

The Cold War Heats Up

By 1946—less than a year after the end of World War II—the Soviet Union established a political order in Eastern Europe which completely cut off that region from the Western world. Communist governments were forced on nation after nation.

Former prime minister Winston Churchill, while visiting Truman's home state of Missouri in the spring of 1946, spoke of the threat of Soviet-backed communism, calling it "an Iron Curtain" which "has descended across the continent" of Europe.

Angered by the speech, Joseph Stalin responded, calling Churchill's sentiment a "call to war with the Soviet Union." But no war of armed soldiers broke out in the war-torn nations of Europe. The new conflict—this Cold War—was generally played out in other ways. For no one wanted war—not even the Western powers, led by President Truman.

Truman met the Soviet challenge through other means. In the fall of 1946, the pro-British Greek government came under challenge by Greek communist forces supported by the Soviet Union. Neighboring Turkey seemed headed down the same road. Britain was unable to supply the Greeks with adequate monetary support to fight the communists.

Truman decided to meet the challenge by announcing in March of 1947 that the U.S. would help any free country fight communist aggression.

This policy was soon known as the Truman Doctrine. The primary goal of this policy was known as *containment*, an attempt to keep communism out of vulnerable states. Almost immediately, the U.S. Congress appropriated \$400 million to aid the Greeks and the Turks in their struggle. In time, communist influences were defeated in both nations.

To halt the threat of communist influence in other European nations and to help rebuild their shattered economies, the United States helped rebuild Europe. Proposed by U.S. Secretary of State George Marshall, the European Recovery Plan (popularly, it was known as the Marshall Plan) offered economic aid to any European country, even the Soviet Union. When Czechoslovakia and Poland attempted to participate in the program, the Soviet Union refused to allow them to receive American aid. In time, the Marshall Plan funneled \$13 billion to help reestablish economic order in Western Europe.

In 1948, Truman made another decisive move in response to Stalin's aggressive policies in Eastern Europe. In June, the U.S., Britain, and France—each of whom controlled a sector of Germany—announced their plan to unite their sectors into the West German Federal Republic (West Germany).

Stalin immediately responded with a desperate plan to close off the city of Berlin from the Western Allies. (Berlin was divided into four sectors, just as Germany was. The city was located over one hundred miles inside the Russian sector.) Organizing a Berlin blockade, Stalin ordered all rail, highway, and river traffic to Berlin closed to the West. But Truman answered Stalin's blockade with an airlift. For nearly a year, every day, Britain, France, and the U.S. sent planes over West Berlin, dropping millions of tons of supplies (the Americans spoke of it as "Operation Vittles"), thus breaking Stalin's plan to occupy all of Berlin.

Review and Write

1. What steps did Truman take to help meet Soviet communist aggression in Europe?
2. What was the Marshall Plan and what were its aims?
3. Describe the Berlin blockade and the Berlin airlift.

U.S. History: What is the U.N.?

Directions: Today in class, we will learn about the United Nations, which are commonly known as the U.N. The U.N. emerged out of WWII. The mission of the U.N. was to replace the League of Nations and promote world Peace. Since its advent, we have seen the U.N. being instrumentally involved in global affairs. Today, you will have the opportunity to explore this international organization on your own or with a partner. After completing the questions below, we will do a four corners activity further exploring this topic. Below are website links that will help you in this activity.

<http://www.un.org/en/about-un/index.html>

<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1937-1945/un>

<http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-united-nations-is-born>

<http://study.com/academy/lesson/wwii-aftermath-the-creation-of-the-united-nations.html>

1. What is the U.N.?
2. What international events happened for the U.N to form?
3. What are some issues the U.N. addresses? (hint, look under the "Overview" category)
4. What is the main objective of the U.N.? (Hint, look under "What we do")

5. What are the four most important issues that the U.N. addresses?
6. Based off of your current knowledge, make a prediction why you think the U.N. has lasted so long and has been as successful as it has been?
7. Identify and describe six issues/campaigns the U.N. has addressed? (Hint look under "Overview" at the bottom of the page)
8. Why was the U.N. created after WWII in 1945? What were some key issues that were addressed? (Look at the study.com link and read "Creation of the U.N.")
9. Where does the U.N. run its operations?
10. How do you think the U.N. can accomplish anything when so many of its members speak so many different languages and come from so many different backgrounds? (Under "Overview" and then "Official Languages on the right)

