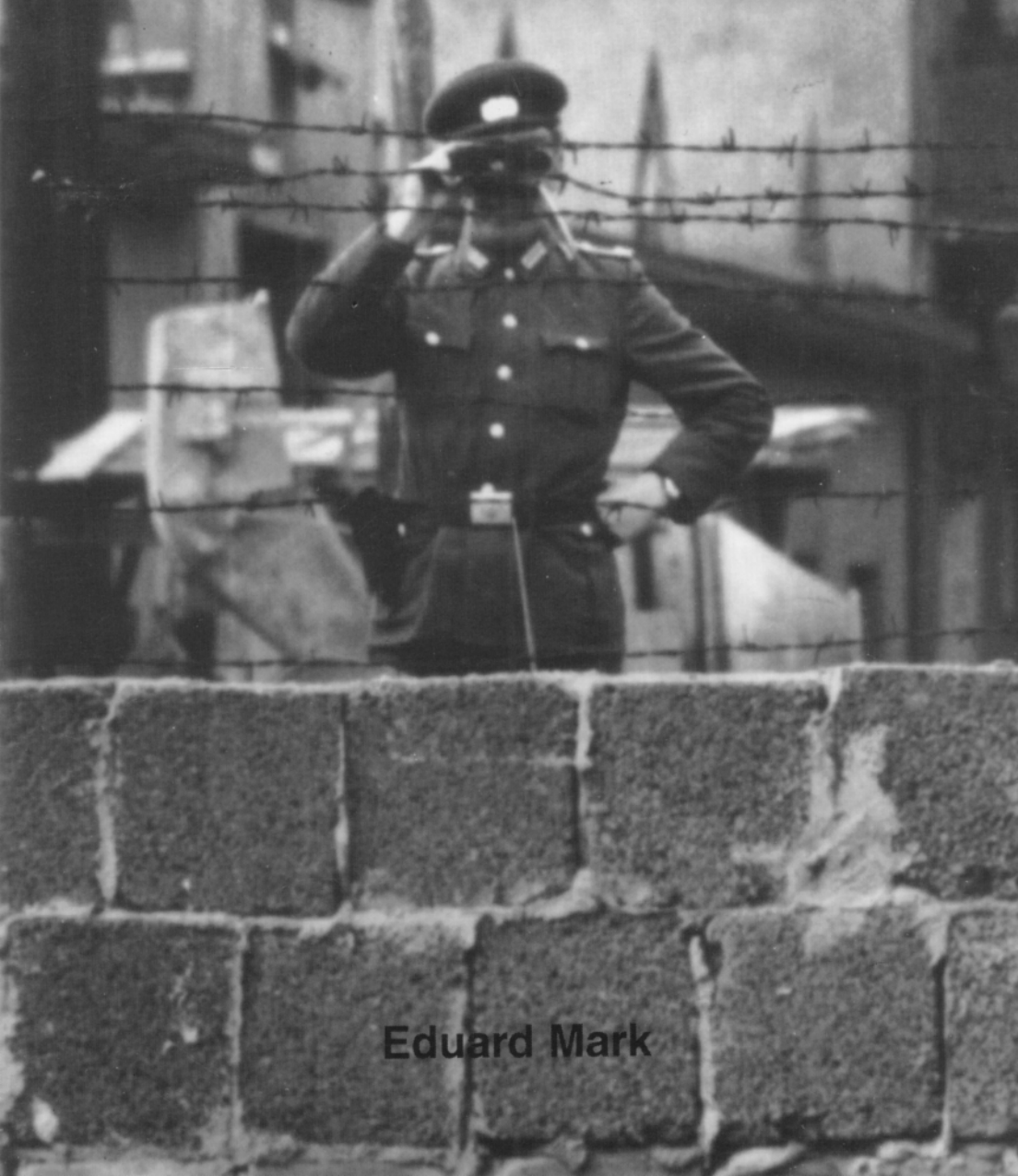


Defending the West



Eduard Mark

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**Defending the West:
The United States Air Force
and European Security
1946-1998**

Eduard Mark

Air Force History and Museums Program

Introduction

The United States Army Air Forces became an independent service, the United States Air Force, in 1947—the second year, supposedly, of “peace.” In reality there had just begun a long conflict between the United States and its allies and the Soviet Union and the satellite states subject to it. In 1949 the United States and most of the non-Communist countries of Europe signed the North Atlantic Treaty. The United States Air Force, which had been only a token presence on the continent since the end of World War II, once more crossed the Atlantic in strength. The commitment of that service to peace and security in Europe, which continues still, has been the longest of its history. This pamphlet attempts to give the general reader some sense of the role the USAF has played in Europe since the end of World War II. It contains three sections. The first reviews the reasons for the origins of the Cold War and describes the strategic concerns that drove the United States to commit itself to the military defense of distant lands. The second section reviews the higher strategy of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) with special reference to the central role of air power. The final section reviews the history of the United States Air Forces in Europe (USAFE) in order to show the many ways in which the United States Air Force has served American national-security policy on the continent. This section is closely based on a brief history of USAFE prepared by Dr. Daniel Harrington of USAFE’s history office. I am grateful to Dr. Harrington for having made his study available to me.

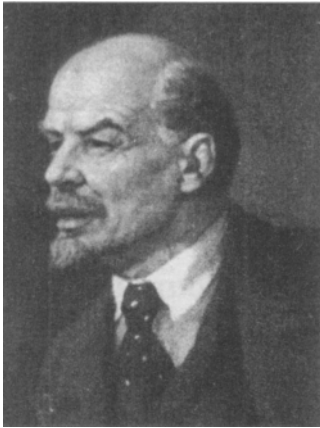
Part One

The Origins of the Cold War and the Founding of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization 1946–1947

The Origins of the Cold War

The origins of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization are to be found in the rivalry that developed after the Second World War between the former Soviet Union and the United States and its allies in Western Europe. The reasons for the Cold War, as that conflict came to be called, were many and complex. Historians still debate why the Grand Alliance of World War II so soon dissolved into protracted acrimony that at times seemed to threaten World War III. While there are few signs that the controversy about the origins of the Cold War will be soon stilled, much has been learned in the last decade. The collapse of the Soviet empire has for the first time allowed scholars access to the archives of the now vanished communist regimes of Eastern Europe and Russia. In the West, too, the progressive declassification of official documents has revealed much about events once obscure or even unsuspected.

Some writers have dated the Cold War to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the subsequent establishment of a communist regime in Russia by V. I. Lenin and the Bolsheviks. Since it is quite certain that there would have been no Cold War if Lenin's coup of 1917 had miscarried and there had been no "Great October Revolution," this argument seems plausible. But it posits too direct a line between the insurrectionary program of the early Bolsheviks and the hostility it inspired around the globe and the events that brought on the Cold War following the Second World War. The Soviet regime changed much under Joseph Stalin, who achieved dictatorial power after Lenin's death in 1924. Under Stalin the USSR acquired—outwardly, at least—many of the attributes of a conventional great power. And while there is no reason to doubt the Soviet ruler's adherence to the revolutionary precepts of Marxism, there is now much evidence to show that during World War II Stalin expected the wartime alliance to endure for some years once the fighting had stopped. Such an outcome would



Vladimir I. Lenin (left) and Joseph Stalin.

certainly have been to his interest. The USSR needed to recover from the war, and it would probably have received significant aid from the United States had serious postwar tensions failed to develop.*

The supposition that a straight line can be drawn from 1917 to the Cold War also overlooks the many changes in Western opinion about Soviet Communism both before and during the Second World War. Most people know that Stalin established perhaps the most pervasive tyranny the world has ever seen. Much less familiar is the fact that in some respects his program appeared to be conservative. By the late 1930s Stalin was famous in the United States not so much as a dictator—there was after all no shortage of dictators at that time—but as the man who had tamed the wilder excesses of Bolshevism. The early Bolsheviks had extolled sexual freedom and derided patriotism in favor of internationalism. Stalin, on the other hand, promoted family life and promoted love of country. Under Stalin, too, sharp economic inequalities replaced the relative equality of an early day. The early Bolsheviks themselves Stalin largely exterminated, either by shooting them or confining them to concentration camps. In the West many conservatives—just those observers one would expect to be most alive to the communist peril—hailed these developments as proof that Socialism could not be made to work and saw them as evidence that the USSR was becoming a nation and ceasing to be the embodiment of a revolutionary cause.

The wartime alliance of the United States with the Soviet Union was the product of necessity. In Adolf Hitler both countries found a dangerous common enemy, whom neither could defeat without the help of the other. But many

* At the end of the war the Roosevelt Administration had under serious consideration a low-interest long-term loan of \$6 billion to the Soviet Union.

thoughtful Americans believed that the alliance could survive the war because the moderate, “nationalistic” Stalin had no strong ideological reason for foregoing the aid he would need to restore his ravaged country as expeditiously as possible. From a point early in the war, to be sure, it was obvious that the USSR would exert a large measure of influence over its neighbors in Eastern Europe. But neither the United States government nor American public opinion was much disposed to object, provided that the Soviets exercised their influence with a light hand, neither severely oppressing the peoples of the region nor so alarming the nations of Western Europe as to bring about the conditions for another war—runaway suspicions, rival alliances and an arms race.

The prospect of another war, remote as it may have seemed in 1945, was threatening twice over. As one global conflagration came to an end, the thought of another was a nightmarish specter from which the mind recoiled. The probable consequences of such a war, moreover, were also highly disturbing. The likely contestants, in the American view, were not the United States and the Soviet Union, but rather Great Britain and the Soviet Union. By 1944, it had become evident that the Soviets and the British were vying for influence in Europe. Washington’s fear was that if the conflict got out of hand—if the United States failed in its efforts to play the “honest broker” between its two Allies—there might ultimately be a war. The Soviet Union would almost certainly win the war and become the master of Europe—and, probably, of Asia too. To American officials—and increasingly to students of international relations outside the government—that seemed the worst possible threat that could be imagined to the long-term national security of the United States.

It may be said without too much oversimplification that at the beginning of the war the international objectives of the United States amounted to little more than a series of general principles—free trade, democratic self-determination for all peoples, and the creation of an international security organization to replace the alliances, spheres of influence, and balances of power by which nations had sought to secure their interests in the past. Historians have variously called this somewhat utopian program internationalism or Wilsonianism, after President Woodrow Wilson, who championed it during the First World War. During the Second World War, there developed a supplementary way of conceptualizing the national interest. By the end of 1943, it had become obvious that the Wilsonian program could not be realized in full because both Great Britain and the Soviet Union rejected important parts of it. American policymakers then began to ask themselves what would be the minimal requirements for the security of the United States in a world in which the power politics of the unhappy past survived. They concluded that if they failed to realize the Wilsonian program, they should at least see that no single power dominated Europe or, more serious still, both Europe and Asia. For a state that dominated Eurasia’s vast resources of industry and manpower would be much more powerful than the United States and very likely to prevail against it in a war. Such a



Woodrow Wilson.

state could, for political purposes, choke off America's foreign trade and block her access to vital raw material. This line of argument predated the war—various writers had advanced it during the 1930s to argue that the United States should work to block Hitler's bid for mastery of Europe—but the war seemed to validate it. The United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union together had barely defeated a Germany that controlled Europe. Could then the United States and Britain prevail against a USSR that disposed its own vast resources as well as those that Hitler had controlled? In 1944 the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded that they could not.

The stakes, then, were large as the great powers addressed themselves to the problems of forging a postwar settlement in the wake of Germany's defeat. None wanted a major trial of strength, and yet one came soon because in the specific conditions that prevailed at the end of the war the objectives of the three major victors made conflict all but inevitable. The United States wanted to realize, to the extent that it could, the Wilsonian program of free elections and free trade. For the sake of those objectives, and also to prevent the consolidation of Europe under the USSR, Washington opposed the consolidation of intrusive Soviet influence over Eastern Europe and any spread of Soviet influence into Western Europe, the Middle East or the Far East. The Soviet leaders, for their part, wished at a minimum to assure the military security of the USSR by keeping down the defeated Germany and by creating in Eastern and Southeastern Europe governments they considered "friendly"—which for the most part would not have been democratically elected governments. To that end, they fostered in the nations occupied by the Red Army left-leaning governments in which communist parties had predominant, if not exclusive, influence. But the Soviets' aims were not purely defensive. They also wished to prepare the way for the final triumph of Communism in Europe when, as they fully expected, another great depression struck the capitalist world. The ensconcement of communist parties in positions of power in Eastern Europe

served that purpose; so too did the various forms of aid the USSR extended to the communist parties of Western Europe. For the time being, however, Stalin instructed the western communists to collaborate with the bourgeois parties and to avoid provoking the United States and Britain. President Franklin D. Roosevelt had told Stalin during the war that American forces would be quickly withdrawn from Europe at the end of the war, and the dictator wanted to do nothing that would induce Washington to keep its troops on the continent.*

Potential conflict obviously inhered in the American and Soviet programs. A comprehensive explanation of the circumstances that made potential conflict actual would have to account for many more causative and contributory factors than there is room to discuss here. Several elements, however, were clearly primary. The first of these was the collapse of the international system as it had existed before the war. Germany, defeated and occupied, had ceased to be a player on the global stage, France and Italy had both ceased to be major powers, although the French, nominally listed among the victors, clung desperately to the shreds of departed glory. Many of the states of Eastern Europe and the Balkans had been the scenes of some of the fiercest combat in history. Organized political life barely existed in these states, and all except Greece had been occupied by the Red Army. Everywhere there was desperate poverty and social unrest. Europe, in short, represented a power vacuum that would have brought the former allies into some degree of conflict even with the best of will all around. For one power to deal effectively with the chaos in its area of occupation was ipso facto to increase its influence at the expense of the others.

