

Eisenhower's Fight Against The British Empire's 'Cold War'

by Dean Andromidas

Within days of Franklin D. Roosevelt's death on April 12, 1945, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill ordered the Imperial General Staff to draft a war plan against the Soviet Union. It returned with a plan which would require a war lasting at least ten years, and all the resources the United States could provide.

Since Gen. George Marshall, Chief of the U.S. General Staff, flatly refused to go along, the plan was shelved. This did not deter Churchill, who, in 1946, despite being out of office, had his lackey, President Harry Truman, invite him to Fulton, Missouri to give his "Iron Curtain" speech, thus launching the Cold War. The true nature of the British policy was enunciated the same year when Bertrand Russell published his infamous article in *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, calling on the Soviet Union to surrender to a world government, or face preemptive nuclear war.

Once the Soviet Union developed its own nuclear weapon that was capable of striking Great Britain, the idea of "preemptive" war lost much of its attraction. Churchill and Russell shifted to "Plan B," an Anglo-Soviet condominium that would preserve the British Empire, while granting the Soviet Union a sphere of influence within the envisioned "World Government." The British policy would become known as the Pugwash doctrine. All of this was directed at preventing the realization of FDR's vision of a post-colonial, rapidly industrializing concert of sovereign nations.

Yet, the British imperialists came very close to failing to impose their policy, when Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower was elected President of the United States in 1952. Eisenhower was wise to British tricks, and was not about to be Churchill's pawn in a global conflict, hot or cold, with the Soviet Union. Working with Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Ike moved immediately to try to defuse the ticking time-bombs that could lead to war, starting with the Korean conflict.

What we present here is only part of the story, but what a story it is!



President-elect Dwight D. Eisenhower (left) in Korea, December 1952. He went to Korea to see whether a new approach could be found to ending the war there.

Effort To Resolve Korean Conflict

Within days of the 1952 elections, but before his inauguration, Eisenhower made a trip to the Korean War front, as a demonstration of the seriousness of his intention to put forward a "new approach" to ending that war.

On Dec. 5, 1952, while Eisenhower was returning from Korea on the *U.S.S. Helena*, Douglas MacArthur, who had been fired by Truman, but, as a five-star general, remained on the active-duty list, gave a speech before the 57th Congress of American Industry, sponsored by the National Association of Manufacturers. He stated: "There is a clear and definite solution to the

Korean conflict. There has been a material change in conditions from those of twenty months ago when I left the scene of action and the solution then available and capable of success is not now entirely applicable. The present solution involves basic decisions which I recognize as improper for public disclosure or discussion, but which, in my opinion, can be executed without either an unduly heavy price in friendly casualties or any increase in the danger of provoking universal war.”¹

The speech was broadcast on national television and became front-page news in the national press. Sources close to MacArthur were quoted saying he was “willing and ready to present [his solution] to the President-elect if an invitation were forthcoming.” A wire service story on Dec. 6 quoted MacArthur’s speech in which he praised Eisenhower for going to Korea “in search for an honorable end to so tragic a slaughter, and all Americans join in prayer that he may safely return and accomplish his self-appointed task with vision and wisdom.” He called upon all citizens to “rally in firm support” of the Eisenhower Administration.

On Dec. 7, Eisenhower, en route from Korea, wrote to MacArthur that he had received the relevant excerpts from MacArthur’s speech and was “looking forward to an informal meeting” in order to “obtain the full benefits of your thinking and experience.” MacArthur replied that the solution to the Korean conflict “might well become the key to peace in the world,” and expressed his readiness to be at the service of his country.

On Dec. 9, Eisenhower, with MacArthur’s permission, released this correspondence to the press.

An Associated Press journalist, writing Dec. 10 from aboard the *U.S.S. Helena*, wrote, “It seems aboard this ship that it was a diplomatic move by General Eisenhower to heal the breach and give his administration the benefit of General MacArthur’s long



National Archives

Gen. Douglas MacArthur addresses an audience at Soldier’s Field, Chicago, April 1951. He offered his help to Eisenhower the following year, to find ways to end the Korean War and to further world peace.

experience in dealing with Far East matters.”

