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Dedication
Keith Randell (1943–2002)
The Access to History series was conceived and developed by Keith, who created a series to ‘cater for students as they are, not as we might wish them to be’. He leaves a living legacy of a series that for over 20 years has provided a trusted, stimulating and well-loved accompaniment to post-16 study. Our aim with these new editions is to continue to offer students the best possible support for their studies.
The origins of the Cold War

The Cold War was a period of political hostility between capitalist and Communist countries, in particular between the USA and the USSR, which, from its onset in 1945, lasted for over 40 years. Several times, it brought the world perilously close to another global war. This chapter looks at historians' attempts to define what the Cold War was and its origins from 1917 to 1945 through the following themes:

- What was the Cold War?
- The opposing ideologies of the Cold War
- The Soviet Union and the Western powers 1917–41
- Tensions within the Grand Alliance 1941–5
- The liberation of Eastern and Western Europe 1943–5
- The Yalta Conference, February 1945
- The end of the war in Europe

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>Oct.</td>
<td>Russian Revolution</td>
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<td>1918–20</td>
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<td>Russian Civil War</td>
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<td>1939</td>
<td>Sept.</td>
<td>Hitler and Stalin partitioned Poland</td>
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<td>1941</td>
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<td>German invasion of USSR</td>
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<td>Nov.–Dec.</td>
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<td>1944</td>
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<td>Allied forces invaded France</td>
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<td>July</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Aug. 23</td>
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<td>Anglo-Soviet ‘percentages agreement’</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>British suppressed Communist uprising in Greece</td>
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<td>1945</td>
<td>Feb. 4–11</td>
<td>Yalta Conference</td>
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<td>May 8</td>
<td></td>
<td>Unconditional German surrender</td>
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</table>
What was the Cold War?

What were the main characteristics of the Cold War?

The term ‘cold war’ had been used before 1945 to describe periods of extreme tension between states stopping just short of war. In 1893 the German socialist, Eduard Bernstein, described the arms race between Germany and its neighbours as a kind of ‘cold war’ where ‘there is no shooting but … bleeding’. In May 1945 when the USA and the USSR faced each other eyeball to eyeball in Germany this term rapidly came back into use. The British writer George Orwell, commenting on the significance of the dropping of the atomic bomb (see page 37), foresaw ‘a peace that is no peace’, in which the USA and USSR would be both ‘unconquerable and in a permanent state of cold war’ with each other. The Cold War was, however, more than just an arms race. It was also, as the historian, John Mason, has pointed out, ‘a fundamental clash of ideologies and interests’. These are discussed in more detail in the next section.

The US historian, Anders Stephanson, has defined the essence of the Cold War as follows:

- Both sides denied each other’s legitimacy as a regime and attempted to attack each other by every means short of war.
- Increasingly this conflict became polarised between two great powers: the USA and the USSR. There was an intense build-up of both nuclear and conventional military weapons and a prolonged arms race between the USA and the USSR.
- Each side suppressed its internal dissidents.

Most historians would more or less accept this definition, although there is less agreement on the timescale of the Cold War. The British historian, David Reynolds, whose chronology is for the most part followed in this book, argues that there were three cold wars:

- 1948–53
- 1958–63
- 1979–85.

These were ‘punctured by periods of détente’. Two Russian historians, Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, however, provide a slightly different model: they define the Cold War as lasting from 1948 to the Cuban Crisis of 1962 and the subsequent 27 years as no more than a ‘prolonged armistice’ rather than actual peace. The problem with this interpretation is that it ignores the impact of the Vietnam War and the outbreak of the ‘Third Cold War’ in 1979.

While the chronology of the Cold War is open to debate, and the beginning of the ‘Second Cold War’ could as easily be dated from October 1956 as from

KEY TERMS

**Socialist** A believer in socialism: the belief that the community as a whole rather than individuals should control the economy.

**Arms race** A competition or race between nations to arm themselves with the most deadly and effective weapons available.

**USSR** Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the name given to Communist Russia and the states under its control from 1922. Also known as the Soviet Union.

**Ideologies** The ideas, beliefs and theories that constitute a religious or political doctrine on which a political party or religion is based.

**Polarised** Divided into two extremes (polar opposites).

**Dissident** Critical of the official line taken by the state.

**Détente** A state of lessened tension or growing relaxation between two states.

**Armistice** The official agreement of the suspension of fighting between two or more powers as a preliminary to a negotiated peace.
November 1958, it is important to grasp that the years 1945–89 formed a ‘Cold War era’, in which years of intense hostility alternated with periods of détente, but, even then, the arms race and ideological competition between the two sides continued. Both sides also continued to engage in proxy-conflicts in the developing world. The US historian John Lewis Gaddis argues that the Cold War lasted for so long because of the nuclear balance. Soviet military, particularly nuclear, strength disguised the essential economic weakness of the USSR, which eventually caused its collapse (see page 216).

### Summary diagram: What was the Cold War?

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<tr>
<th>Clash of ideologies</th>
<th>Mutual denial of legitimacy</th>
<th>Arms race</th>
<th>Suppression of internal dissent</th>
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</tr>
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### The opposing ideologies of the Cold War

*In what ways did the ideologies of the opposing sides differ?*

The main intellectual basis of communism was constructed in the nineteenth century by two Germans, Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx. Their thinking provided the foundations of Marxism–Leninism, which, in the twentieth century, became the governing ideology of the USSR, much of Central and Eastern Europe, the People’s Republic of China, Cuba, and several other states.

Marx argued that capitalism and the bourgeoisie in an industrial society would inevitably be overthrown by the workers or proletariat in a socialist revolution. This initially would lead to a dictatorship of the proletariat in which the working class would break up the old order. Eventually, a true egalitarian Communist society would emerge in which money was no longer needed and each gave ‘according to his ability’ and received ‘according to his need’. Marx idealistically believed that once this stage was achieved then crime, envy and rivalry would become things of the past since they were based on greed and economic competition.

### KEY TERMS

- **Proxy-conflicts**: Wars encouraged or supported by major powers without their direct involvement.
- **Marxism–Leninism**: Doctrines of Marxism which were modified by Lenin, who adapted Karl Marx’s teaching to the situation in Russia. Unlike Marx, he advocated the creation of a party dictatorship, which would have absolute powers, even over the workers.
- **Bourgeoisie**: The middle class, particularly those with business interests, who Marx believed benefited most from the existing capitalist economic system.
- **Dictatorship of the proletariat**: Marx’s term suggesting that following the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, government would be carried out by and on behalf of the working class.

### KEY FIGURES

- **Friedrich Engels (1820–85)**: German industrialist and mill owner in Manchester, who co-operated closely with Karl Marx.
- **Karl Marx (1818–83)**: German philosopher of Jewish extraction, whose writings formed the intellectual basis of communism.
Marxism–Leninism

In the early twentieth century Vladimir Ilych Lenin developed Marx’s ideas and adapted them to the unique conditions in Russia. Russia’s economy was primarily agricultural and lacked a large industrial proletariat, which Marx saw as the class most likely to revolt. Lenin therefore argued that the Communists in Russia needed to be strongly organised with a small compact core, consisting of reliable and experienced revolutionaries, who could achieve their aims of undermining and toppling the Tsarist regime. In 1903 Lenin and his followers founded the Bolshevik Party, which seized power in Russia in October 1917.

