

The Beginnings of the Cold War

Social progress now seemed to be joining economic prosperity. But even as Americans enjoyed the good life, many people realized that the United States could not turn its back on the world. In fact, as the Allied nation that had suffered the least, America, many people now felt, had a new responsibility. It would be up to the United States to reconstruct the war-torn world and defend it from a new enemy: the growing menace of Soviet Communism.

During the war, America and the Soviet Union had put aside their differences to fight a common threat. Now, with Germany beaten, all traces of friendship quickly disappeared. To the Soviets, America was acting like a new imperial power, ready to deny Russia the spoils of a war that had cost it dearly. To Americans, the Soviet Union looked like a nation of godless fanatics bent on spreading Communism to the four corners of the world, crushing freedom and democracy as they went. Mutual suspicion ran deep. But neither side wanted another war, especially one that might involve the new atomic weapons. And so the “Cold War” began.

The United States had emerged from World War II both strong and prosperous. It had helped restore freedom to millions of people. It had proven its military might on the battlefields of Europe and the Pacific.

But its strength came not from manpower alone. It was superior U.S. technology—advanced radar, bombers, fighters, and ships—that had helped the Allies win the war. The pinnacle of this technology was the nuclear bomb. The United States was the only nation with this superweapon. And the *superweapon* made the United States a *superpower*.

Another global superpower also emerged after World War II. It was the Soviet Union. During the war, the Soviets had fought alongside the

The Beginnings of the Cold War

United States and the other Allies to defeat dictatorship in Europe. Ironically, the Soviet Union was itself a dictatorship. Led by the brutal Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union denied its people basic rights and freedoms. It was also a Communist nation, which meant that the central government controlled all business and the economy. The government even told people where to live and where to work.

At a meeting in early 1945, as the war in Europe was winding down, Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, and British prime minister Winston Churchill met in the Ukrainian town of Yalta. The three leaders pledged to create democratic governments in Europe once Germany was finally defeated.

The Soviet Union quickly broke the agreement. In 1945 and 1946, Soviet-

backed Communists took over governments in Eastern Europe one by one. The nations became Soviet “satellites,” taking their orders from the Soviet government.

The United States and Great Britain were alarmed. They had fought to save Europe from the brutal dictatorship of Adolf Hitler only to see Eastern Europe fall to another repressive regime. In March 1946, Winston Churchill warned that an “iron curtain” had descended across Europe. The curtain that he referred to was the dividing line between Communist Eastern Europe and democratic Western Europe.

■ FROM HOT WAR TO COLD WAR

Once allies, the United States and the Soviet Union quickly became enemies. Most Americans saw Communism as a repressive, unjust system of government. They watched with anger as the Soviets forced Communism on neighboring nations. The Soviets, for their part, defended the Communist philosophy. They argued that Communism was a just system in which everyone shared equally in a nation’s wealth.

Historians call the conflict between the United States and the Soviet

The Beginnings of the Cold War

Union the Cold War (1945–1991). In this new war, U.S. and Soviet soldiers never fought one another directly. Instead, the two powerful nations built up their armed forces and weapons stockpiles. In the late 1940s, the Soviets worked furiously to develop their own nuclear bomb.

In Fulton, Missouri, on March 5, 1946, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill gave a speech that made headlines across the United States. In it, he warned that the Soviet Union posed a grave threat to world peace:

“From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended. . . . Behind that line lie all the capitals of. . . Central and Eastern Europe. Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest, and Sofia, . . . all are subject. . . to a very high. . . measure of control from Moscow.”

To Churchill, the iron curtain was an impassable barrier cutting off Eastern Europe from the rest of the world. Behind that bar-

rier, the Soviet Union was setting up harsh governments. Citizens who protested were imprisoned or killed. Churchill pleaded for Americans to stand firm against the Soviet dictator, Stalin.

For the next 45 years, the United States and the Soviet Union faced each other as rival superpowers. Both sides armed themselves with powerful atomic weapons. In this struggle, the United States led the fight to protect democratic governments around the world.

ACTIVITY

On an outline map of the world, fill in the places mentioned in Churchill's speech. Then draw a line representing the "iron curtain."

gle. The *Cold War*, as it became known, was a state of tension between nations without actual fighting. It soon divided the world into opposing camps.

The Beginnings of the Cold War

Roots of the Conflict

During World War II, the Allies had worked together to defeat the Axis powers. Yet the United States and Britain deeply distrusted the Soviet Union. The Soviets also distrusted the United States and Britain. When the war ended, this distrust grew.