The Soviet Union

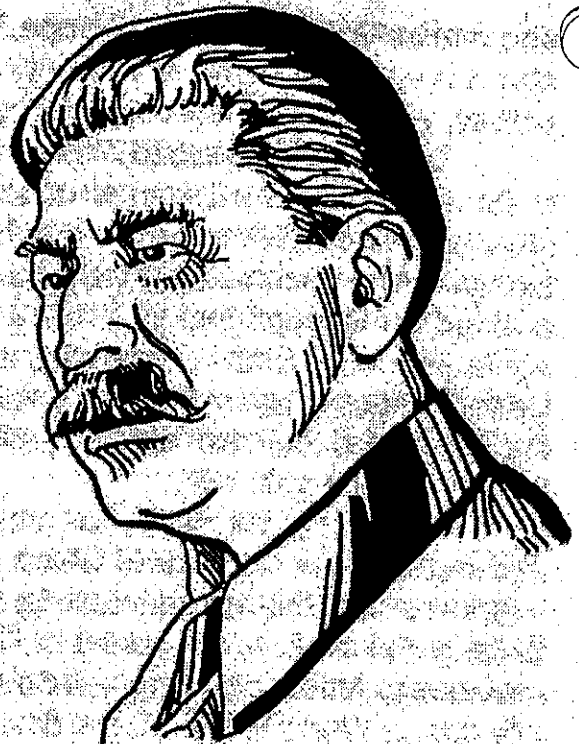
The Soviet Union had made a strange ally for the United States. The two countries were bound together in their common struggle against Hitler's Germany, but beyond that the nations had little in common. In fact, prior to World War II, the countries were hostile toward each other. As a capitalist and democratic nation, the United States was by nature opposed to communism. When Russia experienced a communist revolution in 1917, the United States refused to recognize the new communist government. There was a long history of mistrust between the two nations.

Of all the allies, the Soviet Union suffered the most from World War II. Nearly 20 million Russian soldiers and civilians died during the war. Many Russian cities were in ruins, and the countryside was devastated by the fighting. For the second time in twenty years, Russia had been invaded from the west and had fought a war on her own soil. Although they were victorious, the war was a catastrophe for the Soviets. In comparison, the United States had suffered only half a million deaths, and its cities and factories were untouched by the war.

Even during the war, many American leaders were suspicious of the Soviet Union. They did not trust Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader. They pointed out that Stalin had often treated his own people brutally. They were strongly opposed to communism. They believed that the Soviet Union would continue to promote communist **revolutions** after the war. President Roosevelt largely ignored these arguments. He knew that the United States needed to keep good relations with the Soviets during the war.

After the war, Stalin took actions that appeared threatening to some people in the United States. While pushing back the German armies, the Soviet Union liberated several Eastern European countries. At the Yalta conference, Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill had agreed that free elections would be held in these countries. After the war, elections were held, but American government officials contended that the elections were rigged so that the communists would win. Poland, Hungary, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia were all soon ruled by communist governments. Stalin argued that it was necessary for Russia's neighbors to have friendly governments, for Russia could not afford to be invaded again. Many people in the United States were reluctant to accept this explanation. In a speech given on March 5, 1946, Winston Churchill warned that "an iron curtain is descending upon Europe." Stalin closed off all contact between Eastern Europe and the West. (See map on page 83.) American leaders could only guess what Stalin's plans were and what was happening behind the iron curtain. People wondered if Stalin was protecting the Soviet borders or planning a worldwide communist revolution. Only Stalin knew for sure.

Soon, American and Soviet leaders began to disagree about almost everything. They argued about the future of their recently defeated enemy, Germany. They argued



Joseph Stalin

about rebellions in Asia and Europe. They argued in United Nations meetings. They argued about the atomic bomb, which only the United States had. The alliance crumbled completely, and the two nations soon regarded each other as enemies.

Stalin worked hard to increase the Soviet Union's power. Russian troops were used to insure that Eastern European countries had governments friendly to the Soviet Union. He stripped eastern Germany of industrial equipment and natural resources as reparations for the war. When negotiations with the other allies over Germany's future broke down, Stalin created an independent East Germany and installed a communist government that he controlled. Also, Stalin desperately wanted to obtain the atomic bomb. He knew it gave the United States a huge military advantage. In 1949 Russian scientists stunned the world when they exploded their own atomic bomb. It marked the beginning of an arms race that lasted throughout the cold war.

Another great victory for communism occurred in 1949 when the armies of Mao Zedong won the civil war in China. Mao was a devoted communist who had rallied the support of the Chinese peasants by redistributing farm land. He drove the army of his rival, Chiang Kai-shek, to the island of Taiwan. (See map on page 85.) Mao's victory looked ominous to Americans. China had the world's largest population and had been an American ally during World War II. At the time it seemed certain that China would follow the Soviet Union's leadership. Americans believed that all communist countries worked together. Suddenly, America had lost another ally.

Think about It

1. The Soviet Union had suffered tremendously during World War II. Does this fact justify their desire to control the governments of their neighboring countries after the war? Why or why not?
2. The United States and the Soviet Union were easily the most powerful nations in the world following World War II. Was it inevitable that they would eventually regard each other as enemies? Was a lasting alliance possible considering their differences?

