

Harry S. Truman, Message to Congress, March 12, 1947

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, Members of the Congress of the United States:

[...] One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States is the creation of conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion. This was a fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan. Our victory was won over countries
5 which sought to impose their will, and their way of life, upon other nations.

To ensure the peaceful development of nations, free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations, The United Nations is designed to make possible lasting freedom and independence for all its members. We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity
10 against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes. This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States.

The peoples of a number of countries of the world have recently had totalitarian regimes forced
15 upon them against their will. The Government of the United States has made frequent protests against coercion and intimidation, in violation of the Yalta agreement, in Poland, Rumania, and Bulgaria. I must also state that in a number of other countries there have been similar developments.

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice is too often not a free one.

20 One way of life is based upon the will of the majority, and is distinguished by free institutions, representative government, free elections, guarantees of individual liberty, freedom of speech and religion, and freedom from political oppression.

The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. It relies upon terror and oppression, a controlled press and radio; fixed elections, and the suppression of
25 personal freedoms.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.

I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential
30 to economic stability and orderly political processes.

The world is not static, and the status quo is not sacred. But we cannot allow changes in the status quo in violation of the Charter of the United Nations by such methods as coercion, or by such subterfuges as political infiltration. In helping free and independent nations to maintain their freedom, the United States will be giving effect to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

35 It is necessary only to glance at a map to realize that the survival and integrity of the Greek nation are of grave importance in a much wider situation. If Greece should fall under the control of an armed minority, the effect upon its neighbor, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East.

Moreover, the disappearance of Greece as an independent state would have a profound effect
40 upon those countries in Europe whose peoples are struggling against great difficulties to maintain
their freedoms and their independence while they repair the damages of war.

It would be an unspeakable tragedy if these countries, which have struggled so long against
overwhelming odds, should lose that victory for which they sacrificed so much. Collapse of free
institutions and loss of independence would be disastrous not only for them but for the world.
45 Discouragement and possibly failure would quickly be the lot of neighboring peoples striving to
maintain their freedom and independence.

Should we fail to aid Greece and Turkey in this fateful hour, the effect will be far reaching to the
West as well as to the East.

We must take immediate and resolute action.

50 I therefore ask the Congress to provide authority for assistance to Greece and Turkey in the
amount of \$400,000,000 for the period ending June 30, 1948. In requesting these funds, I have taken
into consideration the maximum amount of relief assistance which would be furnished to Greece out of
the \$350,000,000 which I recently requested that the Congress authorize for the prevention of
starvation and suffering in countries devastated by the war.

55 In addition to funds, I ask the Congress to authorize the detail of American civilian and military
personnel to Greece and Turkey, at the request of those countries, to assist in the tasks of
reconstruction, and for the purpose of supervising the use of such financial and material assistance as
may be furnished. I recommend that authority also be provided for the instruction and training of
selected Greek and Turkish personnel.

60 Finally, I ask that the Congress provide authority which will permit the speediest and most
effective use, in terms of needed commodities, supplies, and equipment, of such funds as may be
authorized.

If further funds, or further authority, should be needed for purposes indicated in this message, I
shall not hesitate to bring the situation before the Congress. On this subject the Executive and
65 Legislative branches of the Government must work together.

This is a serious course upon which we embark.

I would not recommend it except that the alternative is much more serious. The United States
contributed \$341,000,000,000 toward winning World War II. This is an investment in world freedom
and world peace.

70 The assistance that I am recommending for Greece and Turkey amounts to little more than 1
tenth of 1 per cent of this investment. It is only common sense that we should safeguard this
investment and make sure that it was not in vain.

The seeds of totalitarian regimes are nurtured by misery and want. They spread and grow in the
evil soil of poverty and strife. They reach their full growth when the hope of a people for a better life
75 has died. We must keep that hope alive.

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

If we falter in our leadership, we may endanger the peace of the world -- and we shall surely
endanger the welfare of our own nation.

Great responsibilities have been placed upon us by the swift movement of events.

80 I am confident that the Congress will face these responsibilities squarely.