Soviet expansion. In 1944 and 1945, Soviet troops drove the Germans out of Soviet territory and chased them west. By the end of the war, the Soviets occupied much of Eastern Europe.

At meetings during the war, Stalin had promised the other Allies that he would hold “free elections as soon as possible” in Poland and other Eastern European nations. After the war, however, he went back on his promise. “A freely elected government in any of the Eastern European countries would be anti-Soviet,” he said, “and that we cannot allow.”



A Divided Europe

Despite efforts to establish peace after World War II, tensions in Europe remained high. The United States and the Soviet Union disagreed strongly about the political future of Central and Eastern Europe. Germany was a major issue. The United States wanted Germany to be a united, independent country again. The Soviets disagreed. They feared that a united Germany might once again invade the Soviet Union.

The Soviet armies of occupation stayed in Eastern Europe, helping to create communist “satellite states” loyal to the Soviet Union. The Soviets said that they were simply protecting their borders, but western diplomats saw Soviet actions differently. British prime minister Winston Churchill warned Americans of the threat the Soviets posed in Europe.

British and U.S. leaders feared that the Soviet Union’s influence would continue to grow until it threatened the democracies of Western Europe. Many observers were also troubled by stories of Stalin’s use of terror and violence against Soviet citizens. They believed that these brutal acts meant that Stalin would stop at nothing to protect and increase his power.

In 1946, as you have read, the British statesman Winston Churchill warned of an “iron curtain” walling off Soviet-dominated nations from the rest of the world. (See page 771.) At first, some people thought Churchill exaggerated the danger of Soviet expansion. By 1948, however, the government of every Eastern European country was under communist control.

Between 1945 and 1948, all the nations of Eastern Europe became Communist. Like the Soviet Union, they were dictatorships. Only the Communist party was allowed to exist. The government controlled what was printed in newspapers and said on radio and TV. It told artists what to paint and authors what to write. Factories and stores were owned by the government instead of individuals. People were rarely allowed to travel,

The Beginnings of the Cold War



Allies Become Enemies

The Soviet Union and the United States had joined together to fight Germany in World War II. After the war they were the two most powerful nations in the world, but their alliance quickly turned into a bitter competition for world influence. The so-called superpowers had little in common economically or politically. The United States was based on

free enterprise and democracy. American leaders supported free markets and free elections. The Soviet Union was a communist country. The central government planned the economy, and the Communist Party was the only choice for voters.

Both countries wanted to spread their political and economic systems. As a result, they became increasingly involved in the affairs of other nations. For example, the Soviet Union supported independence movements in many colonized regions. Fearing the spread of communism, the United States often worked to stop these efforts. U.S. presidential adviser Bernard Baruch declared, "We are today in the midst of a cold war." The term **Cold War** came to describe the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union for world power.

One of the first troubled spots was Greece. In August 1946, communist rebels rose up against Greece's corrupt monarchy. The rebels were supported by the independent communist government of Yugoslavia. President Truman, however, believed the Soviets were behind the revolt. He decided to stop more Soviet expansion in Europe. In March 1947 Truman announced that the United States would give economic aid to help countries fighting communism. This policy became known as the **Truman Doctrine**. Congress gave \$400 million in aid to Greece and its neighbor Turkey, which helped the Greek army defeat the rebels. The Truman Doctrine had successfully protected the anticommunist governments of Greece and Turkey. However, it greatly angered Soviet leaders.

throughout the world. In 1947 the Truman administration created the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). This spy organization was designed to gather information about foreign governments—especially the Soviet and other Communist governments.

“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.”

“... every nation must choose between alternative ways of life. . . . One way of life is based upon the will of the majority. . . . The second way of life is based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed upon the majority. . . . I believe that it must be the policy of the United States to

support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation [conquest] by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”

-Harry Truman quotes from 1947

The Beginnings of the Cold War

Economic Assistance

Some Europeans thought that communism would solve their economic troubles. The European economy had been badly damaged by World War II. Millions of people were unemployed and major industries were in ruins. Many people were homeless. Countless others were in danger of starvation. General **George C. Marshall**, who had helped plan the D-Day invasion in World War II, became the U.S. secretary of state in 1947. He argued that Europe's economic recovery was necessary for world peace. This recovery would also help the U.S. economy, which depended upon trade with Europe. Marshall spoke about U.S. plans toward Europe.



