political, but was in part also a distaste for fascism.

The calls for a strong stance against Germany only increased as Hitler became increasingly aggressive, and calls for an anti-German coalition grew as well. The growth of Germany only made it more imperative that the Soviet Union would be needed to open an eastern front. The memories of Russian collapse on the eastern front in the First World War, and the increased destruction that it preceded, remained in Britain. Churchill understood that when, not if, Hitler invaded Poland, the Soviet army would be needed to maintain an eastern front. The difficulty on the eve of war came from the fear of Poland and the Baltics. They were afraid of both German and Soviet power, but to Churchill once "the moment when the Nazi malignity is plain, a definite association between Poland and Russia becomes indispensable"²⁴. The encroachment of the Soviets in Eastern Europe during World War Two, resulting in the creation of the Eastern Bloc after the war, was eventually deemed a necessary sacrifice for maintaining the eastern front. Tactics eventually overcame morals as the British were forced into an alliance with the Soviet Union. Churchill being known for his "inveterate opposition to Communism," relayed of how "Without Russia there can be no Eastern Front, and without an Eastern Front the

²³ Ibid 112

²⁴ Ibid 278

whole weight will fall upon the West" as a great French soldier had told him²⁵. The eve of the war was marked by many such comments, as the British were aware that many more would die in a single front war. Stopping the Nazi expansion was in the interest of the Soviets as well, so the calls for a triple alliance between Britain, France, and the Soviet Union were plausible. The Eastern Europeans were hesitant, but they could not stand up to Hitler's expansion alone, so Churchill said, "There is no means of maintaining an Eastern Front against Nazi aggression without the active aid of Russia"²⁶. Once he took control of the government as Prime Minister, the relationship between Britain and the Soviets became more unified.

After taking over from Chamberlain as Prime Minister, Churchill cultivated closer ties with socialists at home and abroad. Despite many years of denouncing Labour policies, he brought them into his wartime coalition, and they were prominent in his cabinet. He promoted more moderate Labour members, like Ernest Bevin to Minister of Labour, as a method of opposing communism. Abroad, he increased communication with Stalin, and during the war years would meet with him in person as well. Despite insults and increasing tensions between himself and Stalin, Churchill would stick by his idea that even the devil was better than Hitler. Had Stalin been the aggressor and Hitler made more modest moves, perhaps the alliances would have been different. Hitler's aggression presented the Russian people as "guarding their homes" from the "the Nazi war machine," as Churchill described in his broadcast after Germany invaded the Soviet Union²⁷. As evidenced here, Churchill was willing to speak positively about the Russian people, even if he didn't say anything about their government. He framed the struggle

²⁵ "Need for Triple Alliance," *The Sunday Times* (London, England) June 4, 1939

²⁶ Churchill, *Step by Step: Political Writings, 1936-1939*, 279

²⁷ "Full British Aid For Russia," *The Times* (London, England) June 23, 1941

with Germany as a struggle between aggression and peace. The Germans had driven the British and Soviets together by recklessly invading everything in their sight.

Churchill made his stance most clear that "I will unsay no word that I have spoken about [Communism], but all this fades away before the spectacle which is now unfolding"²⁸. Churchill was not secretive about his change of stance on Soviet relations. He tried to present the situation of Anglo-Soviet relations as a matter of common sense. The situation can be aptly described by the adage "the enemy of my enemy is my friend," and so Churchill communicated that to the British people. Tactically, an additional front would lessen British losses in the fight against Germany. It was a smart move by Churchill from a variety of perspectives. A realist would support it because Russian losses instead of British would be a relative gain for the British in the balance of power. On the other hand, international cooperation is a sign of the growing liberal international order, and a combined effort to defeat the authoritarian Hitler would exemplify this paradigm. Churchill also made clear that this fight was a result of the Germans, and "Any man or State who fights against Nazism will have our aid. Any man or State who marches with Hitler is our foe"²⁹. Much like later American policies supporting anti-communist rebels, Churchill had a clear enemy, and wanted to do whatever possible to defeat him and restore peace and balance to Europe.

During the war, Churchill's relationship with Stalin had its ups and downs. Churchill was conscious of his reputation with the Soviets, "remembering what had happened twenty years before between me and the Bolshevik Revolutionary Government," and so made sure to reach out to Stalin cordially³⁰. Stalin's first response was a request for the opening of a second front.