Dictionary Exercises

Find the definitions of the following words:

1. Ally
2. Revolution
3. Rebellion
4. Reparations

Activity #1: The Soviet Union

1. What event changed Russia in 1917? (p1)
2. Which nation suffered 20 million deaths in WWII? (p2)
3. Even during the war, some Americans opposed the alliance with Joseph Stalin. List two reasons why they didn't trust Stalin. (p3)
4. Why did President Roosevelt ignore those who mistrusted Stalin? (p3)
5. Communist governments were "elected" in the countries of Eastern Europe after the war. What did American leaders believe happened during the elections? (p4)
6. Name three of the countries in Eastern Europe that came under communist control. (p4)
7. Who warned that "an iron curtain is descending upon Europe?" (p4)
8. What did Russian scientists accomplish in 1949? (p6)
9. Which side won the Chinese Civil War in 1949? (p7)
10. Who was the leader of the Chinese communists? (p7)

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Truman's Dilemma

Harry Truman was thrust into a difficult situation. In his time as vice president, he had been virtually ignored by President Roosevelt. He was inexperienced in dealing with foreign leaders, and his personality was aggressive and abrasive rather than diplomatic. When Roosevelt died, Truman needed to make difficult policy decisions with only limited information. Plans for conducting the victory in World War II were already made, but it was up to Truman to guide America to peace.

Truman was faced by two questions: what role was America to take in the post-war world, and what were the intentions of Joseph Stalin. As dictator of the Soviet Union, Stalin held complete control of his country's future actions. Truman needed to decide if Stalin's intentions were friendly or if they were hostile. He needed to know if the Soviet Union presented a threat to America, or if the two countries could work together to promote peace. Unlike Roosevelt, Truman viewed Stalin as a very serious threat.

America found itself in a unique position after World War II. The war had left America's enemies in ruin and its ally, Great Britain, deeply in debt. The United States and the Soviet Union were the only two remaining powerful nations. Traditionally, America had not involved itself in world affairs. The American people did not desire to rule over an empire. They did not wish to fight in foreign wars. America had never had a large army during times of peace. Truman, however, felt that it was time for America to assume a leadership role. Only the United States had the strength to lead after the devastation of World War II.

Truman was strongly opposed to communism, and he took a stern stance against Joseph Stalin and the Soviet Union from the beginning. He viewed Stalin's actions with a skeptical eye. "Peace has to be built on power," Truman stated. Truman pushed to retain America's large army after the war despite opposition in Congress and from the public. He wished to deal with Stalin from a position of strength. A key part of that strength was the atomic bomb. After the war, only America had the bomb, and during World War II Truman had proved that he was willing to use it.

The alliance with the Soviet Union disintegrated quickly, and in a short time the United States and the Soviet Union were openly hostile to each other. Fearful of communist expansion in Europe and throughout the world, Truman introduced what was known as the Truman Doctrine in 1947. This doctrine stated that the United States would provide aid to any country that was resisting communist aggression (attack). This plan developed into an official policy of containment. The United States wished to "contain" communism within the countries where communists already ruled.



Harry Truman

Truman also put forth other policies. In 1948 he introduced the Marshall Plan, which gave American aid to the countries of Western Europe. These countries had been devastated by the war. The goal of the Marshall Plan was to stimulate an economic recovery for Western Europe, making these countries strong enough to resist communism. The Marshall Plan was extremely successful. Within a few years, Western Europe experienced robust economic growth. In 1949 Truman formed a new alliance with Great Britain, France, and the other nations of Western Europe called NATO, and its primary purpose was to oppose the Soviet Union. (See map on page 83.) Soon these nations were also re-arming in response to the perceived Soviet threat.

President Truman guided the United States into a role of world leadership. The choices he made guaranteed that the United States would be the leader of the democratic nations. However, his assessment of Joseph Stalin also guaranteed that the United States and the Soviet Union would oppose each other. Truman believed that the Soviet Union presented a great threat to the United States, and he took the actions that he believed were necessary to protect the United States. Some historians believe that he overestimated the danger presented by the Soviets, but other historians praise him for his actions. Clearly, he set the United States on the path that led to forty years of confrontation with the Soviet Union.

1. How did Truman become the president of the United States?

2. How was Truman's relationship with Stalin different than Roosevelt's relationship with Stalin?

3. What two nations were the only two remaining "superpowers" after World War II?

4. Immediately after World War II, what was the only nation that possessed the atomic bomb?

5. Truman promised that the United States would help any nation resist communist aggression. What was the name of the doctrine that emerged from this guarantee?

6. What was the goal of the Marshall Plan?

7. Was the Marshall Plan successful?

8. What was NATO?