Just before the Bolsheviks seized power, Lenin outlined his plans for the creation of a revolutionary state in an unfinished pamphlet, *State and Revolution*. It would be run by ‘the proletariat organised as a ruling class’ and would use terror and force against any organisation or person who did not support it. In fact, the state would be the ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’, but would ‘wither away’ only once its enemies at home and abroad were utterly destroyed. Then, of course, the reality of communism would dawn where, it was believed, there would be no economic exploitation, crime, selfishness or violence.

Under the leadership of at first Lenin, and then Josef Stalin (see page 13), the USSR became an authoritarian, Communist state where the government was in charge of all aspects of the economy; there were no democratic elections and freedom of speech was limited. Thus, the state did not in fact ‘wither away’.

Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic system in which the production of goods and their distribution depend on the investment of private capital with a view to making a profit. Unlike a socialist command economy, a capitalist economy is run by people who wish to make a profit and therefore have to produce what people want, rather than by the state. Opposition to Marxism–Leninism in the USA and the Western European states was reinforced, or – as Marxist theoreticians would argue – even determined, by the contradictions between capitalism, which was the prevailing economic system in the Western world, and the command economies of the Communist-dominated states.

Rival definitions of democracy

In the West there was a deep mistrust of communism as a political system, particularly its lack of democracy. The USSR dismissed parliamentary democracy as a mere camouflage for capitalism and its politicians as its puppets. For Marxist–Leninists, democracy meant economic equality where there were
no extremes between wealthy capitalists and poor workers and peasants. However, for the democratic states of Western Europe and the USA, democracy meant the liberty of the individual, equality before the law, freedom of speech and a parliament elected by the people to whom the government is ultimately responsible. Rather than economic equality under the dictatorship of the proletariat, liberal or parliamentary democracy challenges the right of any one party and leader to have the permanent monopoly of power. It is opposed to dictatorship in any form and ultimately the people can get rid of an unpopular government in an election.

**Religion**

Marxism–Leninism was opposed to religion. One of its core arguments was that it was not an all-powerful God who influenced the fate of humankind, but rather economic and material conditions. Once these were reformed under communism, humankind would prosper and not need religion. For Marxists, religion was merely, as Marx himself had said, ‘the opium of the masses’. It duped the proletariat into accepting exploitation by their rulers and capitalist businessmen. During the revolution in Russia, churches, mosques and synagogues were closed down, and religion was banned.

In Europe, Christian Churches were among the leading critics and enemies of communism. After 1945, Catholic-dominated political parties in western Germany and Italy played a key role in opposing communism. In 1979, the election of Pope John Paul II of Poland as head of the Roman Catholic Church strengthened political opposition in Poland to communism (see page 184).

**SOURCE A**


*Fundamentally the cold war was a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, fuelled on both sides by the belief that the ideology of the other side had to be destroyed. In this sense … co-existence was not possible … The Soviet Union held to Lenin's belief that conflict between Communism and Capitalism was inevitable. The United States believed that peace and security in the world would only emerge when the evil of Communism had been exorcised [expelled].*
The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia succeeded against the odds, but Lenin was initially convinced that victory within Russia alone would not ensure the survival of the revolution. An isolated Bolshevik Russia was vulnerable to pressure from the capitalist world as its very existence was a challenge to it. If communism was to survive in Russia, it had also to triumph globally.

SOURCE B


To the Russian proletariat has fallen the great honour of beginning the series of revolutions which the imperialist war [the First World War] has made an objective inevitability. But the idea that the Russian proletariat is the chosen revolutionary proletariat is absolutely alien to us. We know perfectly well that the proletariat of Russia is less organised, less prepared and less class conscious.
than the proletariat of other countries. It is not its special qualities but rather the special conjuncture of historical circumstances that for a certain, perhaps very short, time has made the proletariat of Russia the vanguard of the revolutionary proletariat of the whole world.

Russia is a peasant country, one of the most backward of European countries. Socialism cannot triumph directly and immediately … [but] … our revolution [may be] the prologue to world socialist revolution, a step towards it.

The USA and Russia 1917–18

The simultaneous expansion of Russia and the USA until they dominated the world had been foreseen as early as 1835 by the French historian Alexis de Tocqueville (see Source C):

**SOURCE C**


There are now two great nations in the world, which, starting from different points, seem to be advancing toward the same goal: the Russians and the Anglo-Americans [English-speaking Americans, most of whose ancestors came from the British Isles]. … [E]ach seems called by some secret design of Providence one day to hold in its hands the destinies of half the world.

It was, however, the First World War that brought these great states more closely into contact with each other. When the USA entered the war against Germany, it was briefly an ally of the Russians, but this changed dramatically once the Bolsheviks seized power in October 1917 and made peace with Germany. Ideologically there developed a clash between the ideas of the US president, Woodrow Wilson, and Lenin. Wilson, in his Fourteen Points of April 1918, presented an ambitious global programme for self-determination, free trade and collective security through a League of Nations, while Lenin preached world revolution and communism.

The Russian Revolution and Allied intervention 1918–22

One historian, Howard Roffmann, argued that the Cold War ‘proceeded from the very moment the Bolsheviks triumphed in Russia in 1917’. There was certainly immediate hostility between Soviet Russia and the Western states. Although the Bolsheviks had seized power in the major cities in 1917, they had to fight a bitter civil war to destroy their opponents, the Whites, who were assisted by Britain, France, the USA and Japan. These countries hoped that by assisting the Whites, they would be able to strangle Bolshevism and prevent it spreading to Germany which, after defeat in the First World War in November 1918, was in turmoil and vulnerable to Communist revolution by its own workers. If Germany were to become Communist, the Allies feared that the whole of Europe would be engulfed in revolution. However, Allied intervention

**KEY TERM**

*Allies* Britain, France, Japan, China and others were allied against Germany. The USA was ‘an associated power’.
was ineffective and served only to strengthen Bolshevism. In 1919 French and US troops withdrew, to be followed by the British in 1920. Only Japanese troops remained until the end of the Civil War in 1922. Intervention in the USSR did inevitably fuel Soviet suspicions of the Western powers.

**The Polish–Russian War 1920**

At the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, the British foreign minister, Lord Curzon, proposed that Poland’s eastern frontier with Russia should be about 160 kilometres (100 miles) to the east of Warsaw; this demarcation became known as the Curzon Line. Poland, however, rejected this and exploited the chaos in Russia to seize as much territory as it could. In early 1920 Poland launched an invasion of Ukraine. This was initially successful, but, by August 1920, Bolshevik forces had pushed the Poles back to Warsaw. With the help of military supplies and advisors from France, Poland rallied and managed to inflict a decisive defeat on the Red Army, driving it out of much of the territory Poland claimed. In 1921 Poland signed the Treaty of Riga with Russia and was awarded considerable areas of Ukraine and Byelorussia, in which Poles formed only a minority of the population.

The extension of Poland so far east helped to isolate Russia geographically from Western and Central Europe. The creation of Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania helped to further this, leading to the creation of a cordon sanitaire, a zone of states, to prevent the spread of communism to the rest of Europe. The recovery of these territories of the former Russian Empire became a major aim of the USSR’s foreign policy before 1939.

**Soviet foreign policy 1922–41**

Once the immediate possibility of a world revolution vanished, the consolidation of socialism within the USSR became the priority for Lenin and his successors, particularly Stalin, who after 1928 adopted the policy of **Socialism in one country**. However, this did not stop the USSR from supporting subversive activities carried out by Communist groups or sympathisers within the Western democracies and their colonies. These activities were co-ordinated by the Comintern, which was established in 1919 to spread Communist ideology. Although foreign Communist parties had representatives in the organisation, the Communist Party of Russia controlled it.

