

Europe from challenges of war towards challenges of peace

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Abstract

The end of the World War Second, did not bring peace and harmony among the peoples of Europe and World as expected. Enmity of the war time created such a deep ditch, which could not be overcome for a short time. What's more, even among the allies-winners of the war, friendship and cooperation did not last too long. Very soon, two-three years after the end of the war, Europe was separated by an *iron curtain*, as Winston Churchill, the British prime minister would call it.

The shadow of this division, first of all ideological, became known mostly in South Eastern European countries. This region, for about half of a century was seized by stalinism and democracy. Consequences of this division were not only political. Division produced economic and development consequences, which, in one or many ways, even nowadays, hinder this region in the European and Euro-Atlantic integration processes.

Keywords: war, security, economy, integration, Europe, EU.

Introduction

The date of surrender of the Nazi Germany, on 7 May 1945, was the long-awaited news for hundreds of millions of European residents, and for the whole freedom loving Europe. It seemed that enthusiasm and optimism would last. Spontaneous celebrations filled the roads and quarters of European cities. Thus, an era of great expectations was about to begin, because democracy prevailed over fascism, that the great depression was only a remembrance and that prosperity was ahead.

However, the year 1945 marked the end of a great war and the beginning of another war. The Cold War of the two postwar super powers was not an episode like other wars which have their beginning and their end, winner and loser (Calvocoressi, 1999, 3). As Thomas Hobbes would express himself long time ago: "*a war is not only the battle or the act of fighting but a segment of time during which, the volition to confront in the battle is very much expressed*" (Hobbes, 1997, 191). Such like was in fact the Cold War. The direct confrontation of the two main rivals did not happen, but in all parts of the globe, the whole generations of young people grew up in fear and threat that a great confrontation would happen. A peculiarity of the Cold War was that both parties expected global distribution of the influence according to a new balance of forces.¹

Traditional balance of power in the European continent had been broken. Great

¹ In fact the Cold War derives from the rivalry between the British-American and Soviet rivals in expanding their influence on specific states and governments in Europe, see: Walker, M. (1994). *The Cold War - A history*, Henry Holt & Company, New York, 11.

Britain and France came exhausted out of the war, whereas the defeated Germany was divided in two states. Consequently, as new actors in the global politics emerged two powers that bore the burden of the war and, as a result of this, evidently increased their influence in the policy of the continent. The old European balance was replaced by the global balance of power between the United States of America (USA) and the Socialist Republics of the Soviet Union (SRSU). The fate of the continent would now be determined in Washington and in Moscow (Laker, 2003, 35). Shortly before leaving for the Black Sea Summit of the collapsed Soviet Union, at the Crimea Yalta resort, from 4-11 February 1945 where the „big trio“ met: the smiling tyrant of Moscow, Josif V. Stalin, the American president, Franklin D. Roosevelt who was about to die (died after two months) and the Prime minister of the Great Britain, Winston S. Churchill who addressed himself to his personal secretary *“Keep in mind that except Greece, the entire Balkans will become Bolshevik, and I can do nothing to prevent this from happening. I can do nothing for Poland either”* (Walker, 1994, 11). This Churchill's saying explains clearly that the informal division of Europe had been dictated due to the military situation before the invasion of Germany. The Yalta Conference finally separated the big allies of the war by reviving the Cold War which would last for 40 years. What's more, both groups of states adopted political institutions, economic practices and foreign policies that reflected preferences and the influences of the two respective powers which helped their liberation.²

The most evident political, economic, territorial and military changes, occurred in the Central and South-Eastern Europe. For 45 years, the countries of this region would turn into an arena of influences between two world powers, through an iron curtain. Nowhere more than in this part of the world did the bipolarity of the world order appear. The historical background and the geographic position made this part of Europe important in the relationships between Moscow and Washington. The summit in Moscow between Churchill and Stalin³ as well as the agreement of percentage tells for the interest of each power to preserve and expand here their influence.