Drew Pearson, under the headline “British Resist Bigger Korea War,” in his syndicated column on Dec. 10, reported that before Eisenhower left for Korea, the Truman Administration sent a note to the British government on plans for possibly expanding the war in Korea, which “caused the British to have fits” and made Churchill “furious.” He added the reasons for the British opposition were well known in the Pentagon and to those aboard the *U.S.S. Helena*: “First the British fear any blockage of the China ports would finish their sizable trade with China. Second it would bring an abrupt termination of their lease on Hongkong.”

Truman, in reaction to this exchange of letters between Eisenhower and MacArthur, during one of his last press conferences in the White House, put on what the *Christian Science Monitor* correspondent described as a “pyrotechnical display,” in which he denounced MacArthur for not presenting his plan to him, through the Joint Chiefs of Staff—although he admitted he would not have invited the general to the White House to do so. Truman repeated what he had said during the election campaign: that Eisenhower’s announcement of his intention to go to Korea was “demagoguery.” A journalist asked whether he meant that

1. *Reminiscences of General of the Army Douglas MacArthur* (Annapolis: Bluejacket Books, 1964), p. 464.



Eisenhower and MacArthur sought to undo the damage done to world peace and Soviet-American relations since the death of Roosevelt and the inauguration of Harry Truman. Shown here are leaders at the post-victory Potsdam summit, July 1945: (left) Josef Stalin and Truman; (above) Truman and Winston Churchill.

the President-elect's current trip was an act of "demagoguery." Truman's press secretary whispered into Truman's ear that it was not very becoming of an outgoing President to accuse the President-elect of demagoguery. This, too, became front-page news.

AP's correspondent in Honolulu reported on Dec. 13 that Eisenhower was "irked" at the Truman outburst, but would make no public comment. Nonetheless, the journalist wrote that sources close to Eisenhower said he was determined to receive MacArthur's advice, adding that "the General believes the people of the United States want dignity restored to the Presidency and that they are tired of petty bickering and name calling."

The meeting between Eisenhower and MacArthur took place in New York on Dec. 17, 1952, at the New York townhouse of John Foster Dulles, who would soon become Eisenhower's Secretary of State. MacArthur presented a memorandum on how to end the Korean War, in the context of a global agreement with the Soviet Union. It called for a bilateral conference, limited to Eisenhower and Soviet Generalissimo Josef Stalin, because the inclusion of other powers would only assure failure. The United States had a mandate to do this, since it had been designated as the

agent of the UN in the Korean conflict. Such a conference would explore the world situation as a "corollary to ending the Korean War." The goal would be to allow Germany and Korea to unite, under forms of government to be popularly determined, whereby the neutrality of the former, as well as of Austria and Japan, would be guaranteed by the U.S. and U.S.S.R., with all other nations invited to join in as co-guarantors. The agreement would include withdrawal of all foreign troops. MacArthur also called for the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. to endeavor to include in their constitutions a provision outlawing war as an instrument of national policy, with all other nations doing the same.

If such agreements could not be reached, the U.S.S.R. would be informed of the U.S. intention to clear North Korea of all enemy forces. This would include bombing the logistics centers in China and, if necessary, the use of nuclear weapons. MacArthur saw this intention as leverage to reach an agreement, which would be to the mutual interest of both powers.

He concluded: "It is my own belief that the Soviet masses are just as eager for peace as are our own people. I believe they suffer the delusion that there are aggressive intentions against them on the part of the capitalistic world, and that they would welcome an imaginative approach, which would allay this false impression. The Soviet Union is not blind to the dangers which actually confront it in the present situation, and it might well

settle the Korean War on equitable terms such as those herein outlined, just as soon as it realizes we have the will and the means to bring the present issues to a prompt and definitive determination.”