**Hitler and Stalin 1933–8**

The coming to power of Hitler and the Nazi Party in Germany in 1933 led to a radical change in Soviet foreign policy. Nazi Germany, with its hatred of communism and stated goal of annexing vast territories in the Soviet Union for colonisation, presented a threat to the USSR’s very existence. To combat this, Stalin, despite the ideological differences between the USSR and Britain and France, attempted to create a defensive alliance against Nazi Germany:
In 1934 the USSR joined the League of Nations, which Stalin hoped to turn into a more effective instrument of collective security.

In 1935 Stalin signed a pact with France and Czechoslovakia in the hope that this would lead to close military co-operation against Germany. French suspicions of Soviet communism prevented this development.

In 1936 Stalin intervened in the Spanish Civil War to assist the Republican government against the Nationalists, who were assisted by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

Figure 1.1 Central and Eastern Europe in 1921. This map shows the changes made by the peace treaties of 1919–21 and how Russia (USSR) was now confined to the margins of Europe. What information about the situation in Europe is conveyed in this map?

- In 1934 the USSR joined the League of Nations, which Stalin hoped to turn into a more effective instrument of collective security.
- In 1935 Stalin signed a pact with France and Czechoslovakia in the hope that this would lead to close military co-operation against Germany. French suspicions of Soviet communism prevented this development.
- In 1936 Stalin intervened in the Spanish Civil War to assist the Republican government against the Nationalists, who were assisted by Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

**KEY TERM**

**Nationalist** A movement or person passionately devoted to the interests and culture of their nation, often leading to the belief that certain nationalities are superior to others.
In September 1938, in response to Hitler’s threat to invade Czechoslovakia, Stalin was apparently ready to intervene, provided France did likewise. However, Hitler’s last-minute decision to agree to a compromise proposal at the Munich Conference of 29–30 September, which resulted in the Munich Agreement, ensured that Soviet assistance was not needed. The fact that the USSR was not invited to the Conference reinforced Stalin’s fears that Britain, France and Germany would work together against the USSR.

**Anglo-French negotiations with the USSR, April–August 1939**

In March 1939, Germany invaded what was left of Czechoslovakia and, in April, the British and French belatedly began negotiations with Stalin for a defensive alliance against Germany. These negotiations were protracted and complicated by mutual mistrust. Stalin’s demand that the Soviet Union should have the right to intervene in the affairs of the small states on its western borders if they were threatened with internal subversion by the Nazis, as Czechoslovakia had been in 1938, was rejected outright by the British. Britain feared that the USSR would exploit this as an excuse to seize the territories for itself.

Stalin was also suspicious that Britain and France were manoeuvring the Soviets into a position where they would have to do most of the fighting against Germany should war break out. The talks finally broke down on 17 August over the question of securing Poland’s and Romania’s consent to the passage of the Red Army through their territory in the event of war; something which was rejected by Poland.

**The Nazi–Soviet Pact**

Until early 1939, Hitler saw Poland as a possible ally in a future war against the USSR for the conquest of Lebensraum. Poland’s acceptance of the Anglo-French Guarantee forced him to reconsider his position and respond positively to those advisors advocating temporary co-operation with the Soviet Union.

Stalin, whose priorities were the defence of the USSR and the recovery of those parts of the former Russian Empire, which had been lost in 1917–20, was ready to explore German proposals for a non-aggression pact; this was signed on 24 August. Not only did it commit both powers to benevolent neutrality towards each other, but in a secret protocol it outlined the German and Soviet spheres of interest in Eastern Europe: the Baltic states and Bessarabia in Romania fell within the Soviet sphere, while Poland was to be divided between them.

On 1 September 1939, Germany invaded Poland, and Britain and France declared war on Germany on 3 September. The Soviet Union, as agreed secretly in the Nazi–Soviet Pact, invaded eastern Poland on 17 September, although by this time German armies had all but defeated Polish forces. By the beginning of October, Poland was completely defeated and was divided between the Soviet Union and Germany, with the Soviets receiving the larger part.
Territorial expansion, October 1939 to June 1941

Until June 1941, Stalin pursued a policy of territorial expansion in Eastern Europe aimed at defending the USSR against possible future aggression from Germany. To this end, and with the dual aim of recovering parts of the former Russian Empire, Stalin strengthened the USSR’s western defences:

- He signed mutual assistance pacts with Estonia and Latvia in October 1939. The Lithuanians were pressured into agreeing to the establishment of Soviet bases in their territory.
- In March 1940, after a brief war with Finland, the USSR acquired the Hanko naval base and other territory along their mutual border.
- Stalin’s reaction to the defeat of France in June 1940, which meant German domination of Europe, was to seize the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and to annex Bessarabia and northern Bukovina from Romania.

Summary diagram: The Soviet Union and the Western powers 1917–41

- **Russian Revolution 1917**
  - Emergence of revolutionary Russia/USSR with imperative to spread communism worldwide
- **Anti-Western policies 1918–35**
  - Invasion of Poland 1920
  - Support of Kuomintang in China
  - Comintern founded 1919
  - Support for rebellions in European colonial territories
- **Western reaction, 1918–33**
  - British, French, US and Japanese intervention in Russian Civil War, 1918–20
  - Anglo-Soviet ‘Cold War’ 1927
  - Anti-Communist Nazi government came to power 1933
- **USSR’s defensive policy against Nazi Germany 1933–9**
  - Popular Front policy
  - Intervened in Spanish Civil War
  - Joined League of Nations
  - Sought French and British support
- **USSR’s co-operation with Nazi Germany**
  - Nazi–Soviet Pact, August 1939
    - Partition of Poland
    - Annexation of Baltic states, Bessarabia and north Bukovina
4 Tensions within the Grand Alliance 1941–5

In what ways did the war aims and ambitions of the USSR, the USA and Britain conflict?

To what extent had the Great Powers agreed on dividing up Europe into spheres of influence by the end of 1944?

Between June and December 1941 the global political and military situation was completely transformed. On 22 June Germany invaded the USSR. Hitler’s aggression turned Britain and the USSR into allies fighting a common enemy, and on 12 July this was confirmed by the Anglo-Soviet agreement. On 7 December 1941, Japan’s attack on the naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, brought the USA into the war, as it immediately declared war on Japan, an Axis power. In response, Germany and Italy both declared war against the USA on 11 December. Germany was now confronted with what became the Grand Alliance of Britain, the USA and the USSR, the leaders of which were known as the ‘Big Three’. Although all three powers co-operated closely in the war against Germany, the USA and USSR never actually signed a formal alliance and the USSR did not enter the war against Japan until July 1945.

Both sides remained suspicious of each other’s motives. Stalin feared that the Anglo-American decision not to invade France until 1944 was a plot to ensure the overthrow of communism by Nazi Germany, while Stalin himself considered a possible secret peace with Germany at least up to September 1943. Andrei Gromyko, a Soviet diplomat in Washington in 1942, was convinced that the Cold War began as ‘the secret Cold War accompanying the “hot war” [the Second World War] as the allies … delayed the opening of the second front in Europe’.

The conflicting aims of the Big Three

As victory over the Axis powers became more certain, each of the three Allies began to develop its own often conflicting aims and agendas for post-war Europe.