Germany was a particularly difficult problem to manage. After Hitler's defeat, the pre-Nazi political parties emerged from the rubble and began to vie for power. The communists from the first had strong Soviet backing—they were, in fact, instruments of Soviet foreign policy. Before long the United States and Britain were aiding the opponents of the communists. In this way, Germany's internal political struggles became internationalized with serious results.† The dangers were obvious to all sides, for Germany, even in her devastated condition, was potentially more powerful than all the other countries of Europe. If the German communists, creatures of Moscow, prevailed, the result would be just that domination of Europe by the USSR that was Washington's worst fear. But if, on the other hand, the capitalist parties prevailed, Germany would be in the hands of groups who were, in Moscow's estimation, intrinsically hostile to the Soviet Union. A non-communist Germany, moreover,

* Britain, seriously weakened by the war, felt obliged in most instances to follow the American lead and may, for the purpose of this discussion, be discounted as an independent actor.

† To see this inner-German struggle in perspective one has to realize that everyone expected that sooner or later there would be a treaty of peace and an end to the occupation of the country.



Franklin D. Roosevelt.

might represent a powerful bar to the spread of Communism elsewhere in Europe. Germany, in short, seemed the key to the future of Europe.

The collapse of Europe had repercussions around the world. It weakened the great colonial empires, and everywhere peoples long subject to Europe demanded freedom from their now enfeebled masters. Unrest in what came to be called the Third World unsettled the world system for decades to come. In the immediate aftermath of the war, however, one aspect of the fall of empires contributed particularly to the coming of the Cold War—the weakening of the long dominant position of Great Britain in the Near East.

The so-called Big Three of the Allied coalition—the United States, the Soviet Union, and Great Britain—finished the war with very different prospects. Britain was bankrupt and, as soon became apparent, virtually a client of the United States, whose position was very different. She had emerged from the war with her economy vastly expanded rather than weakened, and possessed of two weapons of unprecedented force—strategic air power and the atomic bomb. The United States was, in fact, the strongest power the world had ever known. Several considerations initially constrained America's ability to play the role of global hegemon. She had, for one thing, slight experience in that role. The United States, though playing an international economic role of unprecedented importance in the world between the wars, had declined to grasp most of the opportunities for political power that flowed from her role in World War I. Americans had rather fallen back on a policy somewhat misleadingly known as "isolationism." At the end of World War II, American elites were largely in the thrall of an infatuation with the newly created United Nations organization. Within a year or two, the essential inutility of that frail institution was apparent, but by then there was another obstacle to the exercise of effective power—the mighty American military machine of World War II had been demobilized. The Army had been reduced to a handful of divisions barely adequate for the occupation of Germany and Japan. The Air Force, though perhaps faring better



During World War II, the U.S. aviation industry expanded tremendously, producing 96,000 aircraft, compared to 2,195 produced in 1939. This B-24 factory used automotive assembly line techniques to speed production.

than the Army, was also underfunded, and its cutting edge, the Strategic Air Command, suffered in its early years from indifferent leadership.* The Navy was in better shape than its sister services, but was less useful with respect to the struggle developing in Europe. Ships were less relevant to the political confrontations in Europe than troops on the ground, and only long-range aircraft could strike at the heart of America's only potential foe, the USSR.

The remaining member of the Big Three, the Soviet Union, had suffered unimaginably in the war, but like the United States, emerged from the struggle much more powerful than she had entered it. Her power rested chiefly on the appeal of the communist brand of socialism to a significant minority of Europe's population and on her army. The Red Army, while reduced in size during the first year of peace, remained much larger than any other army in the world. A program of mechanization, moreover, actually increased its striking power as it shrank in size. The military power of the Soviet Union was a political fact of enormous significance.

* A measure of the extent and rapidity of the American demobilization: the strength of the U. S. Army Air Forces fell from about 2,250,000 men at the end of the war to barely 300,000 in early 1947.

As the Soviets advanced westward they, no less than the British and Americans in their sphere, had to organize political administration for the regions in the rear areas of their army. On the face of things they adhered, more or less, to the promises the Big Three had tendered to the world at major war-time conferences, most notably the Moscow Conference of October 1943 and the Yalta Conference of February 1945. The interim regimes the Soviets established were nominally somewhat representative of the non-fascist political forces in Eastern Europe, and they pledged themselves to hold the “free and unfettered elections” promised at the Yalta Conference, where Roosevelt, Stalin, and Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill of Britain had met for the last time. A shadow, however, lay across this scene. The communist parties enjoyed a degree of influence their relatively modest numbers did not justify, and as a rule they controlled the cabinet posts that disposed the coercive powers of the state—the military and the police. Still, these interim regimes were not fully-developed dictatorships, and two of the countries in the Soviet sphere, Finland and Czechoslovakia, were truly democracies.

It now seems quite likely that Stalin did not intend to establish communist dictatorships as fast as actually happened. His plan was that coalition regimes—albeit coalitions in which the communists were dominant—should endure until another great depression overtook the world, as he confidently expected. The Soviet Union, recovered from the war, would then turn chaos and despair to its advantage. The plan immediately began to go wrong. The non-communist opposition parties of Eastern Europe declined to play the passive role Stalin’s plan reserved for them. Encouraged by the support of the powerful United States, they resisted the encroachments of the communists. The repression they endured aroused in the West both sympathy and increasing suspicion of Soviet motives. These suspicions were further increased by the developing political struggle in Germany and by domestic developments in the USSR. During the war Stalin had encouraged the belief that peace would see a significant reduction of the rigors to which the peoples of the USSR had been subjected since 1917. The end of the war actually saw, however, a reimposition of discipline. Stalin’s regime had committed too many crimes to tolerate even a slight degree of freedom. Nationalist rebellions, moreover, simmered in Ukraine and Byelorussia, and in Siberia there were serious uprisings among the slaves of the labor camps. Stalin also wished to increase the military power of the Soviet state through a continuation of the program of forced industrialization he had begun in the 1920s, and this too required a tightening of the reins. He invoked the nefarious designs of the capitalist West to justify his frustration of the Soviet peoples’ desires for a better life, telling them in February 1946 that despite the Soviet Union’s victory in the recent war, it was still threatened by a “capitalist encirclement.”

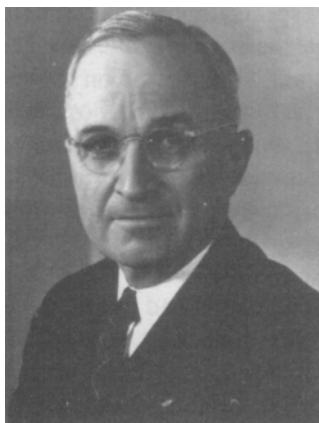
This invocation of a basic theme of Marxist-Leninist fundamentalism was designed for domestic consumption. But it struck a resonant note in the West

because so much of the optimism about the prospects for coexistence with the Soviet Union had been based upon the belief that the Soviet regime had shed the revolutionary enthusiasm of its early days. Stalin's harping upon the mortal dangers posed by the continued existence of capitalism could not prompt a reconsideration of earlier views—especially at a time when the non-communist opposition parties in Eastern Europe were becoming subject to increasingly severe repression and the German communists were striving for political dominance with open Soviet backing. A third aspect of the crisis also became apparent in 1946—the Soviet intrusion into the Middle East.

During the war, Great Britain and the Soviet Union had jointly occupied Iran to facilitate the delivery of supplies to the latter state. At the end of the war, the Soviets declined to honor a pledge made to Iran at the time of the occupation that all foreign forces would be withdrawn shortly after the end of the war. The purpose of this breach of faith was to pressure the Iranians into granting Moscow an oil concession in the northern part of the country. By early 1946, the Iranian imbroglio had developed into an international crisis that came before the United Nations. The Soviets eventually withdrew their forces, though only after securing from Iran a promise to grant the oil concession they desired. (The Iranians later went back on their promise once all the Soviet troops were gone.)

Meanwhile, a more serious crisis had developed over Turkey. In June 1945 the USSR demanded the cession to it of two Turkish provinces and effective control over the Dardanelles Straits. Pressure on the Turks mounted thereafter, especially in 1946. The movement of Soviet troops toward the Turkish border and other warlike preparations in the summer of that year, reported by Western intelligence agencies, indicated that Stalin might be preparing to invade Turkey. A strong stand by the United States—which included extensive military preparations and a highly secret meeting in London at which American and British planners drew up the first joint Anglo-American plan for war with the Soviet Union—apparently induced Stalin to climb down. Soviet pressures on Turkey and Iran, seen against the backdrop of the progressive communization of Eastern Europe, confirmed for many in the West the suspicion that the Soviet Union had embarked upon a career of expansionism.

The crises in the Near East had played out by the end of 1946, and the following year saw little concern with the prospect of armed aggression by the Soviet Union. The attention of policy makers turned to various forms of indirect aggression by the Soviet Union and to the continuing economic crisis in Europe, which the communist sought to exploit at every turn. In the opening months of 1947 Washington's attention focused on Greece, which was then in the throes of an armed rebellion by communist-led forces, to which the Soviets extended aid in ways revealed by Western intelligence agencies. The result was the Truman Doctrine, proclaimed before Congress in March 1947 that extended military and economic aid for Turkey and Greece. Several months later the United States embarked upon the Marshall Plan—a comprehensive program of



President Harry S. Truman (left) and General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army during World War II and Secretary of State after the war.

economic aid for Europe that took its name from Secretary of State George C. Marshall, who announced it in June 1947.

By the end of 1947, the United States, Britain, and France had despaired of effective cooperation with the Soviets in the administration of occupied Germany. Meeting in London in the latter part of that year, representatives of the three governments laid plans for the unification of their zones of occupation. Implicit in this scheme was the creation of an eventual West German state and the division of Germany. The Soviets took strong exception to this on grounds that were both defensive and offensive. On the one hand, they feared the creation of any German state, seeing in it a potential danger to themselves. On the other, however, they also feared that a division of Germany would stymie the efforts of the German Communist Party to spread its influence into the Western zones of occupation. In late February the Soviets began what appears to be have been a campaign of psychological warfare to convince the Western powers that they could pursue their program for Western Germany only at the risk of war. There were unusual Soviet troop movements in Eastern Germany, Soviet dependents were withdrawn, billeting space was confiscated in East German towns for troops said to be about to arrive from the USSR, and Soviet agents in Germany and elsewhere spread tales that indicated other preparations for war. Western intelligence agencies quickly saw through the Soviet game, and the Soviets shifted strategies. Warlike preparations, real and simulated, largely ceased—but the Soviets now undertook the blockading of Berlin.

The Berlin Blockade was ostensibly a response to the plan of the Western states to extend the single currency they had adopted for their zones occupation in Berlin. But a larger aim emerged from talks between the Soviets and their East German proteges, which became known through the efforts of Western

intelligence agencies to shatter the prestige of the Western powers so thoroughly that no German would entrust his future to them.

The blockade lasted from June 1948 through May 1949, when the Soviets threw in the towel. From their point of view the whole exercise had been profoundly counterproductive. The creation of a West German state had been accelerated rather than retarded, and there developed a potentially powerful Western military alliance where individual states had shivered in the shadow of Soviet power.

The Founding of NATO

Even before the crisis that broke in early 1948, the leaders of Western Europe had contemplated various steps toward political and military integration, the better to recover from the ravages of war and to resist Soviet encroachments. On January 13, 1948 the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, informed Secretary of State Marshall that the moment was “ripe for a consolidation of Western Europe,” and that in his view the first step should be a joint offer on the part of Britain and France of a defensive treaty to Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. Marshall warmly endorsed the British proposal. Bevin publicly proposed his alliance on January 22. France and the Benelux countries (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg) responded favorably. On March 17, 1948, against the background of ominous Soviet military demonstrations in eastern Germany, representatives of the five powers signed in Brussels the Treaty of Economic, Social and Cultural Collaboration and Collective Self-Defense. Known simply as the Brussels Pact, this instrument created a collective security organization known as the Western Union. The Brussels Pact also established the Consultative Council of the foreign ministers of the five signatories, who were to meet periodically in order “to consult with regard to any situation which may constitute a threat to peace.”

The United States initially preferred that any European security organization should be a “third force” between the United States and the Soviet Union. Early on, however, American officials let it be known that the United States would be “sympathetically disposed” to membership if such a course seemed necessary. Given the extreme military enfeeblement of Western Europe, few officials can have believed that the United States would not ultimately adhere to the new organization. The point was rather to give it every appearance of being an entirely European initiative to reduce the provocation to the Soviets. The Soviets’ own provocations in Germany, however, quickly made this concern less pressing and Bevin raised the question of a general security pact for the nations of the North Atlantic region, including the United States, on March 11, even before the signing of the Brussels Pact. Secretary Marshall replied the very next day that the United States was prepared “to proceed at once in the joint discussions on the establishment of an Atlantic security system.”