According to MacArthur, Dulles expressed at the meeting that he had lamented MacArthur’s dismissal by Truman, and also, his appreciation for what he called the “bold and imaginative” proposal. He went on to suggest that Eisenhower would have to consolidate his government in the first year of his administration before embarking on such a plan. MacArthur does not say how Eisenhower responded, but only that MacArthur was not called on again.² Why MacArthur wrote these last lines almost 12 years after the meeting is not clear, because developments following this meeting demonstrate that Eisenhower did take his proposal seriously and began to implement it, only to see Stalin die before it could be consummated.

In fact, the idea of a summit with Stalin had been proposed by Eisenhower during his Presidential campaign, in a speech in New York City on June 8, 1952.

MacArthur’s genius was his ability to formulate a far-reaching global strategic vision, a capacity recognized and sought not only by FDR, but also by the highest levels of the wartime military command, notably, Gen. George Marshall. Eisenhower himself had served for more than ten consecutive years under MacArthur, whose capacities he recognized. As the consummate General Staff officer, Eisenhower often took MacArthur’s “vision” and transformed it into an actual war or battle plan, a capacity having a genius of its own.

In comments to the press after the Dec. 17 meeting with MacArthur, Eisenhower said he had had “a fine conversation on the general subject of peace, not only in Korea, but throughout the world, with particular reference to the world situation in which, of course, such a Korean peace would have to be determined.”

The British were worried. On Dec. 18, Australian Prime Minister Robert Menzies came to Washington,



The New York Times’ Christmas Day 1952 interview with Josef Stalin, in which Stalin welcomes the idea of a meeting with Eisenhower. The British were apoplectic.

en route home from the Commonwealth Conference in London, with a message from Churchill, expressing concern about the incoming administration’s Korean policy. “Menzies Quizzes Ike on MacArthur,” was the *Christian Science Monitor* headline on Dec. 19.

Stalin’s Willingness To Cooperate

On Dec. 18, right after the Eisenhower-MacArthur meeting, *New York Times* Washington bureau chief James “Scotty” Reston submitted a list of questions to the Soviet Embassy, as part of a request for an interview with Stalin. Although he had done this in the past, he had always been turned down. On Christmas Eve, the embassy sent him Stalin’s answers. The story was published on Christmas Day in the *Times*, under a five-column front-page headline, “STALIN FOR EISENHOWER MEETING; TELLS THE TIMES THAT HE FAVORS NEW APPROACH TO END KOREAN WAR.”

In this interview, Stalin said that war between the U.S. and the Soviet Union “cannot be considered as inevitable, and that our two countries can live in peace.”

Asked of his view of diplomatic conversations aimed toward a Stalin-Eisenhower meeting, he replied, “I regard this suggestion favorably.”

When asked if he were willing to cooperate on a new diplomatic approach to end the Korean War, Stalin said, “I agree to cooperate because the U.S.S.R. is interested in the liquidation of the Korean War.”

Reston wrote the following month that State De-

2. Ibid., pp. 465-468.



Sir Winston Churchill gives his famous "Iron Curtain" speech in Fulton, Missouri on May 5, 1946. Seated to his right is President Harry Truman, Churchill's lackey in Cold War politics against the FDR legacy.

partment experts underscored the importance of the fact that Stalin made "personal commitments," especially when he said, "I agree to cooperate," which was a departure from previous interviews.

While Eisenhower made no comment to reporters, Dulles issued a statement on his behalf, saying that any "concrete proposals" by Stalin "will be seriously and sympathetically received." As for a Stalin-Eisenhower meeting, Dulles said, "Diplomatic or United Nations channels of communication are always available."

The interview was an international sensation, making front-page news around the world. Reactions ranged from suspicious to hopeful.

The first reaction from Great Britain was to "Discount Stalin's Gesture" the *New York Times* reported on Dec. 26, citing British diplomats who charged that Stalin had "ulterior motives." The *Washington Post* reported on the same day that London diplomatic informants "made it plain that the British would like to sit in if any talks take place."