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ "Britain and Russia," *The Sunday Times* (London, England) July 13, 1941

³⁰ Churchill, Winston S., *Memoirs of the Second World War*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959) 478

This request would be repeated often in the first years of the war. It would remain a point of contention in the relationship between the Soviets and the rest of the Allies for the duration of the war. Throughout his post-war book, *Memoirs of the Second World War*, Churchill includes excerpts of telegrams from Stalin with requests for a second front, and ideas of where to start it or give aid. Looking back, Churchill believed it was "hopeless to argue with a man thinking in terms of utter unreality"³¹. At their meeting in Moscow in 1942, Stalin insulted Churchill, saying "A man who was not prepared to take risks could not win a war," but Churchill remained calm as Stalin was "angry and glum"³². Churchill and Stalin evidently did not like each other, but they both understood the importance of cooperation. For many of their meetings, US President Roosevelt would have to act as a moderator between the dueling personalities of Churchill and Stalin.

The Big Three, Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin, exemplified the pragmatic coalition that had formed in opposition to Germany. In their conferences, such as at Tehran, the order of the world would be decided. Tehran was specifically significant for planning the concluding moves of the war, and some post war issues. Poland specifically was a major point of discussion, as Stalin wanted territory as recompense for his losses in the war. The decision was ultimately made to hand over some territory to the Soviet Union, and give some of Germany's land to Poland. At Yalta, the decisions of how to structure post-war Europe were made. Discussions from German dismemberment to the future United Nations were had. Churchill, remembering the failures of the Treaty of Versailles, advocated for a softer treatment of Germany. Roosevelt and Stalin on the other hand, were in favor of a harsher treatment of Germany. This led Churchill to cynically

³¹ Ibid 484

³² Gilbert, *Churchill: A Life* 727

remark that "The only bond of the victors is their common hate"³³. The Polish question was also discussed at length. The conclusion, after support from Churchill and Roosevelt, was that the Poles would be allowed free and fair elections. Stalin promised that he would not interfere, and would even allow observers from Britain and America. Stalin's willingness to give in on the Polish question was surprising to Churchill. However, this was only deception on Stalin's part, as his promises were "slowly, deceptively, and systematically broken, the wartime Anglo-Soviet alliance was broken with it"³⁴. As Germany was defeated, the question of Poland would become the first major division between the West and East, and would lead to a breakdown after years of cooperation during the Second World War. Despite the violations of the Soviet Union, "Even at his most pessimistic moments Churchill never considered the possibility of continuing the war against the Soviet Union," and his desire for peace overcame his love of freedom³⁵.

Stage 3: A Hope for Peace

*"From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the Continent"*³⁶

The Polish Question did not end with the war, nor did the growing distrust of the Stalin and the Soviet Union. As the war concluded, Stalin's aims turned towards securing the border of the Soviet Union with buffer states. After extensive losses in the two World Wars, the Soviets wanted to protect themselves from invasion. As the war ended, "The destruction of German military power had brought with it a fundamental change in the relations between Communist Russia and the Western democracies. They had lost their common enemy," and so their union

³³ Ibid 818

³⁴ Ibid 820

³⁵ Martin Kitchen, "Winston Churchill and the Soviet Union during the Second World War," *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Jun. 1987): 415-436, 436

³⁶ Churchill, *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat: The Great Speeches*, 303

broke down³⁷. The Soviets moved quickly to solidify their grip on Eastern Europe, both in their new territory and in establishing satellite states. First in Romania, "Soviet tanks and troops deployed in the streets of the capital, and on March 6 a Soviet-nominated Administration took office"³⁸. Stalin grabbed power as quickly as he could, despite Churchill's efforts to stop him. Churchill hoped that a personal address by himself and Roosevelt would slow the Soviet advance, but Roosevelt's failing health made that impossible. Stalin pushed on, defying the British by consolidating control in Poland. Polish democratic leaders began disappearing, clearly because of Soviet actions.

In a telegram to the new US President Truman, Churchill first brought up the idea of the "iron curtain...drawn down upon their front," about the secrecy of Soviet actions in the East³⁹. The Polish would ultimately be added to the Soviet sphere through threat of force. In clear betrayal of the Yalta conference principals, Stalin had put communists in the government undemocratically. One final wartime conference, in Potsdam, would mark the end of any cooperation between the two sides of the Allies. The occasion was marked by much jubilation over the defeat of Germany, and impending end of Japanese resistance. Beneath the celebration, was the understanding that the division between the West and East was becoming solidified. Poland was solidly in Stalin's hands, and nothing short of a war would change that. The division of power was codified further, and this conference established the postwar balance of power that would eventually become the Cold War. Upon returning home, Churchill would resign his position of Prime Minister, the result of his defeat in the General Election.