Campaigns of the Red Army in pursuit of Nazi armies, created the pretext for political intervention through the military presence. In most of the cases the intervention was very harsh. With the liberation motto and slogans, the Soviet army, taking advantage of the difficult situation, carried out abuses of all kinds over the population of the states in question. In the Eastern part of Germany, which was liberated by the Soviet

² France, Belgium, Greece and Italy, despite the fact that their communist movement had played a role in the movement of resistance, reinstated their western parliamentary system and the capitalist economic structure, by managing their foreign policy towards the British-American afterwar vision. On the other hand, the states in the Eastern part of the continent, despite suspicion on the communist ideology and national antipathy against Russia, that characterized the newest history of each of them, adopted the Soviet political and economic model by supporting clear occupation objectives of Kremlin's foreign policy and the Red Soviet Army, through recruitment of collaborators from the indigenous population, see: William R. Keylor, *The Twentieth Century World- An International History*, Fourth Edition, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxford, 2001, page 252.

³ In a face to face meeting between Churchill and Stalin in the beginning of October in Moscow, in principle, an agreement was achieved for division of spheres of interest in the Balkans as follows: Bulgaria and Rumania would be dominated by Russian influence whereas Greece by western influence. Yugoslavia would be influenced 50-50%, *The Cold War- A history*, Henry Holt & Company, New York, 1994, page 11.

Red Army, around two (2) million women were raped. The Soviet General Staff of the war was aware of these criminal actions of Russian soldiers, but did nothing to prevent this from happening (Geert, 2008, 558).

Following the end of the war, Moscow did not withdraw the army but stationed it along the whole frontline of the war with Germans up to Berlin. This means that big contingents of the Red Army would serve now in the liberated countries of Central and South-Eastern Europe as a means of pressure to consolidate communist parties and to bring them into power. In the parliamentary elections in Poland, the governance fell in the hands of pro-soviet communists. Even the efforts of the communist leader, Vladislav Gomulka, who expressed himself for the "Polish way towards socialism," were punished (Sala, Filo, Gashi, 2009, 402).

Such a situation of an unseen communist pressure was also occurring in Hungary, where the first two afterwar years, the governance of non-communist coalition continued but it was heavily blackmailed, by arresting the general secretary of the Party of small owners, Bela Kovaq, by forcing him to report his friend, the Prime minister Ferenc Nagi, for espionage against the Soviet Union. In the face of this pressure in the elections of 1949, the candidates for deputies were only from the Communist Party (Sala, Filo, Gashi, 2009, 403).

Stalinism in Czechoslovakia started through organization of Coup-d'Etat. Stalin did not like at all the unanimous decision of the Czechoslovak government to participate in the assistance of the Marshal Plan. The Coup-d'Etat was prepared by the Soviet Ambassador in Prague, Valerian Zorin. Militants of the "Action Committee" as well as the unions, being armed, occupied the Czech radio from where they threatened Benesh to create a government in which the communists would have majority of governmental positions. On 25 February 1948 the new government was established, consisted of communists, chaired by Klement Gotvald, and thus, putting to an end the democratic system, which in Czechoslovakia had started its development even before the Second World War (Sala, Filo, Gashi, 2009, 402).

Stalinism of the Esthern Germany was carried out from higher level, under the direct supervision of Soviet authorities. Creation of the Communist Party (CP) under the leadership of Valter Ulbriht, as well as its union in 1946 with the Social-democratic Party, integrated the latter in the Communist Party, and thus offered the country a communist party which was completely in programmatic line with the Soviet Union Communist Party (SUCP) (Sala, Filo, Gashi, 2009, 402).

In Bulgary, the non-communist leaders were killed, and in the national elections of October 1946 the communists won convincingly, being led by Gorge Dimitrov, one of the main figures of the communist movement not only in Bulgaria.⁴

Yugoslavia appeared to be a problem for Stalin, as its people seemed to trust its own communist leadership, lead by Tito rather than Stalin.⁵ R. Crampton, in its book, which is famous for the Balkans after the Second World War, would confirm this fact, adding that: "Only in Yugoslavia and in Albania, the communists came into power without the help of the Red Army."

⁴ www.historylearningsite.co.uk/45-50htm.

⁵ www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/books/liberation-the-bitter-road-to-freedom-europe-1945-1950/405405.article.

What's more, Stalin intervened also in other Baltic republics, by separating them from their dream over democracy and West. With respect to this, Stalin advised his foreign minister, Molotov not to bargain with allies about how to deal with Baltic states, by expressing himself decisively: "We will keep them by force"⁶.