On March 22, 1948, there convened in the Pentagon the United States-United Kingdom Security Conversation. Great secrecy surrounded the talks, for while there was an emerging consensus in the executive branch that the United States should adhere to a mutual assistance pact with its European allies, the subject had yet to be raised with Congress. The British tried to draw the Americans into giving a firm pledge of military help. The American delegates would say only that "US full support should be assumed," as no definite assurances could be given without the consent of Congress. The talks concluded on April 1, with the presentation of an American paper (later known as the "Pentagon Paper") that outlined how invitations might be issued to prospective members of a north Atlantic alliance for the creation of mutual defense pact, in which an attack on one member should be regarded as an attack on all.

Concern with congressional reaction to the proposal lessened on June 11, 1948, when the Senate overwhelmingly passed Resolution 229 (called the "Vandenberg Resolution" after its sponsor, Senator Arthur H. Vandenberg), which declared that the Senate favored the "progressive development of regional and other collective arrangements for individual and collective self-defense," as well as the "association" of the United States with such "arrangements as are based on continuous and effective self-help and mutual aid, and as affect its security." From this date it appeared probable that the Senate would approve American membership in a defensive alliance for the North Atlantic states.

In April the British and French governments had urged the United States to participate in forthcoming military talks of the Western Union. The Truman Administration, awaiting passage of the Vandenberg Resolution, delayed. On June 23, once the Senate had safely passed the resolution, the United States sent delegates to the meetings of the Western Union's Permanent Military Committee in London "on a non-membership basis." The London military talks concluded in the early fall, with the announcement on October 5, 1948, that the Western Union had decided to create a Commanders-in-Chief Committee to plan for the defense of Western Europe. Field Marshal Bernard L. Montgomery of Alamein was to head the new organization, which was to have its headquarters at Fontainebleau, France.

In the summer of 1948, a series of meetings between representatives of the United States, Canada, and the members of the Western Union began in Washington. Known formally as the Washington Exploratory Talks on Security, the negotiations soon established that all parties favored the convening of a general conference to establish a North Atlantic defense organization. The Washington Exploratory Talks also produced the outline of the founding treaty for the conference to consider. The draft instrument contained a pledge that the signatories should regard an attack against any of their number as an attack against all, whereupon the other states would extend aid, military or other, as might be necessary "to restore and assure the security of the North Atlantic

Secretary of State Dean G. Acheson.



area.” The conferees also agreed how the conference should be called: the United States should extend invitations to Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Ireland, and Portugal to participate in a conference in Washington at which they, together with the states party to the Washington Exploratory Talks, would draft a treaty of mutual defense. Early in 1949 Italy, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Portugal were added to the list of invitees.

When Dean G. Acheson replaced George Marshall as Secretary of State in January 1949 he appointed himself the American delegate to the Washington Exploratory Talks. He found himself conducting two parallel negotiations—one with the European representatives, the other with Senators Tom Connally and Arthur H. Vandenberg from the Senate’s Committee on Foreign Relations. “I was,” Acheson recalled, “like a circus performer riding two horses—for one to move ahead of the other would mean a nasty fall.” The Senators had several concerns, but of these one was especially grave: How could a convincing commitment by the United States to go to the aid of its European Allies be reconciled with the provision of the Constitution that only Congress might declare war? Any automatic commitment to go war, should the Soviets invade Western Europe, would obviously contradict that constitutional requirement. On the other hand, it was equally clear that the more automatic the response of the United States, the greater the deterrent power of the treaty would be. The Senators insisted that Article 11 of the treaty declare that “this Treaty shall be ratified and its provisions carried out by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements.” This tilted the instrument away from automatic involvement, to the distress of the European negotiators. Article 5 in draft provided that an attack on one state should be regarded as an attack on all and that the allies would jointly and severally take measures to restore peace and security. To strengthen the effect of the treaty, Senators and ambassadors alike agreed that the phrase “including the use of armed force” should be worked into this pledge. But whatever the language of the treaty might state, the

effectiveness of the instrument as a deterrent would ultimately depend upon a perception that people of the United States, through their representatives, would defend Europe even to the extremity of war.

The text of the proposed North Atlantic Pact was published on March 18, 1949. The preamble spoke of the determination of signatories “to safeguard the freedom, common heritage and civilization of their peoples, founded on the principles of democracy, individual liberty and the rule of law.” The heart of the treaty was Article 5:

The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all; and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defense recognized by Article 51 of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area.

The treaty was to bind signatories for twenty years. After that time, any party might withdraw upon a year’s notice.

On April 4, 1949, the foreign ministers and ambassadors of Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, and the United Kingdom met with Acheson and President Truman in Washington for the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty. Acheson signed for the United States. The secretary noted that the Marine Band, with unconscious but appropriate irony, played two songs from George Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* that epitomized the existing military potential of the new alliance—“It Ain’t Necessarily So” and “I’ve Got Plenty of Nothin’.”

Part Two

Air Power and the Higher Strategy of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

From its inception in 1949 through the collapse of the Soviet empire in 1989, NATO faced a potential foe numerically superior to itself. At times the advantage of the Soviet bloc was overwhelming; at others, merely daunting. Throughout the Cold War, NATO relied heavily on air power to offset the advantage that the enemy's large armies would confer in any conflict. NATO's war plans remain classified, but the recent declassification of the alliance's most important strategic documents makes it possible to trace the central role that air power would have played in the defense of Europe. Air power would, of course, have had many roles in a war with the Soviet Union, but two were of particular importance: the strategic air offensive against the Soviet homeland and the interdiction of Soviet forces advancing westward against NATO.

The role of the strategic air offensive changed considerably. In NATO's early days, when the United States enjoyed a nuclear monopoly, an atomic attack on the USSR would immediately have followed the opening of hostilities. But as the Soviet Union developed its own atomic capabilities, the question of whether the USSR should be directly attacked became more complex and contingent. Interdiction, on the other hand, became on the whole more important. In NATO's early years the Soviet forces stationed in Germany could, with little or no reinforcement, have overrun Western Europe. But as the alliance's conventional strength grew, Soviet offensive action would have required considerable augmentation of the Soviet Group of Forces in Germany by reserve formations from within the USSR. If those forces could be prevented from reaching the front, the odds against NATO would become somewhat less formidable.

The Development of NATO's Strategy

The first task of the new alliance was to organize itself. The foreign ministers of the member states, sitting as a group, constituted the North Atlantic Council, NATO's highest policy-making body. In September 1949, the Council

created the Defense Committee, which was composed of the defense ministers of the member states. The foremost responsibility of the Defense Committee was to determine the alliance's strategy and to approve plans to implement it. The actual work of preparing the plans was the province of the Military Committee, which comprised the chiefs of staff of the member states. In practice the Military Committee, which met only intermittently, supervised the work of a permanent secretariat, known as the Standing Group, which did most of the actual work of planning. NATO did not have a Supreme Commander until 1951. Until then there was a decentralized system of five Regional Planning Groups—one each for Western Europe, Northern Europe, Southern Europe and the Western Mediterranean, the North Atlantic Ocean and, finally, for the United States and Canada.

Once the new alliance had established its organizational structure, it addressed the political and economic problems of raising the forces necessary for the defense of Western Europe and of devising a strategy for their effective employment. By October 10, 1949, the Standing Group had prepared SG-1, "The Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Area." This document was very general in character. It affirmed that the alliance should maintain forces adequate to deter a Soviet attack. If deterrence failed, NATO's forces had to be able to achieve air superiority, to defend their lines of communication and base areas, and to deliver an early counteroffensive to drive back the invaders. Each nation was to contribute to the common defense in proportion to its means, the alliance as a whole being careful not to let the cost of defense impair the economic stability of a continent still recovering from the most destructive war in history. What the document called the "hard core" of the ground forces would have to come from the European states, for the United States had no plans to add to its garrison in Germany, where two divisions had been on occupation duty since the end of the war.

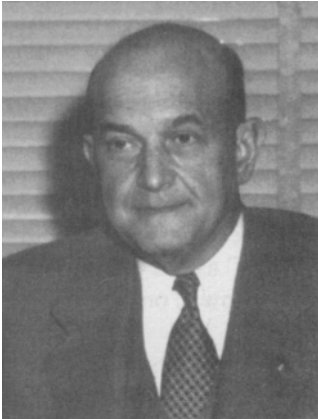
The stark reality, of course, was that the alliance's conventional military capabilities were exceedingly limited. SG 1 stressed, accordingly, that in the event of war there should be an immediate strategic air offensive against the Soviet Union employing nuclear weapons. This would be the responsibility of the United States Air Force's Strategic Air Command (SAC). In 1949, and indeed, throughout the rest of the Cold War, whatever the turns in NATO's strategy the deterrent effect of the alliance was ultimately no greater than the ability of the United States to strike at an aggressor with its atomic-capable strategic bombers and (from the 1960s on) ballistic missiles. NATO's conventional forces were never so strong in relation to those of the Soviet bloc that any western statesman could be certain that the Soviets would be deterred in a crisis from using force against Western Europe if the nuclear forces of the United States had become clearly inferior to those of the USSR or if serious doubts had developed that the President of the United States would shrink from using nuclear weapons in the event of war.

SG 1 went through several revisions in the Military Committee, which approved it as MC 3 on October 19, 1949. It then went to the Defense Committee as DC 6. The Danish Government objected to the very explicit statement about the use of nuclear weapons, although all the other governments supported it. Louis A. Johnson, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, offered a compromise: NATO should insure that it had “the ability of carry out strategic bombing promptly by all means possible with all types of weapons, without exception.” With this diplomatic change, the Defense Committee approved “The Strategic Concept for the Defense of the North Atlantic Area.” as DC 6/1 on December 1, 1949. Approval by the North Atlantic Council followed on January 6, 1950. NATO now had an approved strategy.

DC 6/1 set forth strategic principles for NATO as a whole, but they were of too general a character to guide the work of the Regional Planning Groups. The Standing Group, accordingly, prepared SG 13/16, “Strategic Guidance for North Atlantic Regional Planning.” This document was furnished to the Regional Planning Groups in January 1950, though the Military Committee did not approve it as MC 14 until March 28, 1950. MC 14 forthrightly advised the Regional Planning Groups that NATO would not soon be able to field forces nearly as large as those of the Soviet Union. Consequently “special emphasis must be laid on the necessity for developing methods to compensate for numerical inferiority” so that the USSR would be deterred from attacking the alliance. In practice this would mean that NATO would have to rely heavily on nuclear weapons—a fact already apparent from DC 6/1.

On the basis of SC 13/16 the Regional Planning Groups prepared estimates of what they would require to defend their areas in 1954. Although some of the Regional Planning Groups had prepared emergency plans for immediate use by existing forces, there were no illusions on the part of the Western Powers that they could mount serious resistance to an invasion until they had built up their forces. The expectation was that by 1954 this process would have advanced far enough to create at least the possibility of a successful defense. One purpose of the exercise put to the Regional Planning Groups was to prepare the basis for a consolidated estimate of the force levels the alliance would require in 1954. Once it had received the estimates from the Regional Planning Groups, the Standing Group then consolidated them into the “North Atlantic Treaty Organization Medium Term Plan,” which the Defense Committee approved as DC 13 on April 1, 1950.

While the principal purpose of the Medium Term Plan was to establish desirable force levels to guide the alliance’s build-up, that could scarcely be done without a strategy for the employment of the forces that were to be raised. DC-13 contained a more fully developed strategic concept than either DC 6/1 or MC 14. Deriving from the emergency plans of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, it stated that the aim of NATO in war would be destroy the ability of the USSR to make war through a strategic offensive in Western Eurasia. In the Far East



Secretary of Defense Louis A. Johnson.

the strategy would be defensive. DC 13 envisioned a war unfolding in four phases:

1. D-Day through the stabilization of the Soviet offensive
2. The initiation of major counteroffensive operations by NATO
3. The prosecution of the counteroffensive until the USSR capitulated
4. The final achievement of NATO's objectives, which were not specified.

First among the "basic undertakings" set forth in DC-13 was "to carry out strategic bombing promptly by all means possible with all types of weapons, without exception." Apart from this thinly veiled reference to atomic weapons, the rest of the basic undertakings were unremarkable: to check the enemy's offensive, to establish effective air defenses, to protect lines of communications and base areas. The plan next developed specific tasks for the alliance as a whole and then for the Regional Planning Groups. These were essentially a re-statement of the list of tasks in MC-14.

The second section of DC 13 was an estimate of Soviet capabilities. It predicted Soviet courses of action in the event of war and presented analysis of Soviet weaknesses. DC 13 stated that principal Soviet force (the size of which DC-13 did not estimate) would attack across the North German Plain to capture the ports of the Channel in order to hinder the reinforcement of the defending forces. That accomplished, the Soviets would move down the French Coast to the Pyrenees. There would probably be secondary attacks through southern Germany into central and southern France and northward into Denmark.

In discussing Soviet weaknesses, the authors of DC 13 pointed out that the strategic offensive was not the only vital role that air power would play in the defense of Western Europe. Because of a shortage of motor transport, the Soviet army was "particularly dependent upon rail transportation," and the rail network of the Soviet bloc was "barely adequate to meet present industrial needs, and is

unlikely to increase at a greater rate than the requirements of an expanding industry.” This would prove a major handicap in war, and the state of the roads and the shortage of trucks in the Soviet bloc were such that in the event of hostilities the system of road transport would not “accord much relief to an already overburdened railway system.” Aerial attack on the railroad systems of Central and Eastern Europe by NATO’s aircraft promised to impede the Soviet offensive by slowing the arrival of supplies and reinforcements that the Soviets would sorely need once the alliance had developed a somewhat greater ability to defend itself.

