

The Origins of the Cold War



I. Opposing Perspectives

A. Alliance of Britain and U.S. with Soviet Union was pragmatic: need to defeat Germany

1. Lack of trust of Stalin. Neither Churchill nor FDR told Stalin about the atomic bomb
2. Many Allied leaders hoped USSR could be persuaded to join a new, stronger League of Nations organization

B. Communist leaders feared capitalist nations

1. Expected for European and then world domination by communism.
2. Hoped for collapse of capitalist economies and societies

II. United Nations Formed

A. U.S., Britain, China, and Russia met in 1944 to discuss plans for new organization to replace League of Nations

B. In April 1945, San Francisco Conference formed U.N.

1. Security Council (11 members) with veto power and permanent seats for five major powers (U.S., France, Britain, China, and USSR).
2. Secretariat, headed by Secretary-General, to handle day-to-day affairs

3. General Assembly with delegates from each nation. Three votes to USSR as result of Yalta Conference promise

4. International Court of Justice to deal with legal disputes between members

III. Problems with USSR

A. Free elections promised in Poland by Stalin following the war

1. Communist government formed with no elections

2. Border nations pressured into establishing communist governments

B. Churchill responded with "Iron Curtain" speech in March 1946, declaring that USSR's intentions were to control Eastern European and expand power throughout the world

C. American diplomat George Kennan proposed a "containment" policy to prevent spread of communist ideology.

D. Truman Doctrine--Truman asked for major economic aid to Greece and Turkey to oppose communism

E. Marshall Plan--Western Europeans nations provided \$12 billion to rebuild economies and resist Soviet pressures

IV. European Crises

A. Berlin Blockade and Airlift

1. Partition of Germany among Allies had resulted in Berlin being a divided city within the Soviet sector.

2. In June 1948, Soviets blockaded West Berlin and halted all traffic into the city.

3. Allies (U.S., France, and England) responded by airlifting massive amounts of food, coal, and other supplies to keep West Berlin open.

4. Soviets backed down and allowed traffic to resume.

B. Formation of NATO--Twelve nations (10 European nations plus Canada and the U.S.) joined in April 1949 in an attempt to establish collective security and resist Warsaw Pact nation's expansion.

V. Second Red Scare

A. Loyalty checks of government workers begun in 1947 because of fear of communist infiltration.

B. House Un-American Activities Committee held numerous public hearings and ruined reputations of blacklisted individuals, including many from TV, radio, and the movies.

C. Alger Hiss, former State Dept. diplomat, accused of disloyalty by Whittaker Chambers, a confessed Soviet spy.

1. Hiss sued Chambers for libel, but was convicted of perjury in 1950.

2. Democrats, many of whom supported Hiss, were seen as soft on communism.

D. Sen. Joseph McCarthy began to speak out against communist influence in the government with a speech in February 1950 in which he contended that the State Dept. was riddled with communists.

E. McCarran Internal Security Act (1950) required communist and "communist-front" organizations to register with the Justice Dept.

1. Membership lists and financial statements were required.

2. President was given broad powers to detain potential enemies.

3. Truman vetoed the bill as "a long step toward totalitarianism" but it was passed over his veto.

F. Ethel and Julius Rosenberg arrested, tried, and executed in 1951 for providing atomic secrets.