³⁷ Churchill, *Memoirs of the Second World War*, 938

³⁸ Ibid 940

³⁹ Ibid 971

Freed from his governmental duties, Churchill would begin speaking extensively about his view on the new state of international affairs. The most famous of these speeches, given in Fulton, Missouri, would lead to the popularization of the term "Iron Curtain" about the division splitting Europe. In the opening of his speech, he addresses his dream for the world, a hope for "the safety and welfare, the freedom and progress, of all the homes and families of all the men and women in all the lands"⁴⁰. This goal would guide his actions in the postwar years. He sought not the defeat of the Soviet Union, but rather peace for a war-weary world. In his speech, he passes the baton of world leadership to the Americans as leaders of worldwide democracy. Churchill's view on the world had clearly transitioned from his more realist view on the Soviets, and desire to balance out their growing power, to a more liberal international hope for peace through cooperation. The new United Nations received full support from Churchill, as a force for peace and security. He did not want it as a force for intervention and change, but peace through cooperation. The starkest change from his earlier opinions, he opposed intervention in the authoritarian countries of Eastern Europe. Far different from his earliest desire to crush the Bolsheviks, he wished instead to spread democracy through example.

His great speech next turns to Russia specifically, where he applauds their valiant efforts in the Second World War. However, he presents the facts of life under Soviet control, "totalitarian control...Police governments...no true democracy" in much of Eastern Europe⁴¹. As such, the Soviets must still be watched, despite their participation in the new world order. Churchill argued that ignoring the division would be foolish, but also that there was hope for change. In the spirit of liberal international relations, Churchill wanted a great conference to bring together East and West, communism and democracy. This would be his dream for the rest

⁴⁰ Churchill, *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat: The Great Speeches*, 296

⁴¹ *Ibid* 304

of his life, and he never gave up hope on his goal of peace. Nothing was inevitable, and "Churchill himself believed that, if the right lessons were learned, members of a well-armed united alliance would put themselves in a position, not necessarily to fight their enemies, but to secure a stable settlement with them"⁴². Churchill's faith in humanity supported his hope that despite the differences, both sides could come to the table and peace would be preserved.

Unfortunately, the public portrayal cannot be entirely trusted when examining Churchill's opinion on the Soviet Union. Privately, he was more pessimistic about how to handle the Soviet Union. In true realist fashion, he spoke at times about how an overwhelming first strike was the only possibility of winning the Cold War. An FBI dossier details a 1947 meeting between Churchill and American Senator Styles Bridges, where he urged a nuclear strike, and "believed proactively launching a strike attack against Stalin's Russia was the only way to stop the Soviet Union's Communism from dominating the West"⁴³. Perhaps Churchill was only having a period of intense pessimism, or maybe he advocated beyond this incident in ways unknown to the public. The one thing that this event underscores is Churchill's divided opinion on the matter of handling the Soviet Union. His desire for peace was always the goal, but to achieve that goal, he considered multiple strategies.

After the war, Churchill returned to his old fights with Labour, even after years of working with them. He condemned their policies, declaring that "Under Socialism...it will not be possible for more than two-thirds of our present population to live in this island," and Britain would collapse⁴⁴. He accused the Labour Party of squandering Britain's superiority in the

⁴² John W. Young, *Winston Churchill's Last Campaign: Britain and the Cold War 1951-5* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 8

⁴³ George Winston, "FBI Files Reveals Winston Churchill's Secret Bid to Nuke Russia to Win Cold War" last modified November 17, 2014. <https://www.warhistoryonline.com/war-articles/fbi-files-reveals-winston-churchills-secret-bid-nuke-russia-win-cold-war.html>

⁴⁴ "Mr. Churchill Indicts Socialist Rule"

postwar world order. His speech was at a Conservative Party rally, so it was no surprise that he complained about the fall of Britain under the Labour government. At one point, he went as far as to say, "There is not one single aspect or sphere of British national life that has not undergone a marked deterioration"⁴⁵. Now that the war was ended, Churchill proved again that his opinion of socialism and communism had never changed. The coalition he built, both in Britain and amongst the Allies, existed only with the goal of defeating Germany. He had set aside his ideological standing in favor of serving the British people, and he easily resumed his place when he was able.