The USSR’s aims

In the early 1950s, most Western observers assumed that Moscow’s main aim was to destroy the Western powers and create global communism, yet recent historical research, which the end of the Cold War has made possible, has shown that Stalin’s policy was often more flexible and less ambitious – at least in the short term – than it appeared to be at the time. By the winter of 1944–5 his immediate priorities were clear. He wanted security for the USSR and reparations from Germany and its allies. The USSR had, after all, borne the brunt of German aggression and suffered immense physical damage and heavy casualties – some 25 million people by May 1945.
To protect the USSR against any future German attack, Stalin was determined to hang on to the land annexed from Poland in 1939 and, as compensation, to give Poland the German territories that lay beyond the River Oder (see the map on page 36). He also aimed to reintegrate into the USSR the Baltic provinces of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, as well as the territory lost to Finland in 1941, to annex Bessarabia and to bring both Romania and Bulgaria within the Soviet orbit (see the map on page 9).

In Eastern Europe, Stalin’s first priority was to ensure that regimes friendly to the USSR were set up. In some states, such as Poland and Romania, this could only be guaranteed by a Communist government, but in others, such as Hungary and Czechoslovakia, Stalin was prepared to tolerate more broadly based, but friendly, governments in which the Communists formed a minority.

By 1944 Stalin seems to have envisaged a post-war Europe which, for a period of time at least, would consist of three different areas:

- An area under direct Soviet control in Eastern Europe: Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and, for a time at least, the future Soviet zone in Germany.
- An ‘intermediate zone’, which was neither fully Communist nor fully capitalist, comprising Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Finland. The Communists would share power there with the liberal, moderate socialist and peasant parties. These areas would act as a ‘bridge’ between Soviet-controlled Eastern Europe and Western Europe and the USA.
- A non-Communist Western Europe, which would also include Greece.
Dissolution of the Comintern
In 1943 Stalin dissolved the Comintern (see page 8) as a gesture to convince his allies that the USSR was no longer supporting global revolution. The British government saw this optimistically as evidence that Stalin wished to co-operate in the reconstruction of Europe after the end of the war.

The USA’s aims
In the 1950s, Western historians, such as Herbert Feis, argued that the USA was too preoccupied with winning the struggle against Germany and Japan to give much thought to the political future of post-war Europe, since it assumed that all problems would in due course be solved in co-operation with Britain and the USSR. Yet this argument was sharply criticised by revisionist historians in the 1960s and 1970s, who insisted that the USA very much had its own security agenda for the post-war period.

More recently, historian Melvyn Leffler has shown that the surprise Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941, and the dramatic developments in air technology during the war, made the USA feel vulnerable to potential threats from foreign powers. Consequently, as early as 1943–4 US officials began to draw up plans for a chain of bases which would give the USA control of both the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. This would also give US industry access to the raw materials and markets of most of Western Europe and Asia. Leffler argues that the steps the USA took to ensure its own security alarmed Stalin and so created a ‘spiral of distrust’, which led ultimately to the Cold War.

SOURCE D

The dynamics of the Cold War … are easier to comprehend when one grasps the breadth of the American conception of national security that had emerged between 1945 and 1948. This conception included a strategic [military and political] sphere of influence within the western hemisphere, domination of the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, an extensive system of outlying bases to enlarge the strategic frontier and project American power, an even more extensive system of transit rights to facilitate the conversion of commercial air bases to military use, access to the resources and markets of Eurasia, denial of these resources to a prospective enemy, and the maintenance of nuclear superiority.

The USA’s economic aims
Much of US President Roosevelt’s policy was inspired by the ideas of his predecessor Woodrow Wilson (see page 7), who in 1919 had hoped eventually to turn the world into one large free trade area. This would be composed of democratic states, where tariffs and economic nationalism would be abolished. The US government was determined that there should be no more...
attempts by Germany or Italy to create autarchic economies, and that the British and French, too, would be forced to allow other states to trade freely with their empires. Indeed, the US commitment to establishing democratic states meant that they supported the decolonisation of the European colonial empires.

The United Nations
These ideas were all embodied in the Atlantic Charter, which British Prime Minister Churchill and US President Roosevelt drew up in August 1941, four months before the USA entered the war. This new, democratic world order was to be underpinned by a future United Nations Organisation (UN). By late 1943, Roosevelt envisaged this as being composed of an assembly where all the nations of the world would be represented, although real power and influence would be wielded by an executive committee, or Security Council. This would be dominated by the Soviet Union, Britain, China, France and the USA. For all his talk about the rights of democratic states, he realised that the future of the post-war world would be decided by these powerful states.

Britain’s aims
The British government’s main aims in 1944 were to ensure the survival of Britain as an independent Great Power still in possession of its empire, and to remain on friendly terms with both the USA and the USSR. The British government was, however, alarmed by the prospect of Soviet influence spreading into Central Europe and the eastern Mediterranean, where Britain had vital strategic and economic interests. The Suez Canal in Egypt was its main route to India and British industry was increasingly dependent on oil from the Middle East. As Britain had gone to war over Poland, Churchill also wanted a democratic government in Warsaw, even though he conceded that its eastern frontiers would have to be altered in favour of the USSR.

Inter-Allied negotiations 1943–4
Churchill and Roosevelt held several summit meetings to discuss military strategy and the shape of the post-war world, but it was only in 1943 that the leaders of the USSR, USA and Britain met for the first time as a group.

The foreign ministers’ meeting at Moscow, October 1943
In October 1943, the foreign ministers of the USA, USSR and Britain met in Moscow, the Soviet Union’s capital, in an effort to reconcile the conflicting ambitions of their states. They agreed to establish the European Advisory Commission to finalise plans for the post-war Allied occupation of Germany. They also issued the ‘Declaration on General Security’. This proposed the creation of a world organisation to maintain global peace and security, the UN, which would be joined by all peaceful states. The US secretary of state, Cordell Hull, insisted that the Chinese President Chiang-Kai-shek, as head of a large
and potentially powerful allied country, should sign this declaration too. Stalin also informed Hull, in the strictest secrecy, that the USSR would enter the war against Japan after Germany’s defeat in Europe.

**Tehran Conference, 28 November to 1 December 1943**

At the Tehran Conference, Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin met for the first time to discuss post-war Europe, the future organisation of the UN and the fate of Germany. Stalin again made it very clear that he would claim all the territories which the USSR had annexed in Poland and the Baltic in 1939–40, and that Poland would be compensated with German territory. To this there was no opposition from either Churchill or Roosevelt.

The key decision was made to land British, Commonwealth and US troops in France (Operation Overlord) rather than, as Churchill wished, in the Balkans in 1944. This effectively ensured that the USSR would liberate both eastern and south-eastern Europe by itself, and hence be in a position to turn the whole region into a Soviet sphere of interest. It was this factor that ultimately left the Western powers with little option but to recognise the USSR’s claims to eastern Poland and the Baltic states. On 29 November Roosevelt told his son Elliot, who accompanied him to Tehran, the following (Source E):

---

**SOURCE E**


Our Chiefs of Staff are convinced of one thing, the way to kill the most Germans, with the least loss of American soldiers is to mount one great big invasion and then slam ‘em with everything we have got. It makes sense to me. It makes sense to Uncle Joe. It’s the quickest way to win the war. That’s all.

Trouble is, the PM [Churchill] is thinking too much of the post-war, and where England will be. He’s scared of letting the Russians get too strong in Europe. Whether that’s bad depends on a lot of factors.

The one thing I am sure of is this: if the way to save American lives, the way to win as short a war as possible, is from the west and the west alone … and our chiefs are convinced it is, then that’s that! I see no reasons for putting the lives of American soldiers in jeopardy in order to protect real or fancied British interests on the European continent.