The French saw Stalin's interview as a ploy to "muddy the waters of the Western Alliance," but none-

theless said they would want to be represented in any talks, with a foreign office statement declaring, "it must be hoped that any such meeting would lead to a much larger reunion." The Italians were enthusiastic.

Truman, whose position after the Potsdam conference was that he would only meet Stalin if the latter came to Washington—which guaranteed that they would never meet, since Stalin almost never left the Soviet Union—kept silent on this latest overture.

The Stalin interview was played all over the Soviet media as the lead item, with all English-language broadcasts starting with the interview verbatim. Harrison Salisbury of the *New York Times* reported from Moscow on Dec. 26, that with this personal intervention, Stalin was prepared to put his country in the role of mediator in the stalemated Korean armistice talks. Salisbury wrote that such a

mediation would not only be an "entirely new task for the Soviets," but in fact, "might offer more of a chance of bringing the war in the Far East to an end ... than some in the West suppose." Salisbury's source expressed the hope for a summit meeting, since Eisenhower appeared to be someone who supported the "technique of on-the-spot examination of the facts," as was evidenced by his trip to Korea.

On Dec. 28, Austrian Chancellor Leopold Figl proposed Vienna as the venue for a summit; Berlin was also suggested in the press.

On Dec. 29, Joseph and Stewart Alsop ran a column in the *Washington Post* saying, "It can be said on good authority that both the new President and his future secretary of state, John Foster Dulles, had been weighing this same idea before Generalissimo Stalin indicated he was not opposed to it. In the State Department, moreover, the thinking of the foremost American diplomatic experts has been running on the same lines ... they argue that there may be a good chance of a peaceful settlement in Korea, if President-elect Eisenhower and Generalissimo Stalin get together and talk turkey."

A Gallup poll conducted in the first week of January revealed that 69% of those questioned were “definitely” in favor of an Eisenhower-Stalin meeting.

Churchill Is Not Pleased

Churchill acted quickly, and on Dec. 27, he announced his early departure on the *Queen Mary* on Dec. 31 to hold informal talks with Eisenhower in New York City, en route to Jamaica. The key topics would be MacArthur’s plan, the possibility of a Stalin-Eisenhower meeting, and his demand to be part of it.

When Churchill had reentered government in 1951, he was already moving towards the Russellite line that would later be solidified under Pugwash, but with Britain as a full “partner”—i.e., in the driver’s seat. He was taken by surprise by the latest turn of events, a surprise that turned to alarm as he realized that neither Eisenhower nor Stalin wanted his participation. Churchill, and especially his Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden, were disappointed by the election of Eisenhower, thinking Adlai Stevenson would have been more of a pushover.

On Jan. 5, 1953, Churchill met with Eisenhower at the New York apartment of Bernard Baruch. Eisenhower did not fall under Churchill’s “spell,” however, but indicated the U.S. relationship with Britain would be no more “special” than with any other ally. Eisenhower brought up his proposed summit with Stalin, and mentioned that he was contemplating bringing it up in his inauguration speech. He suggested that a summit meeting could be held in Stockholm. He also told Churchill he did not want him involved, because then he would have to invite the opinions of other countries, such as France and Italy.

According to one source, Churchill felt humiliated by being treated as the “junior partner” once again. Although he was clever enough not to openly attempt to dissuade Eisenhower from meeting Stalin, he advised him to “take a few months to get into calmer atmosphere and learn the facts...” When Churchill returned to London in February, he met with Soviet Ambassador Andrei Gromyko, in an apparently unsuccessful attempt to arrange a meeting with Stalin for himself. Eisenhower’s discussion with Churchill generated discussion in the Foreign Office, which, according to offi-



Generalissimo Josef Stalin and President Franklin Roosevelt at Yalta, February 1945. Eisenhower’s naming of Charles Bohlen, FDR’s translator at all the summits with Stalin, as Ambassador to Moscow, was clearly intended to foster trust in the new administration, on the part of the Soviet leader.

cial documentation, opposed the idea of a summit.³

By Feb. 9, Churchill was downplaying any idea of a meeting between Stalin and Eisenhower, saying there was nothing to “encourage me to think that a meeting of the kind suggested would in present circumstances lead to this result” (*Christian Science Monitor*, Feb. 27).