The speech at Fulton had been met with outcry, and was denounced by many, including Stalin. In 1949, Churchill spoke at MIT in further support of the views he had outlined in Fulton, and millions paid attention. His assessment of the situation had worsened as the Soviet Union increased their dominance in Eastern Europe. Before this speech he had spoken on his beliefs that "there was no reason why a two-world system should lead to war," and Stalin agreed that "the possibilities of peaceful cooperation, far from decreasing, may even grow"⁴⁶. This new speech at MIT revealed that Churchill had been growing more pessimistic. He still wanted a great settlement, but he trusted the Soviets even less. At one point, he even went so far as to say Western democracies were now facing off "with something quite as wicked as, but in some ways more formidable than, Hitler"⁴⁷. Comparing Stalin to Hitler could be the bleakest outlook on relations Churchill was capable of. After years of declaring how Hitler was worse than the devil, and even allying with his mortal enemies, the Soviet communists, Churchill was saying Stalin had potential to be worse. The Soviet sphere of influence encompassed more territory and more

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ "Russia And The West," *The Times* (London, England) Oct. 16, 1947

⁴⁷ "Mr. Churchill's Warning At Boston," *The Times* (London, England) Apr. 1, 1949

people than Hitler's Germany, and soon after this speech they would unlock the secrets of the atomic bomb. Churchill's increased displeasure for the Soviet regime came from the tightening Soviet grip. The Berlin Airlift was a great success for Western democracy, but it came about because of a serious attempt by Soviet Union to starve the German people in the city. Despite the ever-increasing division, Churchill told his audience that "We need not abandon hope or patience" and that "war is not inevitable" between the two sides⁴⁸. He still wanted a great settlement between the two sides, and reminded his crowd how important it was to support the development of international organizations of cooperation. Cooperation, to Churchill, could succeed where war had failed in organizing the world in such a way as to promote peace and prosperity.

At the end of his second term as Prime Minister, Churchill gave one final great speech in support of international cooperation, and his hope for a great summit. The speech marks the final settling point of Churchill's relationship with the Soviet Union. Despite all his desire for a great summit to set right the relationship between East and West, he knew it was no longer likely. Rather, he hoped pragmatically that deterrent, and ultimately the policy that would become détente would allow peace to hold in Europe. Once again torn between what is considered realism and liberalism, his view on international handling of nuclear weapons would be his final interpretation of the Anglo-Soviet relationship. As much as he had faith in humanity and desired disarmament, he knew "sentiment must not cloud our vision" in handling the matter⁴⁹. Neither the Soviets, nor the Americans, would readily hand over the new weapons in the name of peace. Nuclear weapons, while disruptive of the paradigms of international relations, had a stabilizing affect on East-West relations. Mutually assured destruction led to deterrence, and that was the

⁴⁸ Ibid

⁴⁹ Churchill, *Blood, Toil, Tears and Sweat: The Great Speeches*, 341

best Churchill could realistically hope for. If disarmament was not realistic, Britain must stay up-to-date, and Churchill would hope that "These deterrents may at any time become the parents of disarmament"⁵⁰. Ever hopeful for the future, Churchill ended his career with instructions of how peace could be maintained. Europe would remain peaceful, much due to Churchill's efforts, for the rest of his life.

Conclusion

Churchill's relationship with the Soviet Union exemplified his character as a statesman. He was both dedicated to ideas, but willing to make ideological sacrifices in the name of Britain's well-being. The first stage represented Churchill as his most ideological, desiring to crush the Bolsheviks because of their ideology and destabilizing nature. As World War Two approached, Churchill had to put his opposition to communism aside, and pick the lesser of two evils to protect the British people he served. Finally, he settled on a simpler hope, that peace would persist in Europe, rather than a return to the dark days of war. A study of Churchill will uncover a careful balance between realism and liberalism in his views on international relations, and his internal conflict between the two. While he understood the struggle for power, every hope of his was underpinned by his faith in humanity. He didn't fault people, he only found faults in the few foul men that led them. His life was dedicated to Britain, democracy, and freedom, and he never gave up on any of them.

"The day may dawn when fair play, love for one's fellow-men, respect for justice and freedom, will enable tormented generations to march forth serene and triumphant from the hideous epoch in which we have to dwell. Meanwhile, never flinch, never weary, never despair."

-Winston S. Churchill⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ibid 342

⁵¹ Ibid 351