

# President Truman: We Must Defend Freedom

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*In 1947 President Harry S. Truman urged the U.S. to take an active stand to help any nation resisting the spread of communism. In his speech before Congress, condensed here, he used the phrase “totalitarian regime” to refer to communist dictatorships.*

## Address Before Congress, 1947

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 [force]. This was a fundamental issue in the war with Germany and Japan.

Our victory was won over countries 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 against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes [dictator governments].

At the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between alternative ways of life.

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 [elimination] of personal freedoms.

I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation [take-over] 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.



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.

**Questions:** *What is the choice that President Truman says nations face in the world as it was in 1947? Why does he believe it is important for the U.S. to help other nations that are threatened by communism?*

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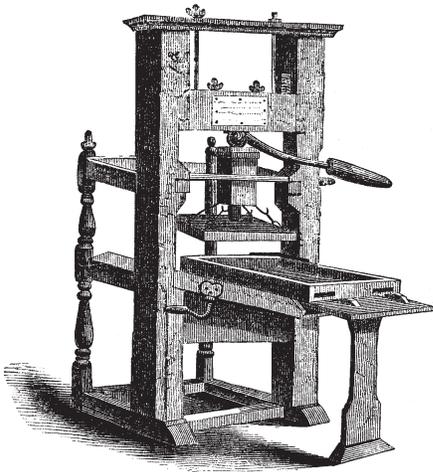
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