---

**The Churchill–Stalin meeting, October 1944**

A year later, in an effort to protect British interests in the eastern Mediterranean (see page 15), Churchill flew to Moscow and proposed a division of south-eastern Europe into distinct spheres of interest. This formed the basis of an agreement, the so-called ‘percentages agreement’, that gave the USSR 90 and...
75 per cent predominance in Romania and Bulgaria, respectively, and Britain 90 per cent in Greece, while Yugoslavia and Hungary were to be divided equally into British and Soviet zones of interest.

After reflection, this agreement was quietly dropped by Churchill as he realised that it would be rejected outright by Roosevelt once it was brought to his attention. This, Churchill feared, would only lead to unwelcome tension in the Anglo-US alliance. Roosevelt had informed Stalin shortly before Churchill arrived in Moscow that there was ‘in this global war … no question, either military or political, in which the United States [was] not interested’. However, it did broadly correspond to initial Soviet intentions in Eastern Europe, and Stalin did recognise Britain’s interests in Greece, even denying the local Communists any Soviet support (see page 23).

### Summary diagram: Tensions within the Grand Alliance 1941–5

#### The Grand Alliance

**USA**
- Access to raw materials and the freedom to trade and export throughout the world
- The creation of a United Nations
- Continue into the post-war period the alliance with the USSR and Britain
- Decolonisation of European colonial empires

**USSR**
- Security from further attack
- Reparations from Germany
- Territorial gains from Poland, Finland and Romania
- Creation of friendly, pro-Soviet regimes in Eastern Europe

**Britain**
- Preservation of British Empire
- Remain on friendly terms with USA and USSR
- Block Soviet expansion in central and south-eastern Europe and the Middle East
- Creation of an independent Poland with a democratic government

### Inter-Allied negotiations 1943–4

- Foreign Ministers’ conference, October 1943
- Tehran Conference, November–December 1943
- Churchill–Stalin meeting, October 1944
The Cold War 1941–95

5 The liberation of Eastern and Western Europe 1943–5

How far did the liberation of Europe, 1943–5, intensify the rivalry and distrust between the ‘Big Three’?

The liberation of Eastern Europe by the Soviet Army and Western Europe by predominantly Anglo-American forces in 1944–5 created the context for the Cold War in Europe. It was in Europe where the Cold War both started and ended.

Eastern Europe 1944–5

To understand the complex political situation created by the end of the war, it is important to understand the significance of the Allied Control Commissions (ACC), the tension between the governments-in-exile and the local partisan groups, and the close links between the Communist parties and the USSR.

Allied Control Commissions

Bulgaria, Finland, Italy, Hungary and Romania were Axis states. Although they were allowed their own governments after their occupation by the Allied powers, real power rested with the ACC. The first ACC was established in southern Italy in 1943 by Britain and the USA after the collapse of the Fascist government there. As the USSR had no troops in Italy, it was not represented on the ACC. Similarly, as it was the USSR that liberated Eastern Europe from Germany, Soviet officials dominated the ACCs in Romania, Bulgaria, Finland and Hungary. In this respect, Soviet policy was the mirror image of Anglo-American policy in Italy.

Governments-in-exile and partisan groups

Political leaders who had managed to escape from German-occupied Poland, Czechoslovakia, Greece and Yugoslavia to Britain, set up what were called governments-in-exile in London for the duration of the war. Being in London, however, they lost control of the partisan groups fighting in the occupied territories. Except for Poland, Communist partisan groups emerged as the strongest local forces and their leaders were not ready to take orders from their governments-in-exile. Sometimes this suited Stalin, and sometimes, as in Greece (see page 23), it did not.

Communist parties

In the liberated territories, Stalin advised the local Communist parties to form popular fronts or alliances with the liberal, socialist and peasant parties. Eventually these fronts became the means by which the Communists seized power in Eastern Europe.
Chapter 1  The origins of the Cold War

Poland

The Polish question was one of the most complex problems facing the Allies. Britain, together with France, had gone to war in September 1939 as a result of the German invasion of Poland. The British government therefore wanted to see the emergence of a democratic Poland once Germany was driven out by the Red Army. On the other hand, Stalin was determined not only to regain the territories that fell into the Soviet sphere of interest as a result of the Nazi–Soviet Pact (see page 10), but also to ensure that there was a friendly pro-Soviet government in Poland. In effect, this meant forcibly establishing a Communist dictatorship, as the majority of Poles were strongly anti-Soviet and anti-Communist.

In principle, Britain and the USA had agreed at Tehran to the Soviet annexation of eastern Poland up to the Curzon Line (see page 8), and that Poland would eventually be compensated for this by acquiring territory on its western frontiers from Germany. Both hoped optimistically that Stalin would tolerate a democratically elected government in Warsaw.

The Soviet advance into Poland

Once the Red Army crossed Poland’s eastern frontier in early January 1944, the Soviet Union annexed the territory it had claimed in September 1939. By July, Soviet troops had crossed the Curzon Line and moved into western Poland. As they advanced, they systematically destroyed the nationalist Polish resistance group known as the Polish Home Army. Stalin fatally undermined the authority of the Polish government-in-exile in London by establishing the Committee of National Liberation, based in Lublin in Poland, which became known as the Lublin Committee. The task of the committee was to administer Soviet-occupied Poland, and eventually to form the core of a future pro-Soviet government in Poland.

SOURCE F

From a report by Colonel T.R.B. Sanders, who was in command of an Allied mission which visited the V2 missile site at Blizna in central Poland in September 1944 after it had been captured by the Red Army. National Archives (NA HS4/146), London.

Everywhere we went (except in the forward areas) there were posters with portraits and short descriptions of the nine or ten chief members of the Lublin Committee. Other posters dealt with conscription, giving up of wireless sets, giving up of arms and payment of social insurance instalments. In addition all along the roads, there were numerous billboards with slogans in Russian and Polish such as ‘Long live the Red Army!’ ‘Glory to our Great Leader Stalin!’

KEY TERM

Polish Home Army

The Polish nationalist resistance group that fought German occupation during the Second World War.

What does Colonel Sanders’ report in Source F reveal about the activities of the Lublin Committee in Soviet-liberated Poland?
The Warsaw Uprising

The Soviet Union’s policy was revealed when the Polish Home Army rose in revolt against the Germans in Warsaw in August 1944 in a desperate attempt to seize control of parts of Poland before the Red Army could overrun the whole country. By capturing Warsaw, the Home Army calculated that it would be able to set up a non-Communist government in the capital, which would be recognised by the Western Allies as the legal government of Poland. It was hoped that this would then stop Stalin from creating a Communist Poland. Not surprisingly, Stalin viewed the uprising with intense suspicion. Although Soviet troops penetrated to within 20 kilometres of Warsaw, the Polish insurgents were left to fight the Germans alone and were defeated by 2 October.

The German defeat of the Warsaw Uprising effectively destroyed the leadership of the Home Army, and inevitably this made it easier for Stalin to enforce his policy in Poland. As Soviet troops moved further west towards the Oder River in the remaining months of 1944, the NKVD, assisted by Polish Communists, shot or imprisoned thousands of participants in the Home Army in a determined attempt to eliminate the anti-Soviet Polish opposition.

Britain, the USA and Poland

Despite all that had happened, Roosevelt and Churchill still clung to the hope that it would be possible to reach a compromise with Stalin about the future of Poland. In the interests of post-war Allied unity, they were both determined to avoid a premature break with the USSR over Poland. In January 1945 the USSR formally recognised the Communist-dominated Committee for National Liberation as the provisional government of Poland. Britain and the USA, although they still supported Poland’s government-in-exile in London, played down the significance of this in the interests of the unity of the Grand Alliance.

