

An abbreviated transcript of President's Truman's speech to Congress on 12 March 1947.

This 'recommendation for assistance to Greece and Turkey' asked Congress to authorise \$400m in military and economic assistance. It became known as the 'Truman Doctrine'.

1. The United States has received from the Greek Government an urgent appeal for financial and economic assistance.
2. Since 1940 this industrious and peace-loving country has suffered invasion, four years of cruel enemy occupation, and bitter internal strife.
3. When forces of liberation entered Greece they found that the retreating Germans had destroyed virtually all the railways, roads, port facilities, communications, and merchant marine. More than a thousand villages had been burned. Eighty-five percent of the children were tubercular. Livestock, poultry, and draft animals had almost disappeared. Inflation had wiped out practically all savings.
4. Greece is today without funds to finance the importation of those goods which are essential to bare subsistence.
5. The very existence of the Greek state is today threatened by the terrorist activities of several thousand armed men, led by Communists, who defy the Government's authority at a number of points, particularly along the northern boundaries.
6. Meanwhile, the Greek Government is unable to cope with the situation. The Greek army is small and poorly equipped. It needs supplies and equipment if it is to restore authority to the Government throughout Greek territory.
7. Greece must have assistance if it is to become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy.
8. The United States must supply that assistance. We have already extended to Greece certain types of relief and economic aid, but these are inadequate.
9. It is of the utmost importance that we supervise the use of any funds made available to Greece, in such a manner that each dollar spent will count toward making Greece self-supporting, and will help to build an economy in which a healthy democracy can flourish.
10. At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. The choice too often is not a free one.
11. 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.
12. 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.

13. 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.
14. I believe that we must assist free peoples to work out their own destinies in their own way.
14. I believe that our help should be primarily through economic and financial aid which is essential to economic stability and orderly political processes.
15. 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 neighbour, Turkey, would be immediate and serious. Confusion and disorder might well spread throughout the entire Middle East.
16. We must take immediate and resolute action.
17. 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.
18. We must keep that hope alive.
19. The free peoples of the world look to us for support in maintaining their freedoms.
20. 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.

Tasks

- A. 'What bitter internal strife' is Truman referring to in paragraph 2? You may need to research this.
- B. In this speech Truman identifies two factors which, in his view help the spread of Communism. What are they?
- C. Look carefully at paragraphs 9 and 14. What do they mean? Do they contradict each other?
- D. Paragraphs 11 and 12 might be seen as important in describing the essential nature of the Cold War. Why might that be?
- E. What American strategic theory is implied by paragraph 16? What is the strategic importance of this part of the world? Refer to a map to explain your answer.
- F. Did the contents of paragraph 13 have any long-term implications for US policy?
- G. Discuss Truman's use of language when discussing those he supports, and those he opposes. Does he use particular terms and phrases to label the two sides of this developing Cold War conflict?
- H. What do you think is the main focus of Truman's speech?