In spite of these symptoms of a new clash, it should be emphasized that the biggest aftermath wonder was the system of the international organized relationships. If we take into consideration disappointment created by the League of Nations, especially in USA, the job done by experts is to be admired, who, in order to make a concept and build up a studied complex of international institutions, immediately after the end of the war, in the UN (United Nations) as a complex organization but an even more organized one. In the frame of an international system, relatively stable, renewal of enmities of the war time was prevented (Dahrendorf, 1997, 116). New constellation in the power of two leading states was respected to a great extent after 1949.

In fact, each of the superpowers attempted to test the power of the other. USA made this through the Marshall Plan (1947), by attracting European communist countries to become its part and to benefit from it, but with no success. Whereas the Soviet Union (SU) attempted to challenge the western power and resoluteness through the Berlin's blockade, which was successfully confronted by western allies as well as from western Berliner sectors of the city.

Establishment of the North Atlantic Alliance as well as the production of nuclear bomb by the Soviet Union, comprise an important moment in the history of relationships between USA-SRSU, where both parties recognized each others' real power. Hereafter, rivalry was developed through international exponents of each superpower as well as through regional conflicts encouraged and assisted sometimes by one party and sometimes by the other.

Conclusions

Referring to what was said above, and always in the context of the main topic, a couple of conclusions can be made in relation to the democratization of the South-Eastern Europe.

- The end of the Second World War (SWW), revived enthusiasms and big expectations of all Europeans who survived it. Hopes of peoples for more wellbeing and democracy comprised the new way of thinking, but these hopes were partially fulfilled only in the western hemisphere of the continent;
- Democratization of the European society was in a very incipient phase, which started after the end of the First World War (FWW). As such, it was interrupted by the Second World War and, consequently, the old states of the continent, now at the end of the war, banked on the implementation of the principles of the Atlantic Charter, as a guide for upbuilding of a new and more democratic society;
- Even the peoples of the Soviet Union hoped that Stalin would change the course in the internal policy of the country, due to the circumstances created by the war alliance with the West as well as relaxation of relationships with the orthodox

⁶ www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/books/liberation-the-bitter-road-to-freedom-europe-1945-1950/405405.article.

church during the war time;

- The course of events which were just mentioned above proved the opposite. Stalin re-established the old course of strengthening the cult of personality and revolutionary totalitarianism;
- Unfortunately, this policy of revolutionary totalitarianism and stalinism, imported by the Red Army, is already being served to European satellite countries as well, thus suffocating, since its inception, every democratic effort;
- Hopes raised by the Truman Doctrine for prevention of Russian ideologic and political expansion over the Central and South-Eastern Europe proved not to be realistic. Even the Republicans who promised that they would liberate Europe from Stalin's claws, when they won elections, they forgot these promises;
- In the face of this pretty hopeless situation, democratization of South-Eastern countries remained only a dream of the future. Communist leadership, with little nuances, chose the Soviet way of building socialism. However, even there were attempts for deviation from Kremlin's tutorial policies, corrections were made by the language of tanks of the Red Army;
- Fenomenon of unmasking each different way of thinking or liberal discourse in politics, economy or in culture and art within these societies was suffocated and punished by high authorities of the party in cooperation with secret police. It is enough to mention the case of Millovan Gijlas, close collaborator of Josip Broz Tito, or Maria Zhivkova, Minister of Culture and the daughter of the communist leader of the Bulgarian state, Todor Zhivkov. Both of them were removed and politically eliminated due to their liberal inclinations;
- In conclusion, we can say that the end of the Cold War and the fall of the iron curtain opened the formal way to reunite the continent. However, the 45 year ideologic and development ditch has left deep traces in the political psychology of the people and states that lived separated from each other. These traces have not been recuperated for almost three decades. European Union, as an economic and political umbrella of European people has often found itself challenged in its expansion process towards this community of states. The truth is that much of the integration process has been successfully finalized, with some waves of expansion since the Maastricht Treaty onwards, which was officially signed by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the member countries, on 7 February 1992, in a city in Netherlands, from where it got its name, near the border with Germany and Belgium. Another part of the region, not such a big one, remained unintegrated. All points of view of the problem speak about the need of a more active policy of the European Union (EU) as well as its mechanisms in the integration process of the Western Balkans. Many positive premises have now already been created or are being created. However, there is an even further discouraging circumstance in this process. If EU wants to condition the integration policy to the level of democratization and decriminalization of the region, but without direct assistance to the process, I doubt that this process will occur on a day, noticeably faraway from today.

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