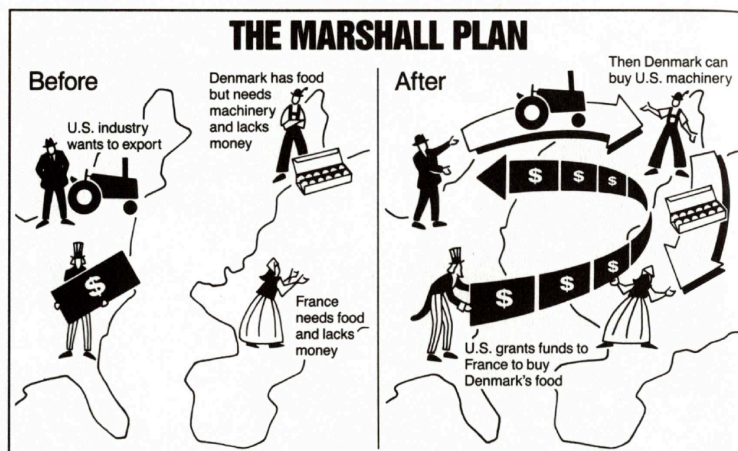
“It is logical that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace.”

—George C. Marshall, quoted in *The Annals of America*

The United States began to carry out the **Marshall Plan**, which offered “friendly aid” to help the nations of Europe rebuild. Some members of Congress thought the Marshall Plan would be too expensive. Others argued in favor of the Marshall Plan, believing that Communists might gain control of Western European nations if their economies did not recover. This argument convinced many officials. Between 1948 and 1951 Congress approved more than \$13 billion for Marshall Plan aid.

Marshall insisted that his plan was not directed “against any country or doctrine [belief system] but against hunger, poverty, desperation, and chaos [disorder].” The United States even offered to assist the Soviet Union, but the Soviets refused the offer. Their foreign minister called the plan a plot to enslave Europe by making it dependent on U.S. aid. Soviet leaders also kept their Eastern European satellites from joining the Marshall Plan or accepting U.S. aid.

The Marshall Plan helped Western Europe recover from the war. “We grabbed the lifeline with both hands,” remembered a British minister. The plan also created a huge market for American exports. However, the Marshall Plan widened the split between the Soviet Union and the United States.



Source: Silver Burdett Ginn Inc.

Trouble in Berlin

At the beginning of the Cold War, the United States adopted a new foreign policy called **containment**. American diplomat George F. Kennan helped form this policy, which focused on containing communism, or keeping it from spreading. As part of the containment policy, the United States would react quickly to any Soviet-backed aggression.

U.S. officials saw containment as a defensive strategy. Soviet leaders, however, saw the American position as an offensive strategy aimed at them. The United States would follow the containment policy for more than 30 years.

Focus on Berlin

In 1948, a crisis developed. It focused around the former German capital, Berlin.

After the war, the Allies had divided Germany into four zones. American, British, French, and Soviet troops each occupied a zone. Berlin also was divided among the Allies. Berlin, however, was located deep inside the Soviet zone.

The United States, Britain, and France had meant the division of Germany to be temporary. By 1948, they were ready to allow Germans to reunite into a single nation. Stalin, on the other hand, opposed a unified Germany. He was determined to stop Germany from becoming a strong nation that might again threaten the Soviet Union. Also, he wanted to keep Soviet influence in the eastern part of Germany.

Soviet blockade. In June 1948, the United States, Britain, and France announced that they would join their zones into the German Federal Republic, or West Germany. In response, Stalin closed all the roads, railway lines, and river routes connecting Berlin with West Germany. The blockade cut off West Berlin from the rest of the world.

President Truman was in a difficult position. He did not want to let West Berlin fall into Soviet hands. Yet he also feared ordering American troops to open a path to West Berlin through the Soviet-occupied zone. Such an action might lead to a new war.

A huge airlift. Truman decided to set up a huge airlift. Day after day, planes flew in food, fuel, and other supplies to 2 million West Berliners. At the height of the Berlin Airlift, more than 5,000 tons of supplies arrived daily. A plane landed or took off every

three minutes.

Extra Fact

Europe. This blockade effectively cut off West Berlin from all sources of supplies. Left with less than 40 days' worth of food, people in West Berlin feared a communist takeover.

The Beginnings of the Cold War

Germany remains divided. Stalin could see that the western powers were determined to keep Berlin open. In May 1949, nearly a year after he first imposed the blockade, he ended it.

Both Germany and Berlin remained divided, however. With aid from the United States, West Germany rebuilt its economy. The Soviet zone became the German Democratic Republic, or East Germany.

divided into four zones of occupation.