Romania and Bulgaria

On 20 August 1944, the Soviets launched a major offensive to drive German troops out of the Balkans. The immediate consequence of this brought about the collapse of the pro-German regimes in both Romania and Bulgaria. Like Poland, both states were vital to the military security of the USSR, since, if they were under friendly pro-Soviet governments, they would protect the USSR’s southwestern frontiers from any future attack. Soviet control of Romania would also allow access to Yugoslavia and south-eastern Europe, and enable it to strengthen its strategic position in the Black Sea. Control of Bulgaria would give the USSR a naval base from which to dominate the approaches to the Turkish Straits and the Greek frontier (see the map on page 9).

Romania

The Soviet Union was also determined to re-annex the Romanian territories of Bessarabia and northern Bukovina, which it had occupied in 1940, and launched
an offensive against Romania on 20 August 1944. In a desperate attempt to take control of Romania before the Red Army occupied the whole country, the Romanian king deposed the pro-German government on 23 August. The king hoped that, like Italy (see page 25), Romania would be allowed to negotiate a ceasefire with the Western allies and then form a new government in which Communists would only be a minority. This idea was an illusion based on the false assumption that Britain and the USA would begin a second front in the Balkans which would give these two allies more say in Romania’s affairs. The king had no alternative but to negotiate an armistice on 12 September, with the Soviets who now occupied the country.

The National Democratic Front

Britain and the USA tacitly accepted that Romania was in the Soviet sphere of influence, and gave no help to the Romanian government, which was anxious to obtain a guarantee that Soviet troops would be withdrawn as soon as the war with Germany was over. An ACC was created and dominated by Soviet officials. A coalition government composed of Communists, socialists, National Liberals and the left-wing National Peasants’ Party, the so-called Ploughmen’s Front, was formed. This was paralysed by disagreements between the National Liberals and the three other parties. Supported by Soviet officials on the ACC, Communists and their allies formed the National Democratic Front and incited the peasants to seize farms from landowners and the workers to set up Communist-dominated production committees in the factories.

In March 1945, Stalin followed the precedent of Britain, which had intervened in December 1944 in Greece (see below) to establish a new government friendly to itself. Consequently, in March 1945 with the help of the Red Army, Romanian Communists orchestrated a coup which led to the creation of the pro-Soviet Communist-dominated National Democratic Front government.

Bulgaria

Although Stalin did not want a break with Britain and the USA, Western observers noted the anti-Western bias of Soviet policy in Romania and how Soviet officials actively supported the workers and peasant parties. The occupation of Romania allowed the Soviets to invade Bulgaria in early September 1944 and establish an ACC on 28 October.

Local Communists, including several thousand partisan troops, had already established the Patriotic Front, an alliance of anti-German left-wing forces. The Front seized power from the pro-German government of Konstantin Muraviev and established a government in Sofia shortly before the Red Army arrived. Inevitably, this success strengthened local Communists, who attempted a Communist revolution in the country. The country’s former ruling class was eliminated, with over 10,000 people executed. The trade unions and police were dominated by Communists and large farms were taken over by peasants.
Soviet response

This enthusiasm for revolution did not, however, fit in with Stalin’s overall strategy. Essentially, he was determined to safeguard Soviet control over Bulgaria, yet not antagonise his Western allies any more than necessary while the war with Germany was still being fought, and at a time when Poland was becoming an increasingly divisive issue. Since the USSR’s position was guaranteed through the key role of the Soviet chairman of the ACC, and the strong position of the local Communist Party, Stalin could afford to be conciliatory. Consequently, he attempted in the autumn of 1944 to persuade the Bulgarian Communists to pursue a more moderate policy. He wanted them to tolerate a certain degree of political opposition and to work within the Patriotic Front coalition. This was difficult to achieve as local Communists, sometimes backed by Soviet officials on the ACC, were determined to gain complete power regardless of Stalin’s instructions or the diplomatic consequences.

Yugoslavia and Greece

Josip Broz (Tito) was one of the most successful partisan leaders in German-occupied Europe. As a Communist, he looked to the USSR as a model for the state he wished to create in Yugoslavia, but his very independence and self-confidence were to cause Stalin considerable problems.

Yugoslavia

After the occupation of Bulgaria, Soviet troops joined with partisan forces in Yugoslavia, launching an attack on Belgrade on 14 October 1944. By this time, Tito had created an effective partisan army which not only fought the Germans but also waged civil war against non-Communist Serbs and Croat nationalists. Tito’s position had been strengthened when Britain decided in May 1944 to assist him rather than the nationalists, as his partisans were more effective opponents of the Germans. With British weapons and equipment, they effectively dominated the struggle against the Germans and nationalists, laying the foundations for a Communist takeover in 1945 in both Yugoslavia and neighbouring Albania. Whenever Tito’s partisans occupied an area, they formed Communist-dominated committees which took their orders from him rather than from the Yugoslav government-in-exile in London.

To the Soviets, the key to controlling south-eastern Europe was to create a military and political alliance between Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and the USSR. Tito was not, however, an easy ally and tried to carry out his own policies independently of the USSR. Despite Stalin’s reluctance to provoke a crisis with Britain and the USA on the eve of the Yalta Conference (see page 26), Tito established Communist governments in both Yugoslavia and Albania, which his forces controlled by November 1944.
Stalin was able to exercise a firmer control over Tito’s foreign policy. In January 1945, he vetoed Tito’s scheme for a federation with Bulgaria which would have turned it into a mere province of Yugoslavia. He made it very clear that Yugoslavia would have to subordinate its local territorial ambitions to the overall foreign policy considerations determined by the Soviet Union, although this naturally displeased Tito.

**Greece**

Tito and Stalin also clashed over the attempts by the Communist-controlled People’s Liberation Army (ELAS) in Greece to set up a national liberation government on the Yugoslav model. During the war, ELAS emerged as the most effective resistance force in Greece and, like Tito’s partisans, fought the Germans and non-Communist guerrilla groups. By 1944, ELAS was able to launch a Communist takeover of Greece. Yet, as Greece was an area regarded by the USSR as being well within the British sphere of influence, Stalin urged ELAS to join a moderate coalition government with non-Communist parties. When a revolt encouraged by Tito broke out in Athens on 3 December 1944, Stalin, true to his agreement with Churchill (see page 16), stopped him from helping Greek Communists and raised no objection to their defeat by British troops.

**Hungary and Czechoslovakia**

In neither Czechoslovakia nor Hungary did Stalin have any immediate plans for a Communist seizure of power. He wanted to keep alive the possibility of co-operation with non-Communist parties in order to protect Soviet interests. Local Communist parties were consequently ordered to enter into democratic coalition governments and to work within these to consolidate their position.

**Hungary**

The decision taken at the Tehran Conference not to start a second front in the Balkans ensured that the Red Army would also decide Hungary’s fate. When Soviet troops crossed the Hungarian frontier in September 1944, the head of state, Admiral Miklós Horthy, appealed to the Soviets for a ceasefire, but Germany took Horthy’s son prisoner and encouraged the Hungarian ultra-nationalists, the Arrow Cross Party, to seize power in western Hungary. It was not until early December 1944 that Red Army units reached the outskirts of Budapest, Hungary’s capital.