The third and final part of DC 13 presented a strategy for the defense of NATO’s member states in 1954. While the plan outlined efforts to be taken in the northern and southern regions and mandated steps to be taken to defend lines of communication across the Atlantic, it anticipated that the major Soviet thrust, and therefore the major battle, would be on the central front. There would the war be won or lost. The document observed that while sabotage and the improvement of lesser obstacles could hinder the attackers, the only major natural obstacles to an invasion of the region from the east were the Elbe and the Rhine Rivers. DC 13 opted for what became known as “forward defense”: the enemy should be held as far to the east as possible to cover the Netherlands, Italy, and Denmark, to preserve the potential of Western Germany, to retain the opportunity for offensive operations in the Baltic Sea, and to lend depth to the alliance’s position. The exact line to be held, however, was not specified. The paper specified an active defense that would employ mobile forces for local offensive action when opportunities presented themselves. Strong naval forces in the North Sea and the Mediterranean would be necessary to secure the alliance’s flanks. DC 13 stressed that only through air power could NATO consistently undertake offensive action. While strategic aircraft based mainly in the United States destroyed the USSR’s “war potential,” tactical aircraft would attack the enemy’s ground forces, lines of communication and rear areas. The largest number of these tactical aircraft would be American—from units of the United States Air Force stationed in Europe and the United Kingdom and from carriers of the United States Navy stationed in the North Sea and the Bay of Biscay.

To make possible a forward defense in 1954 the framers of DC 13 calculated that by D + 90 days NATO would require 90 1/3 divisions, 2,324 naval vessels plus amphibious vehicles for one division, and a total of 11,940 aircraft all types.* The difference between NATO’s existing strength in 1950 and the alliance’s projected needs for 1954 became known as the “Gap.” How the Gap was to be closed was the alliance’s central concern for the next several years.

* Military planners refer to the day on which fighting begins as “D-Day” and calculate phased deployments in terms of days after D-Day. In this context D + 90 means 90 days after the beginning of the Soviet invasion.

Initially there were concerns in Washington that the force levels that DC 13 established for 1954 were unrealistically large. They dissipated when the outbreak of the Korean War rekindled intense suspicions about Soviet intentions. There were serious concerns in the West that the invasion of Korea was a diversion designed to draw American forces away from the real Soviet objective—Europe. When NATO's defense ministers met in October they revised the goals of the Mid-Term Defense Plan *upwards* with MC 28 on October 28, 1950, which the North Atlantic Council approved later in the year. NATO's goal for 1954 was now to have 49 divisions on D-Day, 79 on D + 30, and 95 on D + 90.

In December the Military Committee and the Council Deputies, meeting jointly, worked out a solution to the vexatious problem of Germany, agreeing that German armed forces should be limited to one-fifth of NATO's total strength. The two reports were combined and sent to the Defense Committee as a single document, "German Contribution to the Defense of Western Europe." The Defense Committee and the North Atlantic Council met jointly in Brussels on December 18, 1950 and approved the report. When Secretary Acheson called upon the meeting to name a Supreme Commander, France's Minister of Defense, Jules Moch stepped forward and proposed that the meeting call upon the man who was "in the minds of everyone—General Eisenhower." With no debate, the conference called upon the United States to propose Eisenhower formally. President Truman did so immediately, and on December 19 NATO had its Supreme Commander. The next day Truman placed under Eisenhower's command all American forces in Europe, which, the Administration had decided, should be substantially increased after all.

Eisenhower opened his headquarters, SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe), at Versailles, outside Paris, on April 2, 1951. Changes in NATO's organization soon followed. SHAPE took over the work of the Regional Planning Groups for Western Europe, Northern Europe and Southern Europe. In 1952 the North Atlantic Ocean Planning Group was replaced by Allied Command Atlantic, with its own Supreme Commander, known as SACLANT. These changes left only the Canada-United States Planning Group in existence. The year 1952 also saw other major changes: there was created a third area of command for NATO, the English Channel and adjacent coastal waters, which came under the Channel Committee. In February 1952 Greece and Turkey joined NATO, and the North Atlantic Council created the post of Secretary General so that the alliance should have a political counterpart to the Supreme Commander. From this time, too, the North Atlantic Council began to sit permanently, each nation being represented by an ambassador.

The year 1952 saw a change in American defense policy that had large implications for Europe. Previously nuclear weapons had figured in the defense of Western Europe chiefly in terms of the strategic air offensive against the USSR. While most of the nuclear weapons employed in the offensive would have been directed against Soviet industrial centers, the Joint Chiefs of Staff,

General Dwight D. Eisenhower.



who supervised the target list for the strategic air offensive, reserved a small number of weapons for use against targets the destruction of which would slow down the Soviet advance into Western Europe. The so-called ROMEO (for retardation) mission had been recognized as a basic task of the Strategic Air Command ever since 1949. In 1952, however, the Joint Chiefs allocated part of the nuclear stockpile to theater commanders for use at their discretion. As a practical matter, the joint theater commander in Europe (Commanding General, European Command) would have to rely on the Strategic Air Command to deliver his nuclear weapons. A special center, SAC ZEBRA, was established to plan for the use of nuclear weapons in Europe in support of European Command's war plans, which were of course closely coordinated with those of NATO.

When the North Atlantic Council met in Lisbon, Portugal, in February 1952, it increased slightly the force levels set by MC 28. The goal for 1954 was now to be 96 divisions by D + 90. The Council raised the projected force levels at the insistence of General Eisenhower, who as SACEUR (Supreme Allied Commander Europe) pressed hard for large conventional forces. A new strategy document, MC 14/1 (a revision of MC 14), which the Military Committee and the North Atlantic Council approved in December 1952, reconfirmed the goals for 1954, warning that because "the conventional NATO forces at present in being fall far short of requirements, no relaxation can be allowed in their planned expansion."

Even before the approval of MC 14/1 NATO's conventional build-up had begun to lose momentum. The socialist governments ruling most of the countries of Western Europe found that the mounting costs of rearmament clashed with their ambitious plans for the creation of welfare states. This inherent conflict could be overlooked in the fright caused by the wholly unexpected start of the Korean War. But the shock wore off as it became increasingly apparent that there were no signs that Moscow planned a comparable adventure in



Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

Europe. In March 1953, moreover, Joseph Stalin died. His successors appeared to be less threatening, and they were in any event preoccupied with their own struggles for Stalin's mantle. They also had to cope with growing unrest in their empire that flared into rebellion in Eastern Germany in June 1953. Not a few American officials watched with dismay Western Europe's retreat from the goals of the Lisbon Conference. But the United States did not lag far behind. General Eisenhower became President Eisenhower in January 1953 and redirected American national security policy. As his diary reveals, Eisenhower had long worried about the effects of ever-escalating governmental spending and debt without end on the American economy. He worried no less about the effects of pervasive militarization on American institutions. As SACEUR, he had loyally implemented a policy of increasing the size of Western conventional forces. As President, however, he was free to set his own course. He did not long hesitate in doing so. Nuclear weapons promised "more bang for the buck" and, therefore, the possibility of savings for the same or even greater degree of security. The National Security Council embodied this policy in NSC 162/2 of October 30, 1953, which stated succinctly that "in the event of hostilities the United States will consider nuclear weapons to be as available for use as other weapons."

The implication of these words for the defense of Europe were clear. NSC 162/2 observed in respect to the continent what had long been obvious: "the major deterrent to aggression against Western Europe is the manifest determination of the United States to use its atomic capability and massive retaliatory power if the area is attacked." But Eisenhower's Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, left no doubt of what the new policy portended when he spoke to the North Atlantic Council in April 1954. Calling attention to the familiar fact that the forces of the Soviet bloc outnumbered those of NATO by a considerable margin, he argued that it should be the alliance's policy "to use atomic weapons as conventional weapons against the military assets of the enemy whenever and

wherever it would be of advantage to do so. " The argument fell upon responsive ears.

One way in which President Eisenhower hoped to reduce military spending was by reducing the size of the American forces committed to NATO. There developed in this way, as regards NATO's force levels, a similarity of views between the conservative administration of Eisenhower and the social democratic regimes of Europe—an alliance of convenience, made possible by the death of Stalin and the troubles in the Soviet bloc, between those who wanted to save money and those who wished to redirect spending from military to social programs. The retreat from Lisbon's goals was not without incident, for there were those who opposed the course. One of these was General Matthew B. Ridgway, who became SACEUR in May 1952, after service of rare distinction in Korea.* The primary task Ridgway set for himself was to devise an appropriate strategy for defending Western Europe with the relatively low-yield tactical nuclear weapons that were becoming increasingly plentiful. In this respect, Ridgway's thinking paralleled that of NSC 162/2, then under development. This approach also found increasing favor among the European members of NATO, who saw in tactical nuclear weapons a means of creating a credible defense "on the cheap." Ridgway was out of step, however, in that he took the position that the use of nuclear weapons on a large scale would require *larger* rather than smaller forces because casualties in even a limited nuclear war would be massive.

This and other positions that Ridgway took embroiled him in a series of disputes with his fellow commanders in NATO. Eisenhower gracefully extracted Ridgway from his difficult position by returning him to Washington in May 1953 to become the Army's Chief of Staff. He was replaced as SACEUR by General Alfred Gruenther, who had served as SHAPE's Chief of Staff ever since Eisenhower had established the headquarters two years before. Gruenther also turned his attention to the perils and possibilities of nuclear weapons by creating the "New Approach Group" at his headquarters in August 1953. The special study group was still working away busily when, in early December, the North Atlantic Council requested an estimate of the force levels that NATO would require for about the next five years.

By the summer of 1954, the special working group at SHAPE had completed a large number of studies on the implications of nuclear weapons for NATO. Two papers that summarized the general conclusions of the New-Approaches studies went to the Standing Group which, after soliciting comments, combined them into a single document that became MC 48 when the

* General Ridgway had taken command of the Eighth U. S. Army late in 1950 after the surprise entry of the Chinese into the Korean War had hurled the command into headlong retreat and reduced it to little more than a demoralized armed mob. Within a few months Ridgway reformed his command, restored its elan, and launched an offensive against the vastly more numerous Chinese that cleared them from South Korea.



General Matthew B. Ridgway.

Military Committee approved it on November 22, 1954. The formal title of MC 48, “The Most Effective Pattern of NATO Military Strength for the Next Few Years,” was deceptively modest. Its nominal purpose was to provide interim strategic guidance, pending a revision of MC 14/1. But what it advocated was a drastic embrace of nuclear weapons. Employing none of the delicate circumlocutions that had been used in earlier strategic papers, MC 48 stated that “the advent of nuclear weapons systems will drastically change the conditions of modern war.” Indeed, “superiority in atomic weapons and the capability to deliver them will be the most important factor in a major war in the foreseeable future.”

MC 48 stressed that NATO’s forces must have “an integrated atomic capability” and should “plan and make preparations on the assumption that atomic and thermonuclear weapons will be used in defense from the outset.” The document stressed that if NATO did not use nuclear weapons immediately, Western Europe would be overrun in short order. The authors of MC 48, in sum, left no room for doubt about where they stood—NATO must use nuclear weapons from the very start of a war with the Soviet Union and without waiting to see if the Soviets used them first. In this way they faced up to the logical strategic implications of the alliance’s failure to follow through on the Madrid program. Taking account of the growth of the Soviet nuclear arsenal more than the authors of MC 14/1 had, the framers of MC 48 underlined the new importance in atomic warfare of what had long been a basic task of air power—counter-air operations: “the only present feasible means of stopping an enemy from delivering atomic weapons against selected targets in Europe is to destroy his means of delivery at the source. This will require early atomic counter-attack against the enemy’s [atomic] delivery systems.” Hitherto this was to have been an aspect of SAC strategic air offensive. In the dawning era of potential tactical nuclear warfare, NATO’s own air forces would have to have this capability in order to begin counter-air operations immediately.

On December 17, 1954, the North Atlantic Council approved MC 48. With this decision the political leadership of the alliance approved not the use of nuclear weapons for the defense of NATO's area—that had been assumed from the very beginning—but planning for the *automatic* use of nuclear weapons by the forces under the command of SACEUR rather than the Strategic Air Command, as has been the case previously. As so often happened in the history of warfare, technical change had made possible strategic change.

In 1950, the military had requested the Atomic Energy Commission, which produced all of America's nuclear weapons, to develop a small nuclear weapon that could be carried in high-performance tactical aircraft. By mid-1952 such a weapon, the Mark VII atomic bomb, had been developed. It could be carried by the standard American fighter-bomber of the period, the F-84 Thunderjet. In June 1952 the newly created 49th Air Division deployed to Great Britain. Equipped with nuclear-capable F-84s, this unit for the first time gave European Command—and, therefore, NATO—a theater-based nuclear capability. In the event of war, the chief targets of the 49th Air Division would have been railroad centers and tactical airfields supporting the Soviet attack on Western Europe.

While MC 48 endorsed a greater and more automatic use on nuclear weapons, it did not develop the new strategy in detail. In the summer of 1956, accordingly, the Standing Group and the Military Committee started work on a revision of MC 3 and MC 14 in light of the decisions embodied in MC 48. Two documents resulted from the fundamental reevaluation of strategy—MC 14/2 and MC 48/2.

