

Harry S. Truman: The Truman Doctrine

In this address to Congress, President Truman stressed the duty of the United States to combat totalitarian regimes worldwide. His March 12, 1947, speech called for \$400 million in aid to Greece and Turkey, both of which he said were threatened by communism. Congress approved the financial aid as well as the commitment of U.S. troops to administer postwar reconstruction.

The peoples of a number of countries of the world have recently had totalitarian regimes forced upon them against their will. The government of the United States has made frequent protests against coercion¹ and intimidation, in violation of the Yalta agreement, in Poland, Romania, 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. 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 personal freedoms.

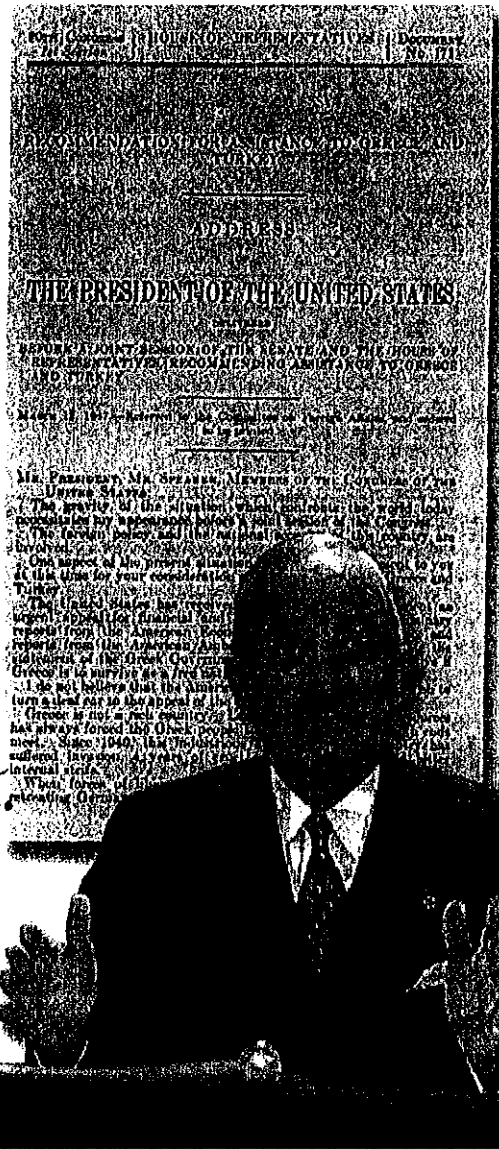
I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation² by armed minorities or by outside pressures.

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 to economic stability and orderly political processes. . . .

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 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.



▲ President Truman delivering a speech

Thinking Critically

- 1. Make Inferences** What is President Truman referring to when he mentions the two "alternative ways of life"?
- 2. Recognize Causes and Effects** According to Truman, how would economic aid support freedom in Greece and Turkey?

Complete sentences! →

1 coercion (koh ER zhuhn) *n.* government by force.

2 subjugation (suhb juh GAY shuhn) *n.* condition of being under the control of a conqueror.