

Chapter 9

From Wartime Allies to Cold War Enemies

The arguments you are about to read are derived from three different schools of historical thinking. The first statement represents the traditionalist school, widely accepted by liberal historians. The second position is held by revisionist historians, who became more critical of US foreign policy during the Vietnam War. The third stance reflects the thinking of conservative historians, who think that the United States has not been tough enough with the USSR.

Three Schools of Interpretation

1) During and after World War II, Presidents Roosevelt and Truman tried to remain on good terms with the Soviet Union. They believed the key to a future of peace and prosperity was maintenance of good US-USSR relations. If the Soviets had met the Americans half way, the Cold War could have been avoided. The United States did everything that could have been reasonably expected to prevent the development of a state of hostilities with the USSR. It was Soviet suspicion and aggression that caused the break up of the Grand Alliance.

2) The United States and other Western democracies were as responsible as the Soviet Union for breaking up the Grand Alliance. The Soviets were ready to make a deal with the United States if the Americans had allowed them a defensive sphere of influence (where their interests would be recognized as predominant) in Eastern Europe. Instead, the United States kept holding the USSR to a higher standard of democratic behavior than was practiced in either the United States or the British colonies.

3) United States diplomats practically laid down on the ground to let the Soviets walk all over them. Americans should have learned from Munich that appeasing a dictator only increases his appetite for conquest. The United States should not have worried about how the Soviets might interpret its actions. If America had been tougher with the Soviets, they would have backed down and been far less of a menace to world peace in the future.

Most Americans living in the 1950s would agree with one of these statements. You are invited to join the debate and come up with your own position based on the facts and your interpretation of them. This chapter provides information that can help readers form their own opinion as to which school of historical interpretation they accept.

From Collaboration to Confrontation

February 11, 1944

Mussolini was overthrown, but Germany remained in command in Northern Italy. The United States and Britain recognized Badoglio's Italian government composed of conservative and liberal anti-fascist politicians. The Soviets complained that communist politicians who had led the resistance to Mussolini played only a minor part in the new Italian government, but their objections were

Digital History

www.digitalhistory.uh.edu

largely ignored. The US and Great Britain disarmed communist resistance fighters who had fought bravely against Germany and put the Italian king back on the throne.

August 1, 1944

With Soviet troops only 20 miles away, the Polish underground began an uprising against German occupation forces in Warsaw. The Red Army waited six months before resuming its Polish offensive. By October, the Polish Home Army of some 40,000, with ties to the London Poles, was defeated. In all likelihood, the Soviet Union delayed its attack for political rather than military considerations so that it could establish a friendly socialist government under the pro-USSR, Lublin Poles in Poland.

December 3, 1944

In Athens, unarmed, pro-communist demonstrators were shot by Greek police. British troops began clearing communist guerrillas out of Athens. The communist party of Greece was very popular because it resisted German occupation during World War II. It took the British six weeks to put down the communist rebellion. Prime Minister Stalin neither issued a formal protest nor helped the communist party in Greece. The communists later lost the elections.

February 12, 1945

The Yalta Conference ended with an agreement that provided for self-determination in Poland and East Europe. USSR membership in the United Nations with a veto in its Security Council, four-power occupation of Germany, German reparations, and USSR entrance into the war against Japan in exchange for concessions in Asia.

April 12, 1945



President Harry

Franklin Roosevelt died and an unprepared Harry Truman became President. Truman had not been informed about previous negotiations with the USSR and was given a quick cram course.

April 21, 1945

The USSR and a provisional government composed of communist Poles signed a 20-year treaty of mutual aid. The United States protested this violation of the Yalta Agreement. Stalin replied that he was justified in interfering in Poland's affairs for reasons of self-defense. He pointed out that the British had interfered in the affairs of Greece.

April 23, 1945

Recently informed of the agreements made at Yalta, Truman took the occasion of a diplomatic visit from Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov to tell him that it was high time for the Soviets to begin to carry out both the letter and the spirit of the agreement concerning Poland. Molotov responded that he had never been addressed in such strong language before. Truman replied that he would not have talked to him that way if the Soviet government had carried out its commitments.

April 30, 1945

At the UN organizational meeting in San Francisco, the United States and others denied membership to Poland's Lublin government. The Soviets protested. They protested again when the United States successfully backed UN membership for Argentina's pro-Nazi government.

May 7, 1945

Germany surrendered, ending six years of constant warfare in Europe. The United States quickly stopped shipping Lend-Lease aid to the Soviet Union. Ships already en route to the USSR were called back. The Soviets protested and the order was reversed.