In the Soviet-occupied section of the country, the Hungarian Communist Party was initially too weak to play a dominant role in politics, and it therefore had little option but to co-operate with the Socialist Party, the Smallholders Party (a peasants’ party) and several other middle-class parties. In December 1945, when elections took place for the National Assembly, the Communist Party, despite the presence of the Red Army, gained only seventeen per cent of votes cast, but they were given three key posts in the provisional national
government. Throughout 1945, Stalin’s immediate aim was to remove anything from Hungary that could be claimed as war reparations by the USSR, since Hungary had been a German ally. In the longer term he was not sure whether Hungary should be integrated into the emerging Soviet bloc, where it would be dominated militarily, politically and economically by the USSR.

**Czechoslovakia**

Of all the Eastern European states, Czechoslovakia had the closest relations with the USSR. The Czechoslovaks felt betrayed by Britain and France over the Munich Agreement of 1938 (see page 10) and looked to the USSR as the power that would restore their country’s pre-1938 borders. In 1943, the Czechoslovak government-in-exile in London under Edvard Beneš, the former president, negotiated an alliance with the USSR, although this still did not stop Stalin from annexing Ruthenia, in eastern Czechoslovakia, in the autumn of 1944 (see the map on page 9).

As the Soviet army occupied more and more of Czechoslovakia in the winter of 1944–5, the balance of power tilted steadily away from the democratic parties represented by the government-in-exile in London to the Czechoslovak Communist Party led by Klement Gottwald, who was a refugee in Moscow. Stalin nevertheless forced Gottwald to accept Beneš as president and work within a coalition government. In turn, Beneš followed a conciliatory policy and was ready to co-operate with the Communist Party, enabling Stalin to achieve a harmony that had been impossible to reach in Poland. When the Provisional Government was formed in 1945, the Communist Party was able to demand eight seats in the cabinet including the influential Ministries of the Interior and Information, although Gottwald skilfully camouflaged the Communist Party’s powerful position by not demanding the position of prime minister.

**Finland**

In the summer of 1944, when Soviet troops invaded, Finland was granted an armistice on unexpectedly generous terms. The Finns had to:
- declare war on the Germans
- cede part of the strategically important Petsamo region on the Arctic coast
- pay reparations.

However, politically, they were allowed a considerable degree of freedom. Marshal C.E.G. Mannerheim, who had co-operated closely with Germany during the war, remained president until 1946 and there was only one Communist in the first post-war cabinet. Finland was in a position to give the USSR vitally needed reparations, such as barges, railroad equipment and manufactured goods. A repressive occupation policy would have disrupted these deliveries. In addition, the Finnish Communist Party was weak and unpopular, and the USSR had little option but to rely on the non-Communist parties.
Chapter 1 The origins of the Cold War

The liberation of Italy and France

Italy and France were liberated by the Western Allies. Italy was a leading Axis state, while France, until its defeat in 1940, had played the main part in the war against Germany. In both states, resistance to German occupation and its puppet governments helped to legitimise each Communist Party and enhance its popularity.

Italy

After the Allied landings in Sicily in July 1943, Mussolini, the Italian Fascist dictator, was overthrown and imprisoned, and in September an armistice was signed. This did not prevent German troops from seizing Italy’s capital, Rome, and occupying most of the Italian peninsula. The Allies were then forced to fight their way up the peninsula, and it was only in April 1945 that northern Italy was finally conquered. Italy was the first Axis state to sign an armistice, and the way it was administered by the Allies set important precedents for the future. All Soviet requests to be involved were firmly rejected by Britain and the USA, which later gave Stalin an excuse to exclude them from Eastern Europe. An Italian government was established and it was gradually given responsibility for governing the liberated areas. This government was closely supervised by the Anglo-American ACC.

Palmiro Togliatti

Stalin had little option but to accept these arrangements, although he was determined that Italian Communists should not be excluded from participating in the new government. Palmiro Togliatti, the leader of the Italian Communist Party, was ordered to form a coalition with the Socialist Party. He was to avoid any aggressive actions, such as an uprising or a civil war, which would cause tension between the USSR and the West and so make it more difficult for Stalin to consolidate the Soviet position in Eastern Europe. Togliatti was also to draft a popular programme for reforming the Italian economy which, by promising measures that would help the workers and peasants, would prepare the way for later Communist Party electoral successes.

Togliatti carried out these instructions as well as he could, joining the new government that was formed when Rome was occupied by the Allies in June 1944. In the north, in the winter of 1944–5, Communists played a key role in the resistance against the Germans. Togliatti, only too aware of how the British had crushed the Greek revolt, managed to keep his more radical partisans in check. By the time the war ended, this resistance had won the Communists considerable support throughout Italy and made them an essential partner in coalition government. This was seen when Togliatti himself became minister of justice in the Italian government, which was formed in April 1945. At this stage, then, Stalin’s policy in Italy was to push the Italian Communist Party into joining a governing multi-party coalition.

KEY TERM

Puppet government
One that operates at the will of and for the benefit of another government.
**France**

When Paris was liberated in August 1944, General Charles de Gaulle, the leader of the *Free French*, immediately established an independent government. His aim was to rebuild French power and to create a powerful French-led Western European bloc. To counter the predominance of the Anglo-Americans, he looked to the Soviet Union, and in December 1944 signed the Franco-Soviet Treaty of Alliance and Mutual Assistance, which committed both states to co-operate in any future defensive war against Germany.

As in Italy, the French Communist Party, having played a prominent part in the resistance, became a major force in French politics. Its leader, Maurice Thorez, was instructed by Stalin to support the Soviet–French alliance and work towards creating a left-wing coalition with socialists, which, it was hoped, would eventually be able to form a government.

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**Summary diagram: The liberation of Eastern and Western Europe 1943–5**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The liberation of Europe, 1944–5, by the Grand Alliance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From the east by the USSR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944: Poland, Romania and Bulgaria</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944–5: Hungary and Czechoslovakia</td>
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<tr>
<td>From the west by the USA, Britain and their allies</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944–5: Military aid to Yugoslavia</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944–5: Italy and Greece</td>
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<tr>
<td>1944–5: France and western Europe</td>
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<td>1944–5: Italy and Greece</td>
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<td>1944–5: France and western Europe</td>
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**6 The Yalta Conference, February 1945**

*What was achieved at the Yalta Conference?*

The Yalta Conference, attended by Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill, was, to quote the journalist and historian Martin Walker, ‘the last of the wartime conferences … [and] the first of the post-war summits’. Besides creating plans for finishing the war in Europe and eastern Asia, it also attempted to lay the foundations of the coming peace. Plans were finalised for the occupation of Germany by the victorious powers, among whom, on Churchill’s insistence, France was to be
included because he feared that the USA might withdraw its troops from Europe soon after the end of hostilities. Each power was allotted its own zone, including a section of Berlin, which was placed under Four-Power Control (for details of the zone divisions, see the map on page 36). The decision was also taken to establish the UN.

Poland

Poland again proved to be the most difficult subject on the agenda, and the Allies were only able to reach agreement through a series of ambiguous compromises, which could be interpreted differently by the USSR and the Western powers:

- They confirmed that Poland’s eastern border would run along the Curzon Line.
- They agreed in principle, as they had at Tehran, that in compensation for the land lost to the USSR, Poland would receive a substantial increase in territory in the north and west from land to be removed from Germany. The exact details of this were not stated.

SOURCE G

The ‘Big Three’: Churchill, Roosevelt, who was already terminally ill, and Stalin (front row, left to right) at the Yalta Conference in 1945. No French representative was invited.

How valuable is Source G in assessing Allied unity in February 1945?