According to British Foreign Office documents, Charles Bohlen, who would be named by Eisenhower as Ambassador to the U.S.S.R., held talks with a British Embassy official to ascertain whether Churchill’s coolness toward an Eisenhower-Stalin meeting was because he felt left out, or whether he opposed it out of principle.⁴

The Momentum Grows

But despite the British opposition, momentum was building for a summit, after Eisenhower’s inauguration on Jan. 20, 1953.

On Feb. 25, Eisenhower was asked at a press conference to comment on a proposal circulating in Congress calling for the government to repudiate all wartime agreements between the Soviet Union and the United

3. Uriel Bar-Noi, *The Cold War and Soviet Mistrust of Churchill’s Pursuit of Detente 1951-55* (East Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 1988), pp. 74-75.

4. David C. Williams, *Separate Agendas: Churchill, Eisenhower and Anglo-American Relations 1953-1955* (Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Press, 2005), p. 13.

States. Eisenhower expressed his disapproval of such a proposal. He was then asked directly by Robert E. Clark of the International News Service, about Stalin's answer to the *Times'* Reston in which he expressed his openness to a meeting with Eisenhower.

Eisenhower replied: "I would meet anybody, anywhere, where I thought there was the slightest chance of doing any good, as long as it was in keeping with what the American people expect of their Chief Executive. In other words, I wouldn't want to just say, 'Yes, I will go anywhere.' I would go to any suitable spot, let's say halfway between, and talk to anybody, and with the full knowledge of our allies and friends as to the kind of thing I was talking about, because this business of defending freedom is a big job. It is not just one nation's job."

Andrew F. Tully of Scripps Howard Newspapers asked whether Eisenhower would have faith in promises or agreements made with Stalin. Eisenhower responded: "This is what I believe: Any worthwhile programs for peace in the future must provide some kind of terms and provisions that make certain it is a self-enforcing treaty; ample provisions for the kind of inspections and the kind of things that leave no doubt as to what will happen."⁵

On Feb. 26, Eisenhower named Bohlen as Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Bohlen had been FDR's translator at all the summits with Stalin, and was considered to be the only State Department official that FDR trusted. Stalin died before Bohlen's confirmation by the Senate.

On Feb. 27, the *Christian Science Monitor* published a United Press dispatch from Moscow stating, "Foreign observers here say they believe the Russians would welcome President Eisenhower's willingness to discuss peace face to face with Prime Minister Joseph Stalin. Their best guess is that Berlin could be the meeting place." It further stated that Eisenhower's statement "was expected to receive favorable reaction," and "observers said they believe the likelihood of a meeting



General Eisenhower and the other Allied Commanders in Berlin, June 5, 1945. Left to right: Britain's Bernard Montgomery, Eisenhower, the U.S.S.R.'s Georgy Zhukov, and France's Jean de Lattre de Tassigny. Eisenhower and Zhukov had a collegial working relationship.

was good now that both men had expressed readiness for one." The article pointed to Moscow's the prompt acceptance of Bohlen as ambassador as a good sign, noting that he "could be useful in arranging a meeting in view of his participation in previous conferences with Stalin personally..." The article concluded that once Bohlen arrived in Moscow, the talks could begin for a meeting.

On Feb. 27, British Foreign Secretary Eden boarded the *Queen Elizabeth* for Washington, with orders from Churchill to "Quiz Eisenhower on Stalin Parley View," according to the *Christian Science Monitor* on Feb. 27, adding, "It is probable that the British would rather there were no meeting than that there should be one between only President Eisenhower and Stalin."