May 21, 1945

Syria and Lebanon, former French colonies, broke off diplomatic relations with France because the French attempted to regain control over them. Within two weeks, French and Syrian troops clashed in Damascus. In September 1946, revolutionaries and French soldiers came to blows when the French tried to once more rule North and South Vietnam as well as Laos and Cambodia. Ho Chi Minh, a communist and a nationalist, prepared his people to fight a guerrilla war for Vietnamese independence.

July 21, 1945

In accordance with the Yalta Agreement, the US and Great Britain pulled troops several hundred miles back from positions in central Europe during the last days of World War II. Earlier, General Eisenhower restrained General Patton from taking Berlin, Germany, and Prague, Czechoslovakia to allow Soviets to occupy areas agreed upon at Yalta.

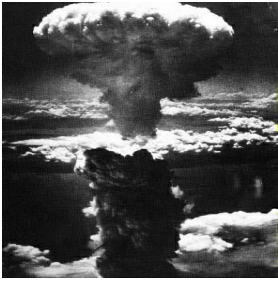
July 17-August 2, 1945

The USSR and the US and Great Britain met at Potsdam, Germany to resolve issues not settled at Yalta. Reparations from Germany were reduced from \$20 billion to what Germany was able to pay. The US and Great Britain did not want to allow the Soviets to bleed their German occupation zone of everything it had because they wanted Germany as a potential ally, in case relations with the USSR worsened.

Digital History

www.digitalhistory.uh.edu

August 6 and 9, 1945



The US dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Some historians believe the bombs were dropped more for the purpose of letting the Soviets know the US had the capacity to destroy the USSR than to force a quick Japanese surrender.

August 10-14, 1945

The Soviets entered the war against Japan. Japan surrendered; under the terms of surrender, the USSR took over the Kurile Islands and the southern Sakhalin Peninsula. Moreover, the USSR was allowed to temporarily occupy Outer Mongolia, North Korea, Port Arthur, and parts of Manchuria. The United States refused to allow the Soviets a role in the occupation and reorganization of Japan, where General MacArthur had established a democratic government, distributed land to Japanese peasants, and given women the right to vote.

January 6, 1946

The USSR-supported Polish government took over all industries in Poland and declared land redistribution. Communist officials began to limit freedom of press, speech, and assembly in order to weaken opposing parties. The Soviets defended these actions, and similar measures taken in Romania and Bulgaria as necessary to root out fascism and to build truly democratic peasant and worker governments. The Soviet Union also claimed it needed buffer states in its sphere of influence to protect it from invasion by hostile countries in the West.

January 27, 1946

Local elections were held in the American zone of occupied Germany with representatives ranging from communists to former supporters of the Nazis taking office. Later in the year elections were conducted in Italy. The pro-American Christian Democratic party (with American backing) came to power, and Italy was proclaimed a republic. The United States emphasized the need to rebuild Italy and Germany and supported amnesty for former Nazis. Industrial leaders who had backed Hitler and Mussolini were allowed to keep their factories and property. No major social reforms were undertaken.

February 9, 1946

In a belligerent speech, Stalin boasted of the Red Army's power and the Soviet people's allegiance to communism. He proclaimed that capitalism had led to political repression, economic crises, and war and that it had made a peaceful international order impossible.

Digital History

www.digitalhistory.uh.edu

March 5, 1946

Speaking in Fulton, Missouri, Winston Churchill declared that an “iron curtain” was descending on Eastern Europe, where “the Communist parties...have been raised to pre-eminence,. are seeking everywhere to obtain totalitarian control,” and “denying millions their basic freedoms.” Churchill suggested that all English-speaking people establish “the condition of freedom and democracy” as fast as possible in these countries.

By March 1946, the wartime allies had become Cold War enemies, engaged in a deadly and dangerous competition for power that was to last for over 45 years and ended costing both sides trillions of dollars. Readers will be asked to decide who was most responsible for the growing state of post-war hostilities between these World War II allies.

Suggested Student Exercises:

1. Identify or define and briefly tell the importance to this chapter of each of the following:

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. three schools of thought regarding the beginning of the Cold War | f. Syria, Lebanon, and Vietnam |
| b. forming the Italian government | g. US/B troop withdrawal |
| c. Polish Home Army | h. change in reparations from Germany |
| d. revolt in Athens | i. what US/B saw Soviets doing in Eastern Europe |
| e. seating the Lublin Poles at the UN | j. Iron Curtain speech |

2. Make three headings on your paper. Then review the reading and list events that support the case of each of the three schools. Be prepared to support your decisions,

or

as your teacher directs prepare a speech defending one of the three positions.