KEY TERM

Four-Power Control
Under the joint control of the four occupying powers: Britain, France, the USA and the USSR.
The decision was also taken to reorganise the provisional government by including democratic politicians from both Poland and the London government-in-exile. Elections would be held as soon as possible.

Superficially this seemed to be a success for Britain and the USA, but in fact the terms were so vague that Stalin could easily manipulate them. First, the exact amount of land that Poland would receive at the cost of Germany was not fixed and secondly, words like ‘democracy’ and ‘elections’ meant very different things to the participants. For Stalin they essentially meant the domination of Poland by the Communist Party, while for Britain and the USA they meant effectively the domination of the non-Communist parties.

**SOURCE H**


Given the relentless character of Soviet diplomacy over the Polish problem, it must be recognized … that Stalin’s views had changed fundamentally. In 1939–41, the Soviet dictator had showed a willingness to trample on every vestige of Polish nationality or independence. From 1941 onwards he constantly reiterated his desire to restore ‘a strong and independent Poland’. His understanding of ‘strength’ and ‘independence’ differed considerably from that which was held in Britain and America, or indeed in Poland, but was no less substantive for that. Anyone who has any doubts concerning the genuineness of Stalin’s commitment should compare the post-war history of Poland with that of the Baltic states or the Ukraine. Stalin was the author not only of post-war Polish independence, but also of the peculiarly stunted interpretation of that concept which prevailed in the post-war era.

‘Declaration on Liberated Europe’

To underpin the right of the liberated states to determine their own governments, Roosevelt persuaded Stalin and Churchill at Yalta to agree to the ‘Declaration on Liberated Europe’, which committed the three governments to carry out emergency measures to assist the liberated states and to encourage democratic governments.

With the start of the Cold War, this became, as the journalist Martin Walker observed, a key text ‘upon which all future accusations of Soviet betrayal and bad faith were made’. Yet such accusations, although essentially true, completely ignored the reality of the situation in Eastern Europe. Stalin saw Poland, and indeed the other Eastern European countries, as corridors for an attack from Germany or eastern Europe on the USSR. He was therefore going to ensure that friendly governments, which in most cases were to mean Communist ones, were in place.
SOURCE I


[The Declaration emphasised] the right of all peoples 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 of them by the aggressor nations.

To foster the conditions in which the liberated people may exercise these rights, the three governments will jointly assist the people in any liberated state or former Axis satellite state in Europe where in their judgement conditions require: (a) to establish conditions of internal peace; (b) to carry out emergency measures for the relief of distressed peoples; (c) to form interim governmental authorities broadly representative of all democratic elements in the population and pledged to the earliest possible establishment through free elections of governments responsive to the will of the people; and (d) to facilitate where necessary the holding of such elections.

Summary diagram: The Yalta Conference, February 1945

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Britain, USA and USSR agreed on key issues which would shape the post-war world</th>
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<tr>
<td>Arrangements for post-war Germany</td>
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<td>The Declaration on Liberated Europe</td>
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The end of the war in Europe

Why did Churchill view the USSR’s advance westwards with suspicion?

Three months after the Yalta Conference, the war in Europe ended. In the final weeks of the war British and US forces raced to Trieste, Italy, in an attempt to stop Yugoslav forces seizing the port, while British troops in northern Germany crossed the River Elbe and advanced into Mecklenburg to prevent the Soviets from occupying Denmark (see map on page 36).

Churchill urged the USA to make special efforts to take Berlin and Prague to pre-empt a Soviet occupation, but the US generals were not ready to see their soldiers killed for what they regarded as political reasons, and so both capitals fell to Soviet troops.
When the war ended with the surrender of Germany on 8 May 1945, Anglo-American forces occupied nearly half the area that was to become the Soviet zone in Germany (see the map on page 36). It was not until early July that these troops were withdrawn into the US and British zones, which had been agreed on at Yalta.

The Red Army now confronted the Western allies in the middle of Germany. A few days before he killed himself in April 1945, Hitler predicted that:

**SOURCE J**


With the defeat of the Reich [Germany] and pending the emergence of the Asiatic, the African, and perhaps the South American nationalisms, there will remain in the world only two Great Powers capable of confronting each other – the United States and Soviet Russia. The laws of history and geography will compel these two Powers to a trial of strength either military or in the fields of economics and ideology. These same laws make it inevitable that both Powers should become enemies of Europe. And it is equally certain that both these powers will sooner or later find it desirable to seek the support of the sole surviving great nation in Europe, the German people.

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**Chapter summary**

The roots of the Cold War lay in the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and in Marxism–Leninism. This was countered by the USA’s intention to open up the world to capitalism, free trade, democracy and self-determination. During the interwar years, the Soviet government focused on internal issues rather than foreign policy, but used secret agents to stir up trouble in the capitalist states of Western Europe and their empires. At first Stalin sought to co-operate with Britain and France against Hitler, but in August 1939 he signed the Nazi–Soviet Pact to regain the land lost to Poland in 1920.

The German invasion of June 1941 led to the USSR allying with the very states it so distrusted. While the Second World War lasted the USSR and its Western Allies had no option but to co-operate to defeat Germany, despite tensions in the Grand Alliance. The military campaigns that defeated Germany in 1944–5 dictated the immediate post-war situation in Europe. Eastern Europe fell under the control of the Red Army, and Western Europe was firmly within the sphere of the British and the Americans.

At the Yalta Conference of February 1945, the Big Three agreed to place Germany under Four-Power Control, and democratically elected governments were to be set up in liberated Europe.
Chapter 1  The origins of the Cold War

Refresher questions
Use these questions to remind yourself of the key material covered in this chapter:

1 What are the main arguments of Marxism–Leninism?
2 Why did Western liberals distrust Marxism–Leninism?
3 To what extent was Soviet foreign policy, 1920–45, aimed at consolidating the Soviet state?
4 How serious were the tensions within the Grand Alliance?
5 To what extent were the aims of the Big Three contradictory?
6 What were the key sources of political power in liberated Eastern Europe, 1944–5?
7 To what extent was Stalin’s concern about post-war Poland prompted by the needs of Soviet security?
8 How did the USSR consolidate its position in Romania and Bulgaria?
9 Why were Tito’s ambitions viewed with suspicion by Stalin in 1944 and early 1945?
10 What was Stalin’s policy in Hungary and Czechoslovakia?
11 Why did Stalin pursue such a moderate policy in Finland?
12 How influential were the Communist Parties in Italy and France?
13 How was an agreement on Poland reached?
14 How significant was the Declaration on Liberated Europe?
15 Why did Poland cause problems for the ‘Grand Alliance’?

Question practice

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1 ‘The wartime “Grand Alliance” between Britain, the USA and USSR was undermined by mutual suspicion.’ Explain why you agree or disagree with this view.
2 How far was Soviet policy in Eastern Europe based on defensive aims?
3 How important was ideology in the origins of the Cold War, 1917–45?
4 Which of the following was the greater problem for the unity of the ‘Grand Alliance’ in the period 1943–5?
   i) The liberation of Italy. ii) The liberation of Poland. Explain your answer with reference to both i) and ii).

INTERPRETATION QUESTION

1 Read the interpretation and then answer the question that follows. ‘Fundamentally the cold war was a confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union, fuelled on both sides by the belief that the ideology of the other side had to be destroyed’ (from John W. Mason, The Cold War, 1945–1991, Routledge, 1996, p. 71). Evaluate the strengths and limitations of this interpretation, making reference to other interpretations that you have studied.