

6.33 Emergence of a Cold War after World War II

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Background: In February 1945 the allied leaders of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union met at Yalta in the Soviet Crimean to plan the final push to defeat the Axis Powers and plan for the post-war world. In July 1945 they met again in Potsdam, Germany. At the second meeting United States President Harry Truman replaced Franklin D. Roosevelt who had died in office and Clement Atlee, the newly elected British Prime Minister, replaced Winston Churchill. Josef Stalin, representing the Soviet Union participated in both meetings. By 1949, the United States, Great Britain, and France, with the formation of NATO and a unified independent West Germany were allied against the Soviet Union in a “Cold War.”



Source: Leslie Gilbert, Illingworth, Daily Mail, London June 16, 1947

Questions

1. What evidence of cooperation in post-war planning is there in the Yalta Agreement, the Potsdam Communiqué, and the Preamble to the United Nations Charter?
2. What is the point of view of the cartoonist about the origin of the Cold War?
3. Which statement is most closely aligned with the point of view of the cartoonist? Explain.
4. With which statement(s) on the start of the Cold War do you tend to agree the most? Why?
5. What valid points are made in the other arguments? Explain.
6. In your opinion, why did the United States and the Soviet Union move from allies to antagonists?

Yalta Conference Agreement (February 1945): “The Premier of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and the President of the United States of America have consulted with each other in the common interests of the people of their countries and those of liberated Europe. They jointly declare their mutual agreement to concert during the temporary period of instability in liberated Europe the policies of their three Governments in assisting the peoples liberated from the domination of Nazi Germany and the peoples of the former Axis satellite states of Europe to solve by democratic means their pressing political and economic problems. The establishment of order in Europe and the rebuilding of national economic life must be achieved by processes which will enable the liberated peoples to destroy the last vestiges of Nazism and fascism and to create democratic institutions of their own choice. This is a principle of the Atlantic Charter - the right of all people to choose the form of government under which they will live - the restoration of sovereign rights and self-government to those peoples who have been forcibly deprived to them by the aggressor nations.”

United Nations Charter (June 1945): “We the Peoples of the United Nations determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small, and to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained, and to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom, *And for these Ends* to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors, and to unite our strength to maintain international peace and security, and to ensure by the acceptance of principles and the institution of methods, that armed force shall not be used, save in the common interest, and to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples, *Have Resolved to Combine our Efforts to Accomplish these Aims . . .*”

Potsdam Communiqué (August 1945): “Agreement has been reached at this Conference on the political and economic principles of a coordinated Allied policy toward defeated Germany during the period of Allied control. The purpose of this agreement is to carry out the Crimea declaration on Germany. German militarism and Nazism will be extirpated and the Allies will take in agreement together, now and in the future, the other measures necessary to assure that Germany never again will threaten her neighbors or the peace of the world. It is not the intention of the Allies to destroy or enslave the German people. It is the intention of the Allies that the German people be given the opportunity to prepare for the eventual reconstruction of their life on a democratic and peaceful basis. If their own efforts are steadily directed to this end, it will be possible for them in due course to take their place among the free and peaceful peoples of the world.”

Winston Churchill (Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri, March 1946): “From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic an iron curtain has descended across the Continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia; all these famous cities and the populations around them lie in what I must call the Soviet sphere, and all are subject, in one form or another, not only to Soviet influence but to a very high and in some cases increasing measure of control from Moscow. The safety of the world, ladies and gentlemen, requires a unity in Europe, from which no nation should be permanently outcast. It is from the quarrels of the strong parent races in Europe that the world wars we have witnessed, or which occurred in former times, have sprung. Twice the United States has had to send several millions of its young men across the Atlantic to fight the wars. But now we all can find any nation, wherever it may dwell, between dusk and dawn. Surely we should work with conscious purpose for a grand pacification of Europe within the structure of the United Nations and in accordance with our Charter. In a great number of countries, far from the Russian frontiers and throughout the world, Communist fifth columns are established and work in complete unity and absolute obedience to the directions they receive from the Communist center. Except in the British Commonwealth and in the United States where Communism is in its infancy, the Communist parties or fifth columns constitute a growing challenge and peril to Christian civilization . . . I repulse the idea that a new war is inevitable -- still more that it is imminent. It is because I am sure that our fortunes are still in our own hands and that we hold the power to save the future, that I feel the duty to speak out now that I have the occasion and the opportunity to do so. I do not believe that Soviet Russia desires war. What they desire is the fruits of war and the indefinite expansion of their power and doctrines.”

Josef Stalin's Reply to Winston Churchill (March 1946): "Mr. Churchill now stands in the position of a firebrand of war. And Mr. Churchill is not alone here. He has friends not only in England but also in the United States of America. In this respect, one is reminded remarkably of Hitler and his friends. Hitler began to set war loose by announcing his racial theory, declaring that only people speaking the German language represent a fully valuable nation. Mr. Churchill begins to set war loose, also by a racial theory, maintaining that only nations speaking the English language are fully valuable nations, called upon to decide the destinies of the entire world . . . [W]hat can be surprising in the fact that the Soviet Union, in a desire to ensure its security for the future, tries to achieve that these countries should have governments whose relations to the Soviet Union are loyal? How can one, without having lost one's reason, qualify these peaceful aspirations of the Soviet Union as 'expansionist tendencies' of our Government?"

Nikolai Novikov (Soviet ambassador to Washington, September 1946): "The countries of Europe and Asia are experiencing a colossal need for consumer goods, industrial and transportation equipment etc. Such a situation provides American monopolistic capital with prospects for enormous shipments of goods and the importation of capital into these countries--a circumstance which would permit it to infiltrate their national economies. Such a development would mean a serious strengthening of the economic position of the US in the whole world and would be a stage on the road to world domination by the US."

Harry Truman (Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947): "To ensure the peaceful development of nations, free from coercion, the United States has taken a leading part in establishing the United Nations . . . We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free people to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes . . . I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures . . . 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."

George Kennan ("The Doctrine of Containment," July 1947): "It is clear that the main element of any United States policy toward the Soviet Union must be that of a long-term, patient, but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies. Soviet pressure against the free institutions of the Western world is something that can be contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points."



Follow-up: This cartoon is by Bruce Russell, "Time to Bridge the Gulch," *Los Angeles Times*, November 1945. Who is the cartoonist blaming for the breakdown of the U.S. Soviet alliance and the start of the Cold War?