MC 14/2, "Overall Strategic Concept for the Defense of the NATO Area," placed even more emphasis on the use of atomic weapons than MC 48 had, stressing that NATO should seek to deter Soviet aggression through the prospect of nuclear retaliation, but, if deterrence failed, the alliance had to be ready to fight a nuclear war:

Our chief objective is to prevent war by creating an effective deterrent to aggression. The principal elements of the deterrent are adequate nuclear and other ready forces and the manifest determination to retaliate against any aggressor with all the force at our disposal, including nuclear weapons, which the defense of NATO would require.

In preparation for a general war, should one be forced upon us:

- a. We must first ensure the ability to carry out an instant and devastating nuclear counteroffensive by all available means and develop the capability to absorb and survive the enemy's onslaught.
- b. Concurrently and closely related to the attainment of this aim, we must develop our ability to use our land, sea and air forces for the defense of their territories and sea areas of NATO as far forward as possible to maintain the integrity of the NATO area, counting on the use of nuclear weapons from the outset.

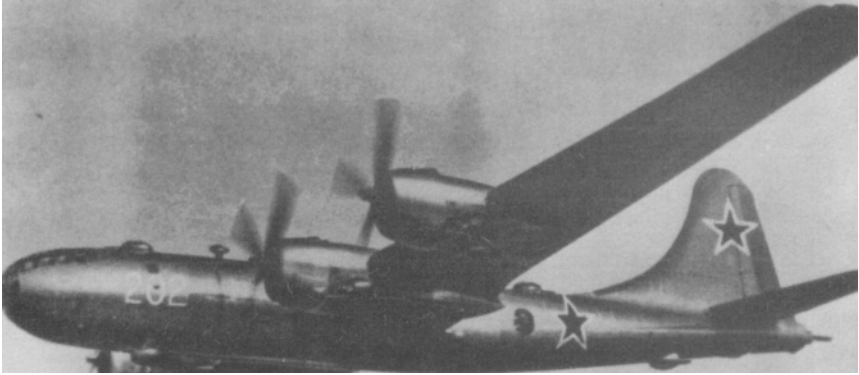
It should be noted that the phrase “as far forward” in the paragraph quoted above had a greater significance in 1957 than it had previously, for the Federal Republic of Germany had become a member of NATO in 1955.

MC 14/2 allowed some flexibility in responding to a Soviet incursion. NATO’s conventional forces were not simply a “trip wire” for the nuclear forces. The authors foresaw a need for dealing flexibly with “infiltration, incursions, or hostile locations” that might result of from the unauthorized initiatives of local Soviet commanders or of rulers of the satellite states of Eastern Europe. MC 14/2 stressed that NATO should have the capacity for dealing with such lesser threats “without necessarily having recourse to nuclear weapons.”

The Military Committee prepared MC 48/2, “Measures to Implement the Strategic Concept,” as a companion to MC 14/2. It described the practical steps that would have to be taken to implement the strategy set forth in MC 14/2. MC 48/2, like MC 14/2, dealt largely with what it called the “Nuclear Retaliatory Forces,” it also stressed that NATO needed adequate “Shield Forces” to deal with “a limited military situation which an aggressor might create in the belief that gains could be achieved without provoking NATO to general War.” In such situations the Alliance should be able to act “promptly to restore and maintain the security of the NATO area without necessarily having recourse to nuclear weapons.” But while MC 48/2 stressed in this way the need for being able to deal flexibly with crises short of a general assault on the alliance, it specifically repudiated the concept of limited war: “if the Soviets were involved in a hostile local action and sought to broaden the scope of such an incident or prolong it, the situation would call for the utilization of all weapons and forces at NATO’s disposal, since in no case is there a concept of limited war with the Soviets.”

The Military Committee forwarded both MC 14/2 and MC 48/2 in April 1957 to the North Atlantic Council, which approved them on May 9, 1957. The two complementary documents now represented NATO’s strategy, replacing altogether MC 3/5, MC 14/1, MC 48, and MC 48/1.

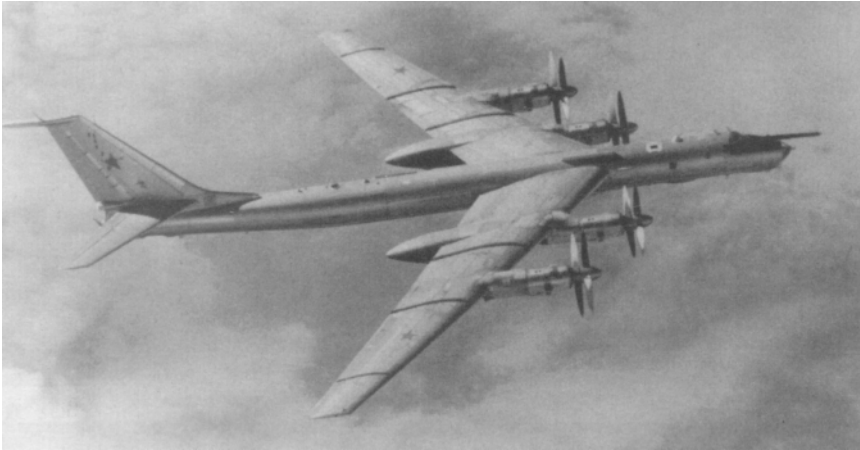
The doctrine of massive retaliation was the product of a period of the United States’s nuclear superiority over the Soviet Union. That the days of American strategic supremacy were numbered was appreciated from the first. The Soviet Union had exploded its first atomic bomb in 1949 and was known to be developing strategic bombers. Still, the end of American nuclear supremacy probably came more quickly than had been supposed, and it was certainly accompanied by a number of very rude shocks. By 1950, the Soviets were flying numbers of the Tupolev Tu-4, a copy of the B-29 Superfortress that was capable of reaching the United States on one-way missions. In 1954 and 1955, the USSR showed off two large and very impressive-looking intercontinental bombers at celebrations in Moscow—the jet-propelled Myasishchev Mya-4 and the Turboprop Tu-95. In 1957, the Soviet Union became the first nation to launch a satellite and to test an intercontinental ballistic missile. The developments of 1957 raised fears in some minds that the USSR might in the strategic



The Soviet Tupolev Tu-4 Bull (top), a copy of the Boeing B-29 (bottom).

contest pull ahead of the United States, which had yet to orbit a satellite or to test an ICBM. By seemingly demonstrating the United States was not—or at least would soon no longer be—immune from nuclear attack by the Soviets in the event of war, the Soviets had raised doubts about the credibility of the American nuclear deterrent. Many Europeans began to voice privately what President Charles de Gaulle of France said publicly: “no U. S. President will exchange Chicago for Lyons.”

That the developing balance of terror would affect NATO’s strategy was inevitable, but in the event what spurred a reconsideration was a new crisis over Berlin that began in 1958 and smoldered until 1962. All members of the alliance agreed that nuclear war would not be an appropriate response to a renewed blockade of Berlin or to any of the other provocations that seemed likely in connection with the latest Berlin crisis. Early in 1959, accordingly, the United States, Britain, and France created a special planning staff to develop limited responses to possible limited Soviet actions in Berlin. In the United States the



Introduced in 1955, the Tupolev Tu-95 Bear was an extraordinary aircraft with variations that flew into the 1990s.

new administration of President John F. Kennedy also believed that there was a need for a more flexible—and less dangerous—approach to dealing with the Soviet Union in international crises. In April 1961, the National Security Council, in response to the festering Berlin situation, issued National Security Action Memorandum 40 to revise the stance the United States would take in NATO toward threatening contingencies in Europe. NSAM 40 stated that “first priority be given, in NATO programs for the European area, to preparing for the more likely contingencies, i.e., those short of nuclear or massive non-nuclear attack.”



Reconnaissance photograph showing missile equipment in Cuba.



Charles de Gaulle (left) and John F. Kennedy.

By the latter part of 1962, the Berlin crisis had faded, but a much more threatening (albeit briefer) crisis flared over the effort by the Soviets to emplace strategic rockets in Cuba. The United States brought the confrontation to a satisfactory ending by employing its military forces in a limited way. The successful blockade of Cuba, while occurring outside of Europe, was just the sort of limited response that NSAM 40 had called for. Together the crises over Berlin and Cuba had given Western strategy a powerful impetus in the direction of what came to be called “flexible response.”

At ministerial meetings of the North Atlantic Council in 1961 insistent calls for a fundamental reconsideration of the alliance’s strategy began to be heard. Discussion continued for two years, finally bearing fruit in September 1963 in a paper by the Military Committee, MC 100/1 (Draft), “Appreciation of the Military Situation as it Affects NATO up to 1970.” The study coupled a critique of massive retaliation with a recommendation that the alliance should respond to aggression with graduated escalation: there should first be an effort to repel an assault with conventional weapons which effort, if unsuccessful, would be followed by the use of tactical nuclear weapons. Only if the attack continued would there be a recourse of strategic nuclear weapons, which would at first be used sparingly.

Some members of NATO were uncomfortable with the proposed doctrine; France refused flatly to accept it, apparently fearing just that lapsing of the once absolute commitment of the United States to defend Europe *a l’outrance* that had provoked de Gaulle’s observation about the relative values to an American president of Chicago and Lyons. French resistance, the assassination of President Kennedy, and the growing involvement of the United States in Southeast Asia for a while stalled NATO’s adoption of anything like the program for which MC 100/1 (Draft) had called. In March 1966, however, de Gaulle

announced that France would withdraw from NATO's military structures, but not from the alliance per se.

Many consequences flowed from France's conclusion of her military role in NATO. Not the least of these was that it became possible to consider a radically new approach to strategy. With the leading opponent of flexible response no longer participating in the NATO's military bodies, it became possible to adopt a strategy along the lines of MC 100/1 (Draft). Late in 1966 the Military Committee again called for a strategy of flexible response to replace the decade-old MC 14/2. The North Atlantic Council, sitting as the Defense Planning Committee approved the concept in May 1967, issuing a document that stated that "the overall strategic concept for NATO should be revised to allow NATO a greater flexibility and to provide as appropriate of one or more of direct defense, deliberate escalation, and general nuclear response, thus confronting the enemy with a credible threat of escalation in response to any attack below the level of a major nuclear attack."

The new strategy, like its predecessor, found expression in two documents, one an abstract doctrinal explanation, the other a treatise in practical implementation. The first of these, MC 14/3, "The Overall Strategic Concepts for the Defense of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Area," which the Defense Planning Committee issued in its final form on January 16, 1968. MC 24/3 stated that "The deterrent concept of the Alliance is based on a flexibility which will prevent the potential aggressor from predicting with confidence NATO's specific response to aggression and which will lead him to conclude that an unacceptable degree of risk would be involved regardless of the nature of his attack." In short, NATO declared its willingness not merely to reply in kind to a limited attack but to even to escalate its defensive response first through a demonstrative use of a nuclear weapon to their employment on select targets (primarily related to interdiction) and finally, if necessary, to what the paper called a "General Nuclear Response."

The companion document to MC 14/3 was MC 48/3, "Measures to Implement the Strategic Concept for the Defense of the NATO Area." It summarized the strategy developed in MC 14/3 and identified the steps that would have to be taken to make the strategy practicable. It noted particularly requirements for improved intelligence and operational readiness, stronger offensive capabilities, better air defenses, quicker mobilization, and more effective logistical support. The Military Committee approved MC 48/3 on May 6, 1969. The approval of the Defense Planning Committee followed on December 4, 1969.

MC 14/3 and MC 48/3 were the last strategy documents that NATO devised before the collapse of the Soviet empire. With them, accordingly, this survey of the alliance's military strategy during the Cold War concludes.

Part Three

United States Air Forces in Europe Through the Cold War and Beyond

Having discussed the origins of the Cold War and traced in a general way the role of air power in the higher strategy of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, we turn now to some of the more particular ways in which the United States Air Force served the causes of peace and security in Europe during the Cold War and beyond. Some of these services were directly in support of NATO; others supported ends of foreign policy not directly related to the North Atlantic Alliance. A useful way of organizing a review of the activities of the USAF in Europe is through the history of United States Air Force In Europe (USAFE).

The direct ancestor of USAFE was United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe (USSTAF) which, commanded by General Carl Spaatz, and comprising the Eighth and Fifteenth Air Forces, was responsible for the American portion of the Combined Bomber Offensive against Germany. Following Germany's surrender, USSTAF's mission became the disarmament of the *Luftwaffe*, the enforcement of surrender terms, and the disposal of no-longer needed war matériel. Because the command was no longer engaged in strategic bombing, the War Department on August 7, 1945 gave the organization the name it has proudly borne to the present day—United States Air Forces in Europe. Headlong demobilization followed Japan's surrender a week later, and the huge aerial armada created during the war vanished virtually overnight. On V-E Day, USSTAF had controlled 17,000 aircraft and 450,000 men. By the end of 1947, merely 458 planes and 18,120 men remained. Of 188 combat aircraft assigned to USAFE, only three B-17 bombers, two A-26 attack bombers, and thirty-one P-47 fighters were fully operational. On V-E Day the command had operated 152 airfields. By 1947 the number had fallen to thirteen—nine in the American occupation zone of Germany and one each in Berlin, Austria, Libya, and Liberia. There were no longer any numbered air forces serving in Europe.*

* During the war there had been four numbered air forces in Europe — two strategic (the Eighth and the Fifteenth) and two tactical (the Ninth and the Twelfth).