The Beginnings of the Cold War

Keeping the Peace

Many of the disputes in the Cold War were debated in the new international

peacekeeping organization known as the **United Nations** (UN). The UN came into being in October 1945, when 51 original members ratified its charter.

The United Nations. Every member of the UN had a seat in the General Assembly, where world problems could be discussed. For conflicts that threatened the peace, a smaller Security Council met. Under the United Nations charter, member nations agreed to bring disputes before the UN for peaceful settlement.



Choosing Sides

Many countries were becoming more concerned over the Soviet Union's growing military strength. These concerns led the United States, Canada, Iceland, and nine Western European nations to form a military alliance in April 1949. Each member of this **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** (NATO) promised to defend the others. The treaty then went to the U.S. Senate for approval. Some senators worried that NATO might force the United States to go to war without the agreement of Congress. Similar concerns had stopped the United States from joining the League of Nations after World War I. Yet the threat of Soviet military expansion convinced the Senate to approve NATO. In 1955 the Soviet Union created

its own military alliance, the Warsaw Pact. The Soviet Union and the Eastern European nations that it controlled joined the new alliance.

In 1955, the Soviet Union formed its own military alliance, called the **Warsaw Pact**. The Soviet Union demanded complete loyalty from its Warsaw Pact neighbors.

In Hungary, freedom fighters hoped to gain independence from Soviet control. En-

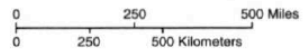
couraged by the United States, they staged an uprising in 1956. The Soviet Union responded by sending in the army to crush the revolt. To many Americans, the invasion of Hungary showed how dangerous the Soviet Union was.

The Beginnings of the Cold War



The Cold War in Europe

- NATO, 1955
- Warsaw Pact, 1955
- Nonaligned nations
- Areas added to the Soviet Union after World War II



The Beginnings of the Cold War

Another concern for U.S. leaders was the rise of a Soviet nuclear threat. In August 1949 the Soviets shocked U.S. military experts by exploding their own atomic bomb. The Cold War grew more intense. Some U.S. leaders argued that the Soviet Union wanted to control Europe and the entire world. These people stated that U.S. leaders had to be prepared to oppose Soviet-backed Communists worldwide. The United States might even have to use force in small or faraway countries to protect its interests.

Not all military and political officials agreed with this viewpoint. Some critics argued that fighting communism everywhere would stretch the resources of the United States too thin. Critics also worried that the United States might even be tempted to help undemocratic governments that were anticommunist. Despite such concerns, global containment won strong support among many American politicians and military leaders. In addition, the American people generally supported the fight against communism.

The United States moved to strengthen its alliances. It also quadrupled defense spending. President Truman approved the development of even more powerful nuclear weapons for national defense. Just a few years after the end of World War II, a new struggle had begun. The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union was spreading around the world.

An "iron curtain"

of distrust fell, dividing Europe into East and West. The two worlds, closed off from each other, competed for military, economic, political, and cultural dominance. The competition over building strong militaries was known as the arms race.

After World War II, Korea was separated along

The Beginnings of the Cold War

was growing more and more powerful. On August 29, 1949, the Soviet Union tested its first nuclear bomb. The United States was shocked. If the Soviets also had “the bomb,” then Americans had lost the upper hand in the Cold War. A U.S. military document explained, “The United States has lost its capability of making an effective atomic attack upon the war-making potential of the USSR [Soviet Union] without danger of retaliation in kind.” So if the United States attacked the Soviets with nuclear weapons, it could expect a nuclear attack in return. For both nations, the next step was to create bigger, deadlier bombs—and more bombs than the enemy had.

People's Republic of China

In the late 1940s, Americans focused special attention on China. Chiang Kai-shek (chang kī SHEHK) was the ruler of China. For years, he had fought a war against the Chinese communists, led by Mao Zedong (mow dzuh DOONG). By 1945, Mao's forces occupied northern China. Chiang's armies held the south.

The United States gave Chiang Kai-shek millions of dollars in aid. Chiang's government was corrupt, however, and he lost the support of his people. In 1949, the battle for the Chinese mainland ended with a communist victory. Mao Zedong set up the People's Republic of China. Chiang Kai-shek and his forces retreated to Taiwan, an island about 100 miles (160 km) off the coast of China.

Mao Zedong's victory meant that the largest nation in Asia had become communist. The Chinese communists did not always agree with the Soviet Union. Yet between them, these two communist nations dominated almost one fourth of the Earth's surface. Many Americans worried that communist forces would soon take over all of Asia. As you will read, some Americans became obsessed with their fears of communism.