There is documented evidence from official British correspondence of the expressions of rage by Eden and Churchill, at the fact that there was very serious discussion in the Eisenhower Administration of a Stalin-Eisenhower meeting, specifically without the presence of the British. Eden expressed anger particularly at Bohlen, who was apparently encouraging a meeting without the British.

On March 2, in answer to a question in Parliament about Eisenhower's press conference, Churchill con-

5. *American Presidency Project, Public Papers of the Presidents*, D.D. Eisenhower XXXIV, President of the United States: 1953-1961; The President's News Conference, Feb. 15, 1953.

firmed Eisenhower's public declaration of his willingness to meet Stalin, and of course added that he was prepared to join him. The *Sydney Morning Herald* (March 3) added that a United Press dispatch from Moscow cited foreign observers saying that prospects for a Stalin-Eisenhower meeting were "very good," but that they did not think Churchill would be invited.

Eden arrived in Washington on March 4. On the next day, Stalin was dead.

A Lost Chance?

Eisenhower clearly wanted to re-establish collaborative relations with the Soviet Union, relations that failed to materialize after Stalin's death. He expressed it himself in his wartime memoir, *Crusade in Europe*, written in 1948, during the Cold War. There he described his visit to Moscow in August 1945, when he talked with Stalin, while attending a national sports parade:

"He evinced great interest in the industrial, scientific, educational and social achievements of America. He repeated several times that it was necessary for Russia to remain friends with the United States. Speaking through an interpreter, he said in effect: There are many ways in which we need American help. It is our great task to raise the standards of living of the Russian people, which have been seriously damaged by the war. We must learn all about your scientific achievements in agriculture. Likewise, we must get your technicians to help us in our engineering and construction problems, and we want to know more about mass production methods in factories. We know that we are behind in these things and we know that you can help us.' This general trend of thought he pursued in many directions, whereas I had supposed that he would content himself merely with some expression of desire to cooperate."

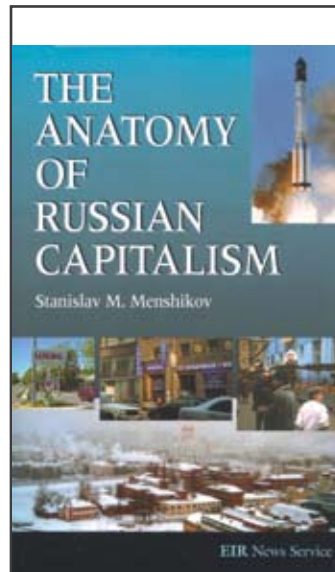
Eisenhower put the desire to cooperate in a broader context: "In the past relations of America and Russia there was no cause to regard the future with pessimism. Historically, the two peoples had maintained an unbroken friendship that dated back to the birth of the United States as an independent republic. Except for a short period, their diplomatic relations had been continuous. Both were free from the stigma of colonial empire building by force. The transfer between them of the rich Alaskan territory was an unmatched international episode, devoid of threat at the time and of any recrimination after the exchange. Twice they had been allies in war. Since 1941 they had been dependent each on the

other for ultimate victory over the European Axis."

After reviewing the obvious differences and potential for conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union, Eisenhower continued: "Should the gulf, however, be bridged practically by effective methods of cooperation, the peace and unity of the world would be assured. No other division among nations could be considered a menace to world unity and peace, provided mutual confidence and trust could be developed between America and the Soviets.

"Berlin, we were convinced, was an experimental laboratory for development of international accord. There the West joined the East in the task of reorganizing a highly complex economy and re-educating a numerous people to political decency so that Germany, purged of its capacity and will for aggression, might be restored to the family of nations."

Eisenhower's vision was not to be realized, of course. Instead, the dominant Cold War geometry reasserted itself under British sponsorship. It still remains for American patriots to take up the task of eradicating the British Empire, once and for all.



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