The brief war scare of 1946 merely caused the drawdown of American air power in Europe to pause for a while. Also without lasting effect was the first incident of the Cold War that produced American fatalities. In August 1946 the communist government of Yugoslavia shot down an unarmed American C-47 transport. The U.S. responded by sending six B-29s to Germany as a show of force, and Yugoslavia subsequently apologized and offered compensation. But while 1947 saw high diplomatic drama as the United States responded to Soviet pressures on Greece and Turkey with the Truman Doctrine and to Europe's economic crisis with the Marshall Plan, fears of a general war with the Soviet Union, so briefly acute the year before, receded.* In March 1947, the theater commander, General Joseph T. McNarney, told the War Department all he needed was "an Air Force of about 7,500 [men] to provide air transport and communications." He had no use for combat units, which he described as an "administrative burden," and he wanted them withdrawn. Faced with limited defense budgets and tight manpower ceilings, no one in Washington objected to McNarney's plans. General Eisenhower, now Army Chief of Staff, noted that the mission of U.S. forces in Europe was to occupy Germany, not prepare for war. In June 1947, however, the Strategic Air Command began a policy of rotating groups of B-29s through USAFE's bases in Germany. This practice gave the crews practice in intercontinental flying, while serving as a reminder that though largely demobilized United States had retained a strategic bombing force—and the atomic bomb.†

The year 1947, then, though seeing high political drama, provided a respite from confrontations of a more direct sort between the antagonists of the Cold War—so much so, in fact, that the pace of the JCS's war-planning slowed nearly to a standstill. The next year, however, saw a return to the pattern of 1946. The Western Allies, despairing of reaching a common policy in Germany with the Soviets, laid plans for the unification of their zones of occupation. The Soviets responded, as we have seen, with a campaign of psychological warfare designed to convince the Western powers that war might result if they persisted with their plans. When that failed, the Soviets began to interfere with traffic to the city of Berlin which, though under four-power occupation, lay 110 miles within the Soviet zone of occupation. By June the city was subject to a blockade

* USAFE, it should be pointed out, played a small but important role in the Truman Doctrine. Military aid was an especially urgent part of the program of aid to Greece, which was battling partisans backed by the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania. USAFE provided airlift support to the American aid mission to Greece, transferred aircraft to the Greek air force, and then provided spare parts and maintenance to keep the planes flying during the protracted guerilla war with the Communist partisans.

† The aircraft deployed to Europe did not carry nuclear weapons. The 509th Bomb Group—the Atomic Strike Force—remained in the United States as it would have been too vulnerable if stationed in Europe. In the event of war with the Soviet Union the aircraft of the 509th would have deployed to bases in the United Kingdom and then proceeded almost immediately to their targets.



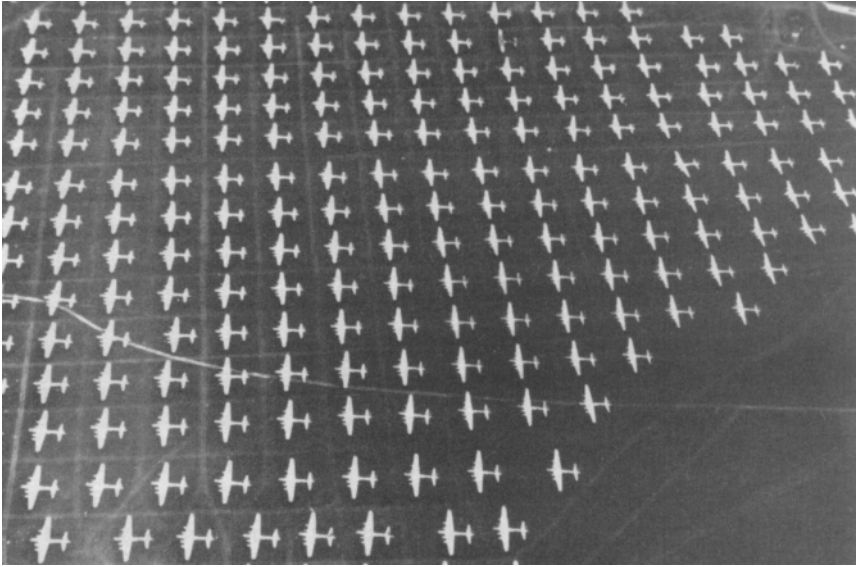
General Carl A. Spaatz (left) and General Joseph T. McNarney.

that cut off all supplies from the westerns zones of occupation and allowed only a trickle from the surrounding countryside of the Soviet zone.

More was now at stake than the fate of Berlin and the plan for the unification of the Western zones. If the Western Powers allowed themselves to be driven from the former German capital, their prestige would everywhere have been broken and only the bravest citizens of Europe would have hazarded their lives and those of their families in a seemingly foredoomed struggle to stem the advance of Soviet communism. Speaking to the leaders of the Social Unity Party (SED) on March 22, 1948, the leading German communist, Walter Ulbricht said of the impending blockade, "Tremendous responsibilities will rest upon the SED during the next few months because the fight of the progressive world against reactionary capitalism is centering in Berlin. . . . Whoever holds Berlin holds Germany and whoever holds Germany holds Europe."

It was the good fortune of Europe—and of all the world—that in this perilous hour the United States Air Force and the Royal Air Force proved equal to Stalin's challenge. Even before B-29s had arrived at British bases to underline the United States's commitment to stay the course in Berlin, British and American transport had begun to ferry food, coal, and medical supplies into the beleaguered city.* Begun as a hasty improvisation, the effort grew into a massive operation that kept more than two million Berliners alive through a hard winter. By spring, the Anglo-American airlift had reached a peak of efficiency

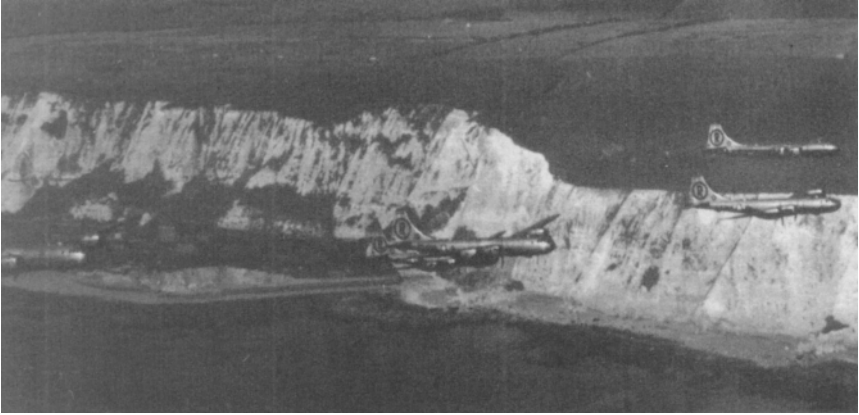
* Though the Berlin airlift remains the best-known of USAFE's humanitarian missions, it was not the first, as the command had engaged in a similar operation at the end of World War II. To avert starvation in areas of the Netherlands that had remained in German hands until the end of the war, British and American aircraft dropped over 11,000 tons of food in the first week of May 1945.



Hundreds of B-17s stockpiled in Europe wait for destruction after the war.

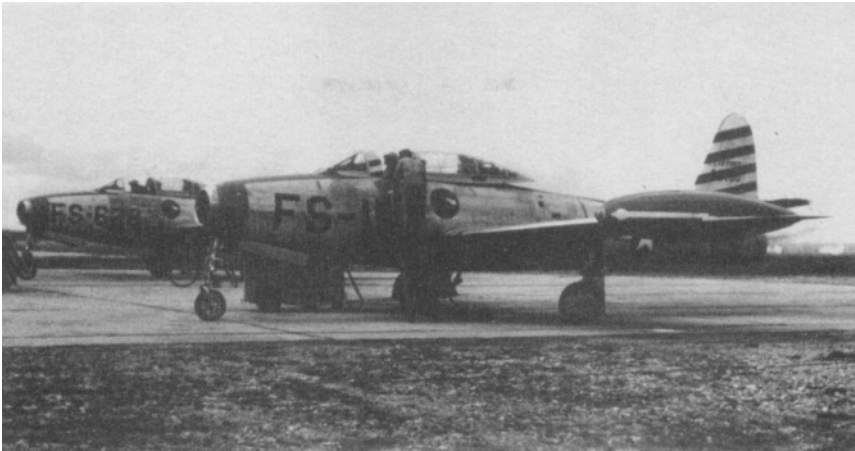
that surprised, even as its gratified, its planners. On April 16, 1949, 2,764 sorties delivered 12,941 tons of supplies. Every two minutes an aircraft landed or took off at one of Berlin's three airfields. Stalin, recognizing that he had been beaten, lifted the blockade on May 12, 1949. The airlift continued until September 30, however, in order to build up stocks against any new blockade. In all, Anglo-American aircraft delivered 2.3 million tons to Berlin, with American aircraft carrying about 1.8 million tons, of which 1.4 million tons was coal and the rest food. In all, thirty-one American airmen lost their lives to defeat the blockade of Berlin.

The signing of the North Atlantic Treaty by the United States and its Western European allies on April 4, 1949, had large consequences for USAFE, whose mission now became more complex and multifaceted as it shifted from being little more than an occupation force to preparing for possible combat. On January 21, 1951, USAFE became a joint command directly subordinate to the JCS. It soon after reactivated the Twelfth Air Force in Germany to serve as a tactical air arm for NATO's ground forces. USAFE also organized the Third Air Force for the defense of Great Britain. Other changes were also necessary. The original dispositions of the American occupation forces in Germany had not been chosen with tactical considerations in mind. USAFE operated only two bases for combat aircraft, Neubiberg and Fuerstenfeldbruck in Bavaria, both well forward and vulnerable to Soviet air and ground attack. The supply line to both facilities ran north along the East German border to Bremerhaven, exposed



A flight of B-29s over Dover's cliffs are on their way to a British base (top). The crew of the last Berlin Airlift flight pose in front of their C-54 (bottom).

to a quick Soviet armored thrust across the north German plain. In 1951, accordingly, USAFE began an extensive program of airfield construction, mainly in the French occupation zone west of the Rhine. This program of construction later extended to France itself. USAFE also ended its reliance on Bremerhaven by creating new supply lines and storage areas in Western Germany and France.

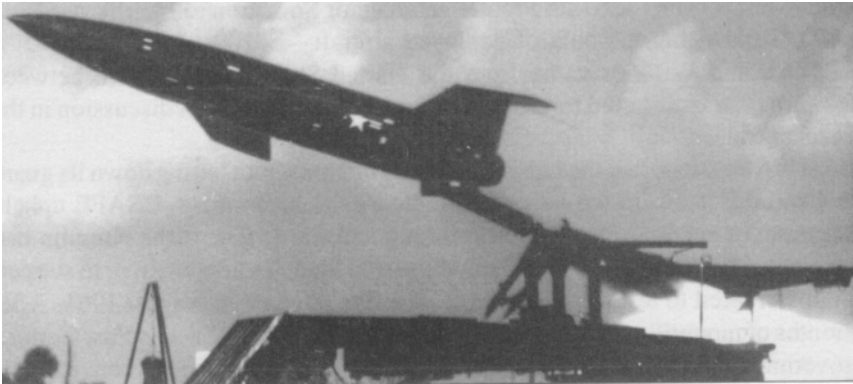


F-84s at Fuerstenfeldbruck, Germany.

American air units once more headed east across the Atlantic to man the new bases. The increase was considerable: from four wings, 371 aircraft, and eight bases in 1950, USAFE had grown to 16 wings, over 2,100 aircraft, and 33 bases four years later. New F-84 fighter-bombers replaced F-80s and F-47s (formerly P-47s) late in 1950. F-86 Sabres began arriving the following year. By mid-1952, selected F-84s and B-45s had been modified to carry nuclear weapons. Assigned to USAFE's 49th Air Division, these aircraft for the first time gave NATO a tactical nuclear capability of its own. By December 1956, all USAFE fighter-bombers had been equipped to deliver atomic weapons.

NATO's retreat from the goals set by the Lisbon Conference of February 1952, and the alliance's subsequent adoption of the strategy of "massive retaliation," in December 1957, had consequences for USAFE as marked as those produced by the earlier build-up. The strategy of "massive retaliation" had been predicated on the assumption that abundant nuclear weapons would allow the West to be defended with forces smaller and significantly less expensive than those earlier envisioned. Reflecting the new approach, American military strength and expenditures in Europe began to decline. From a 1955 high of 136,475, USAFE's manning fell to less than 88,000 by the end of the decade. Numbers of assigned aircraft dropped from around 2,000 in 1957 to about 1,300 by 1960.

Modernization offset some of the effects of these reductions. USAFE added nuclear-capable B-57s to its forces in 1955 and B-66 light bombers the following year. Deployment of the Matador, an early cruise missile, in 1954 and an improved model, the Mace, in 1959 also enhanced USAFE's ability to destroy airfields, railyards, and other fixed targets vital to the retardation mission. A further increase in capability came when the command phased out its F-84s



A Douglas B-66 (top), the launch of a Martin Matador (middle), and a North American F-100 refueling en route to Europe.

and F-86s in the late 1950s to make room for the more advanced "Century" series of supersonic fighters (F-100s, F-101s, and F-102s).

