# Evaluate the importance of each of the following in the breakdown of East – West relations 1945 – 1949, the Potsdam Conference, the Sovietization of Eastern and Central Europe, the Marshall Plan.

The tension between USA and USSR began even before the World War 2. There are several events and incidents, which builds up the tension between two countries. In this essay, I will evaluate the importance of several events, and how they contribute into the breakdown of East – West relations.

The Potsdam conference was taken place and time towards the end of World War 2 (WW2). This was where the tension between the two big powers started to build up. In the previous Yalta conference, Stalin and Roosevelt were able to make compromises and agreements. Three months before the Potsdam conference took place, president Roosevelt passed away and was replaced by president Truman. In this meeting, Stalin’s encounter with Truman was not as pleasant as the previous conferences. In the Yalta conference, they agreed to disarm, demilitarize, de-Nazify, and divide Germany. They decided to divide Germany into their own zones for occupation. This decision led to many problems. They also divided Berlin, which was in the Soviet zones, into four zones. This created the Berlin Crisis. Their decision in this conference, was crucial in the breakdown of their relationship because it led to many other things that happens.

In terms of Poland, they agreed that they are to have a “free and democratic” government. However, this didn’t happen. Stalin promised that they would have free elections in Poland weeks after the Potsdam conference. Instead, there weren’t any elections until 1947, almost two years after the conference was held. But this election wasn’t fair nor just. There were over 50000 people deported before the election. The Mikolajczyk’s Polish Peasant Party disqualified 246 candidates. Some others were arrested and murdered. There were also a million voters that were taken off the electoral register for numerous of excuses. At last, there were only the communist activists left. This was an example of how Stalin used the salami tactics to take over Eastern Europe. It showed the USA how “promising” Stalin was, this intensifies the distrust between both countries.

There was also the demonstration of USA’s atomic bomb in Nagasaki. At that time, Stalin did not know the extent of their “super weapon”. So when USA dropped the bomb on Japan, USSR was to an extent, intimidated by their weapon. That increases both side’s awareness on atomic weapon. On one hand, USA realizes that they could use this as a threat in the future towards any hostile countries. They are the only country at that time who had the new “super power”. On the other hand, USSR realizes they are under threat not only by the majority of capitalistic countries, but also under pressure by USA. This incident lead to the “action and reaction” pattern. Where both countries relies on threatening each other, this catastrophe in Japan did was merely a starting point on building up their awareness of atomic bomb.

After the Potsdam conference, Stalin used the salami tactics to take over eastern Europe. This happened during 1946 to 1947. This event in itself was already a threat to USA. USSR had a geographic advantage because they are already in control Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria. So for them to take over more eastern Europe countries were not that difficult. USA thought that if they had more and more countries on their side, there would be a intense relationship between the two big powers of east a west, making the world more divided. This could also lead to another war.

There were three steps of the salami tactics. The first step clearly shows Stalin’s hostility against anything that is not communism. He used the excuse of creating a “anti facists” government to eliminate anyone who is not a leftist. The second step was to “slice off” different parties one by one. The final step is when there are only communists left in the country, they would replace anyone if needed with the “baggage train” people from Moscow. When this is complete, they have a big control over the government. They wanted to do these to Iran, Greece, Turkey, Italy and France. It didn’t go as well as they thought. In Iran, all three sides had troops stationed there. They agreed in the Tehran conference to draw out all the troops. Although USA and Great Britain (GB) did, USSR remained 30000 soldiers on the northern border. Claiming that they were there to offer help to Iran if the are needed. This angered the USA and GB. For one, USSR were not doing what they agreed to. For two, Iran had an important natural resource, which is oil. The value of their resources made their relationship more intense. Eventually the troops had to pull out because they were facing pressure from the protest of Iran and UN. There were instability in the other countries, they contributed into building the tension. For example, communist parties were popular in Italy and France. USA and GB suspected that USSR was behind this, although they had no evidence. Nevertheless, the use of Salami tactics frightened the USA, they were ready to respond in order to show their power.

Following the Salami tactics, the USA responded with the creation of the Marshall plan. Creator of this plan, George Marshall, claimed that this was created because Western Europe needed immediate help from the USA. This was an economic aspect of the Truman doctrine. The plan’s aim was to ensure “political stability” in Europe. Marshall believed that a steady economic environment could lead to a peaceful government. they want to avoid what had happened to Germany after WW1. This plan might have angered Stalin. On one hand, they feel like USA had no right to interfere with anything that happens in Europe. They were once a isolated country, but all of a sudden they want to get involved and help. To Stalin, it seemed like this is merely a counterstrike to his salami tactics.

On the outside, USA seemed to be inviting USSR to join the Marshall plan, but they intended the USSR to refuse because they had a requirement, which is to access their financial records. The USSR didn’t agree to that and in return, formed the COMECON. This shows that the plan had offended USSR because they felt like the West wants to create a dollar imperialistic Europe. They believed that USA wants to use money to control European countries, because they also believed that if the countries relied in USA on economy, USA will soon have control over the government. the Soviet Foreign Minister Vyshinsky stated that” it is becoming more and more evident to everyone that the implementation of the Marshall Plan will mean placing European countries under the economic and political control of the United States and direct interference by the latter in those countries”. This was an important element in the breakdown of the east and west because the economy of countries had large involvement with the political status.

Take Germany after WW1 as an example. They had a poor economy, there was inflation, people were starving. Generally the Germans were not happy with what they had. Since they were not happy with their situation, they didn’t show interest in the weak government. causing the government to have no power to control the country. The power of money, directly influences the satisfaction of the people, the status in the world, and your extent of control. Now that we understand economy is a important aspect, we can see that this is a great example of the pattern “action and reaction”. By now, both sides are just reacting to what the other side has done. They are both thinking the other side has great power, and both faking that they do. This tension continues to grow as both sides feel more attached to their power.

In the breakdown of East – West relations, all events on the above contributed equally. The Potsdam conference started this tension, the sovietization intensifies that tension, and the Marshall plan is an example of the continuation of their poor relationship.

## Bibliography

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