As U.S. forces in Europe shrank, strategists in Washington revived the practice of rotational deployments from the United States. In November 1956, Tactical Air Command (TAC) took the idea to its logical extreme, proposing that all tactical wings be based in the United States. Under this regime, squadrons would deploy overseas for periods of six months, after which other units would arrive from the States to replace them. This was an inherently expensive concept, and in any case there were not enough tankers to support it. TAC, accordingly, developed what it called the Composite Air Strike Force. This specially tailored force of fighters, reconnaissance, and cargo aircraft would deploy quickly from the United States during crises or "brush-fire" wars anywhere in the world. A test of the concept soon came. When anti-Western rioters threatened to overthrow the Lebanese government in July 1958 and President Eisenhower ordered in U.S. troops, TAC (rather than USAFE) was called upon to respond. USAFE airlifted a U.S. Army battle group from Germany and sent nine F-86Ds from the 512th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron to Incirlik Air Base (AB), Turkey, but the bulk of deployed aircraft—F-100s, RF-101s, B-57s, RB-66s, and WB-66s came from the United States. The balance between forward- and U.S.-based forces would be a subject of constant discussion in the years ahead.

USAFE supported the Lebanese deployment without letting down its guard in Central Europe. In the face of periodic Soviet harassment, USAFE upheld Western air access rights to Berlin throughout the 1950s. If the Kremlin had blockaded Berlin again, USAFE stood ready to launch a new airlift or to support troops ordered to test the blockade. A test finally came in August 1961. After months of mounting tension in the divided city, the Soviet-backed East German government built the Berlin Wall. To bolster the alliance's conventional strength, TAC sent 192 aircraft to Europe in early September. Eleven squadrons of the Air National Guard soon deployed to eight bases in France, Germany, and Spain to relieve TAC's aircraft, which returned to the United States. The reserve units remained in Europe until the summer of 1962, by which time the crisis had ended in a sort of stand-off. The Soviets dropped their attempt to change the status of West Berlin, but the West had been unable to prevent construction of the wall, which for the next twenty-eight years remained a potent symbol of tyranny.

Once the Berlin crisis had ended, USAFE once again began to contract: from 1,595 aircraft in 1961, it declined to 730 in 1967. The causes were both economic and political. A serious crisis had developed in the balance of payments between the United States and Europe. To staunch the financial hemorrhage, Washington began to cut every form of expenditure abroad, and USAFE was not immune. Project CLEARWATER closed bases in Britain, Spain, Germany, and France. Political pressures unexpectedly forced the pace of



Checkpoint Charlie, Berlin, during the mid-1960s.

closing bases in the latter country. In March 1966, President de Gaulle of France, having just announced his intention to withdraw from NATO's military structures, ordered NATO to clear French soil by April 1967. Forced to give up seven main operating bases, one depot, and sixty-eight other installations, USAFE had to find new homes for three tactical reconnaissance wings and one airlift division. As there were not enough bases in Britain and Germany, the Air Force reluctantly adopted what it called the dual-basing concept: certain units would be based in the United States but committed to NATO, with designated bases in Europe ready to receive them in a crisis. First applied to reconnaissance squadrons leaving France, the concept was later expanded to include some fighter squadrons. Dual-based units were to deploy to Europe periodically for intensive training. No longer able to use France as a logistics base, US forces in Germany also had to shift their supply lines to Antwerp and Rotterdam—a region sure to bear the brunt of a Soviet thrust across the northern plains of Germany.

When American forces had been drawn down with the adoption of “massive retaliation,” the reduction had at least been in harmony with the strategic concept. In the late 1960s, however, the enforced redeployment was at cross-purposes with the strategy of “flexible response” that NATO adopted in 1967. Proportionality, it will be recalled, was the central concept of “flexible

response”: the alliance had resolved to respond, at least initially, to an attack by conventional forces with conventional forces. The new strategy, to have any chance of avoiding a rapid escalation to a nuclear exchange, required larger rather than smaller conventional forces. But smaller forces is what NATO now had, both because of the precipitous withdrawal of France from the military side of NATO and the retreat of part of USAFE across the Atlantic.

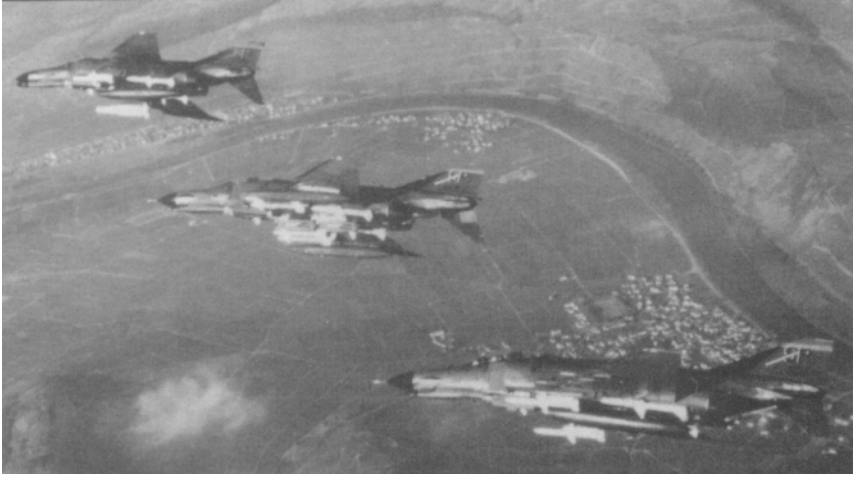
The new doctrine of “flexible response,” emphasizing as it did the strength of NATO’s conventional forces, lent new urgency to what was already an old mission for the Air Force—airlifting reinforcements to Europe in the event of an emergency. This meant, for the most part, moving more of the U.S. Army’s divisions to Europe in an emergency or at the approach of one. From the standpoint of pure military efficiency, it would have been best to add to the garrison of divisions already present on the continent. But the same economic considerations that forced the dual-basing scheme on the Air Force militated against that approach. The year after NATO’s adoption of “flexible response” the Army and the Air Force began yearly exercises known as REFORGER (for Return of Forces to Germany) to practice the rapid transfer of soldiers to Europe. Since the exigencies of war would require more airlift than the Air Force possessed, a feature of the plans—and of the yearly exercises—was the use of civilian airliners to supplement the Air Force’s transports. There remained the problem of equipment. The equipment of even an infantry division—to say nothing of an armored division—would require so much in the way of aircraft capacity as to render all plans for rapid reinforcement impracticable without a solution akin to the Air Force’s dual-basing concept. The divisions slated to be moved to Europe had two sets of their basic equipment—one set was kept at their home stations in the continental United States, while the other was pre-positioned in Germany.

The scale on which the REFORGER exercises were conducted varied. The first REFORGER, conducted early in 1969, was on a large scale. Two brigades of the 24th Infantry Division, the 3d Armored Cavalry Regiment and a number of small units went to Germany—a total of 24,528 troops and nearly 1,660 tons of cargo. Later in the 1970s, when budgets were lean, REFORGER was on a small scale. But the Reagan Administration’s emphasis on military strength gave new life to REFORGER. In 1988 the exercise ran from September 8 to October 22. During that period the Military Airlift Command C-5s, C-141s, and contract airliners moved 17,378 soldiers and 449 tons of cargo to various destinations in Belgium and the Federal Republic of Germany. Upon arrival, the soldiers linked up with their pre-positioned equipment and participated in exercise CERTAIN CHALLENGE, a major field training exercise that involved about 125,000 American, German, Canadian, French, and Danish troops. REFORGER was cancelled in 1989 due to the rapidly improving international climate. Subsequently, exercises to practice the reinforcement of Europe resumed, but on a substantially smaller scale.



Members of the Army's 82d Airborne Division parachute from C-141s during a REFORGER exercise.

In the late 1960s USAFE faced another problem that ultimately proved no less serious than the effects of budget-cuts and balance-of-payment problems. This was the continuous draining away of resources to the seemingly endless war in Southeast Asia. One way for USAFE to carry on with its mission in the face of this steady attrition was to modernize. The F-4 Phantom began to replace the Century-series fighters in 1965. Both the fighter and reconnaissance versions of this aircraft were to serve as the command's workhorse into the 1980s and beyond (USAFE's last F-4s left its inventory in 1994). The new swing-wing F-111E arrived at the 20th Tactical Fighter Wing in 1970. Its terrain-following radar and electronic countermeasures were designed to enable the "Aardvark" (as the F-111 was unofficially known) to penetrate an enemy's defenses at night and in bad weather, carrying conventional or nuclear weapons. Another step was to reduce the vulnerability of USAFE's bases to conventional attack. The command had been thinking about hardening various facilities since the early 1960s, but as no amount of hardening could protect a base against nuclear attack, little had been done. But the emphasis of "flexible response" on preparation for conventional conflict changed the command's perspective. The ease with which the Israelis destroyed Arab air forces on the ground in the war of 1967 between Israel and its Arab neighbors gave impetus to the program. USAFE's program to reduce the vulnerability of its bases swung into high gear in 1968, and saw the hardening of command posts, utilities, and other key facilities, the construction of new hardstands to permit the wider dispersal of aircraft, and the building of aircraft shelters and revetments. U.S. Army Europe, responsible for ground-based air defense of USAFE bases, strengthened the



Phantoms over Europe: a flight of F-4s (top) and an RF-4.

forces allotted to this mission. USAFE also developed plans to disperse aircraft to “collocated operating bases”—allied military installations available for the command’s wartime use.

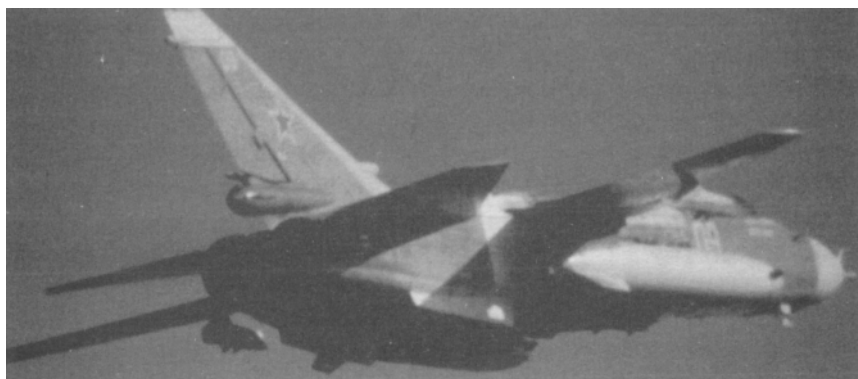
Developments in the Soviet sphere provided an additional stimulus for USAFE’s efforts to bolster its readiness. In an ominous echo of the Prague coup of almost twenty years earlier, the nations of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia in August 1968, demonstrating once more Moscow’s limited tolerance for doctrinal heterodoxy among its satellites. The crackdown on the



An F-111 from Upper Heyford releasing practice bombs.

“Prague Spring” was followed by a gradual, but sustained, increase of Soviet forces in Eastern Europe. The air forces of the Warsaw Pact in particular underwent extensive modernization. The appearance of the MiG-25 fighter-interceptor in quantity led some observers to wonder if an era of unchallenged Western technological superiority in aircraft design had ended. Other developments also stirred anxious thoughts. The Soviets and their allies vigorously improved their capacity for close-air support by equipping air regiments with new Su-19 and MiG-27 fighter-bombers that could carry heavier payloads, laser-guided weapons, and nuclear bombs. They also hardened air bases, modernized ground control techniques, and reoriented training and tactics to emphasize offensive strikes and deep penetration of NATO territory.

USAFE sought to keep pace with the newly more formidable foe. Besides modernizing its forces and heeding the lessons of the Middle East, it added to



The Soviet Sukhoi Su-19, subsequently designated the Su-24, was roughly equivalent to the F-111.

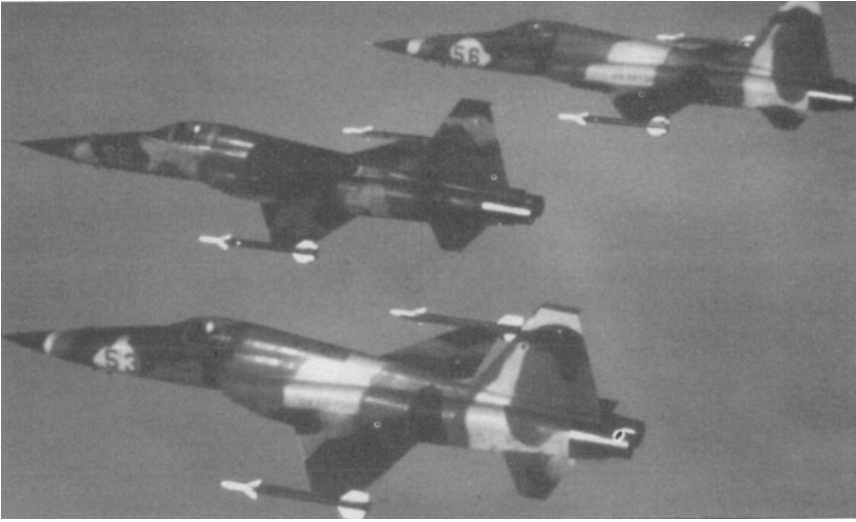
its inventory of modern war planes. Aircraft strength bottomed out at 658 in 1972 and then began a slow rise until it reached 872 in 1981. Additional F-4s arrived at bases in Spain, Germany, and the United Kingdom. Tactical air control improved with the 1974 arrival of OV-10 Broncos. USAFE's forward air controllers flew these aircraft for the next ten years. A more powerful airborne control system received its first European test in 1973, when the E-3A airborne warning and control system (AWACS) proved itself in two European deployments and ensuring exercises.

The "Yom Kippur" War of 1973, like the Arab-Israeli war of six years before, highlighted the importance of new technologies. Precision-guided munitions, such as the AGM-62 Walleye and AGM-65 Maverick, proved enormously effective in the latest Middle Eastern conflict. The new war also showed that the effectiveness of anti-aircraft missiles had improved considerably, as Israel's air force learned to its cost when it found regions of Egypt's air space denied to it by Soviet-made missiles. The lesson, in the view of the U. S. Air Force, was clear: the suppression of anti-aircraft defense had become as essential an aspect of the battle for air superiority as the destruction of enemy aircraft in the air or on the ground.

Building on these lessons, and responsive to NATO's strategy of "flexible response," USAFE emphasized conventional readiness throughout the 1970s. The command's air defense force in 1976 began converting to the F-15, a new fighter designed to win the battle for air superiority against the MiG-25 and the next generation of Soviet fighters. That same year, USAFE activated a squadron of Aggressors—a unit equipped with the MiG-like F-5E and that employed Soviet tactics—to improve through mock air-to-air combat the skills vital for success in the real thing. In 1977, the 48th Tactical Fighter Wing converted to



Boeing E-3A AWACS aircraft.



Aggressor F-5s (top) and an A-10 firing its 30-mm cannon.

the new F-model F-111. Equipped with the latest advances in navigational aids, these aircraft could attack targets at night or in bad weather with precision-guided munitions. USAFE's first A-10s arrived the following year. Highly maneuverable and built to withstand heavy battle damage, these aircraft had been specially designed to destroy Soviet armor-piercing projectiles from the high-velocity Gatling guns mounted in their noses. To overcome enemy air defenses, USAFE received in 1979 its first squadron of F-4G Wild Weasels—special-purpose aircraft designed to blind the enemy's defenses with anti-radar missiles. An EF-111 squadron that arrived in 1984 improved USAFE's capacity for confusing an enemy's defenses with electronic warfare. The command



An EF-111 electronic warfare aircraft.

further improved readiness by expanding its collocated operating base program and by beginning CORONET deployment exercises during which squadrons from the United States deployed to various bases in Europe and to engage in exercises. These changes represented significant improvements in USAFE's capabilities. But still all was not well. The Air Force's decision to spend its limited budget on force structure and modernization came at the expense of wartime logistical requirements, and left units without the supplies they would need to fight a long war.

Even before President Ronald Reagan took office on a platform that emphasized the need for increased military readiness, worsening of East-West relations following the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, in December 1979, had loosened congressional purse strings somewhat. This allowed USAFE to embark on many needed programs, including increased procurement of spare parts and other supplies that improved readiness and the command's ability to sustain wartime operations. The modernization of the command continued in 1981 with the arrival of the first F-16. By 1986 three wings had converted to the new fighter. Two years later, USAFE replaced its aging F-5 Aggressor aircraft with F-16Cs in order to keep training for air-to-air combat abreast of the improved capabilities of the eastern bloc's air forces. The year 1983 saw the activation of a reconnaissance wing. This unit, equipped with the TR-1 (a version of the famous U-2) increased USAFE's capacity for reconnaissance.

USAFE's biggest program in the 1980s was its deployment of ground-launched cruise missiles (GLCM). This project was an eight-year effort to counter Soviet deployment of SS-20s in Eastern Europe. These two-stage,

multiple-warhead, mobile Soviet missiles could attack targets 3,000 miles away. Moscow began deploying them in 1977 and continued to do so, at the rate of about one a week, for the next five years. The SS-20 had no counterpart in NATO's arsenals, the United States having withdrawn its Thor and Jupiter intermediate-range missiles in 1963 and USAFE's Mace missiles five years later. Except for air-delivered bombs and a few ballistic-missile submarines under SACEUR's control, NATO's theater nuclear arsenal in 1979 consisted of 180 Pershing I missiles, with a range of only 500 miles. Western leaders feared this imbalance weakened deterrence by encouraging the Soviets to believe they might defeat NATO in a theater nuclear exchange. In response, NATO, under strong prodding from the Reagan Administration, decided to deploy 108 Pershing IIs and 464 GLCMs, while seeking an agreement with Moscow that would limit theater nuclear weapons.

This "dual-track" decision sparked fierce opposition on both sides of the Atlantic, as pacifists and anti-nuclear activists organized massive demonstrations against NATO's plans. Moscow did everything it could to stop the deployment, and failed. The first GLCM arrived in Britain in mid-November 1983, and by the end of August 1987 USAFE had activated all six planned bases for the GLCMs. But by then, Washington and Moscow were close to an agreement eliminating intermediate-range nuclear forces worldwide, as a result of meetings between Presidents Ronald Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in Geneva in November 1985 and in Reykjavik in October 1986. The two leaders signed the treaty on December 8, 1987, and it entered into force in June 1988. USAFE inactivated its first GLCM wing pursuant to this agreement three months later. Its last two wings cased their flags in May 1991.

The INF treaty proved to be a harbinger of enormously improved East-West relations. Once it was evident that the USSR under Gorbachev would no longer intervene to protect the discredited and increasingly unviable communist governments of Central and Eastern Europe, the end of the Cold War came with dizzying swiftness. The most dramatic symbol of the change—the opening of the Berlin Wall—occurred November 9, 1989. Within a year, Germany had been reunified. Events now began to outpace the diplomats. NATO and the Warsaw Pact signed a Conventional Armed Forces in Europe treaty in November 1990 that mandated reductions in conventional weapons of both organizations by 40 percent. But the Warsaw Pact disbanded in July 1991, and the Soviet Union itself collapsed five months later.

The end of the Cold War inevitably meant changes for USAFE. The command began to close bases and to return aircraft to the United States. From just over 800 aircraft, 72,000 persons, 3 numbered air forces, and 27 bases in 1990, by the end of 1996 it had shrunk to about 240 planes, 33,000 persons, 2 air forces, and 6 bases with active flying missions. As in the past, modernization would offset some of the reductions. USAFE's first F-15E joined the 48th Fighter Wing in February 1992. In addition to the traditional air superiority



McDonnell Douglas F-15E.

mission of the F-15, the F-15E could carry out all-weather deep interdiction strikes with conventional or nuclear weapons. Updated F-16s began arriving at Ramstein and Spangdahlem in 1993.

Though shrunken, USAFE continued to serve the cause of peace. USAFE's traditional involvement in humanitarian relief, begun before the Cold War in the famine-stricken Netherlands of 1945, outlasted the long twilight struggle between East and West. In all, USAFE has taken part in nearly 200 humanitarian operations, ranging in scale from the Berlin airlift to individual planeloads of food and medical supplies. Geographically these operations ranged from Iceland to Bangladesh and from sub-Saharan Africa to Eastern Europe and parts of the former Soviet Union. Most were in response to natural disasters, such as floods, earthquakes, and epidemics, but some helped the victims of wars, civil unrest, and terrorism.

Though Europe was no longer threatened with being overwhelmed by an invader, trouble stirred in the wreckage left behind by Communism, and nowhere more than in Yugoslavia, an essentially artificial construction cobbled together at the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919 by adding parts of the former Austro-Hungarian Empire to Serbia. The communist Josip Broz, better known as Marshal Tito, emerged as the ruler of Yugoslavia at the end of World War II because he had created the most effective partisan movement in the struggle against the occupying Germans. Tito proved to be a flexible and charismatic leader who kept his ethnically diverse state together until his death in 1980. His successors proved unable to fill his shoes. In June 1991, the provinces of Slovenia and Croatia declared their independence from Yugoslavia. In March

1992, another province, Bosnia-Herzegovina, declared its independence. Macedonia also broke away, leaving in Yugoslavia only Serbia and the small province of Montenegro. The central government in Belgrade, dominated by Serbs, attempted to reestablish its control over the breakaway Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia. The result was civil war. The Slovenes easily prevailed over the Yugoslav army, but Croatia and Bosnia were not so fortunate. Many Serbs lived in Bosnia and Croatia, and with considerable help from Serbia they revolted against the Bosnian and Croatian governments. Religious animosities intensified the ethnic tensions in Croatia, for the Serbs were Christians, while the non-Serbian Bosnians were predominantly Muslim.

An abortive ceasefire in Croatia led to the introduction of the United Nations Protection Force of about 23,000, which was charged with creating "the conditions of peace and security required for the negotiation of an overall settlement crisis." The Serbs, not for the last time, proved recalcitrant and honored the ceasefire agreement chiefly in the breach. Nonetheless, peace of a kind came to Croatia for a while, while matters turned much for the worse in Bosnia. There, as in Croatia, the local Serbs set up a republic in opposition to the national government, with which they went to war. The Bosnian Serbs generally prevailed against the Bosnian government. They overran much of Bosnia and laid siege to the capital city of Sarajevo, which was soon the scene of degrees of suffering rarely seen in Europe since the end of World War II. In June 1992, the forces of the United Nations reopened the airport at Sarajevo in order to keep the city supplied with the necessities of life. As part of what became Operation PROVIDE PROMISE, USAFE started delivering food, medical supplies, and other assistance to Sarajevo in July 1992. This effort lasted until January 1996, making it the longest-lasting humanitarian airlift in history. With 12,895 sorties, U.S. Air Force transports delivered 180,000 tons of supplies to Bosnia. The Serbs only grudgingly tolerated the relief program that effectively broke their siege, and occasionally fired on the transports. One Italian aircraft was downed in September 1992.

Both in response to this threat and as part of its effort to dampen the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, the United Nations, in October 1992, banned the use of military aircraft by the contending factions over specified "no-fly zones." The Serbs, both Bosnian and Croatian (who cooperated closely), ignored the ban, and in April 1993 the United Nations asked NATO to enforce it. The resulting operation, DENY FLIGHT, began in April 1993. USAFE was the prime contributor to Operation DENY FLIGHT, as it was to PROVIDE PROMISE. DENY FLIGHT saw NATO, then in its forty-fifth year, fire shots in anger for the first time. On February 28, 1994, six Serb jets attacked Bosnian forces. Four of USAFE's F-16Cs intercepted the intruders and downed all but two of them.

This was not the end of the use of armed force by NATO. Renewed use of aircraft by the Serbs led NATO to launch an attack on a military airfield near



A Lockheed C-130 Hercules delivers supplies during PROVIDE PROMISE.

Udbina, Croatia on March 21, 1994. In December 1994 former President Jimmy Carter brokered an uneasy peace agreement for Bosnia. It soon suffered the usual fate of peace agreements in the former Yugoslavia. The Croats drove most Serbs out of Croatia, and Bosnian Serbs conquered the city of Srebrenica. NATO decided to act after Bosnian Serb mortars killed thirty-eight civilians in the long-suffering Sarajevo. For two weeks NATO's aircraft attacked Bosnian Serb positions during Operation DELIBERATE FORCE, suppressing air defenses and destroying command, communications, and logistics facilities. Further pressure was applied by the forces of Croatia and the Bosnian government which, powerfully aided by the air strikes, pushed back the Bosnian Serbs, who sued for peace in mid-September. In all, DELIBERATE FORCE involved somewhat more than 200 aircraft that flew 3,500 sorties, of which about 750 entailed actual strikes on the Bosnian Serbs. DELIBERATE FORCE, by weakening the Bosnian Serbs and impressing their backers in Serbia proper with the potential dangers to themselves of further intransigence, paved the way for the comprehensive settlement for Bosnia negotiated under American auspices by the presidents of Bosnia, Croatia, and Yugoslavia (Serbia) at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio, in November 1995. Under the terms of the agreement, which was formally signed in Paris, on December 14, NATO assumed major responsibilities for guaranteeing the terms of the agreement. The end of this story has yet to be written, for NATO's—and USAF's—responsibilities in the former Yugoslavia continue.

Bibliographical Essay

The most ambitious overview of American national-security policy written to date is Melvyn P. Leffler's *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, The Truman Administration, and the Cold War* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992). The work is now, however, somewhat dated because it is uninformed by revelations from the archives of the former Soviet bloc and the progressive declassification of documents in the United States. A more recent survey of the origins of the Cold War is John Lewis Gaddis's *Now We Know* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Of especial importance for military policy are the official histories in the series *History of the Office of the Secretary of Defense* (Washington, D. C.: Historical Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1984+). The official history of the United States Air Force provides a detailed overview of the service's experience with many bibliographical references for further reading: Bernard C. Nalty, General Editor, *Winged Shield, Winged Sword: A History of the United States Air Force* (two volumes; Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1997). Indispensable for the history of NATO is the recent compilation of strategy documents edited and introduced by SHAPE's historian: Gregory Pedlow, ed., *NATO Strategy Document, 1949-1969* (Brussels, Belgium: North Atlantic Treaty Organization, 1997). The reader may wish to supplement the last volume with a general history of NATO. One of the better ones is John S. Duffield, *Power Rules: The Evolution of NATO's Conventional Force Posture* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1995).