

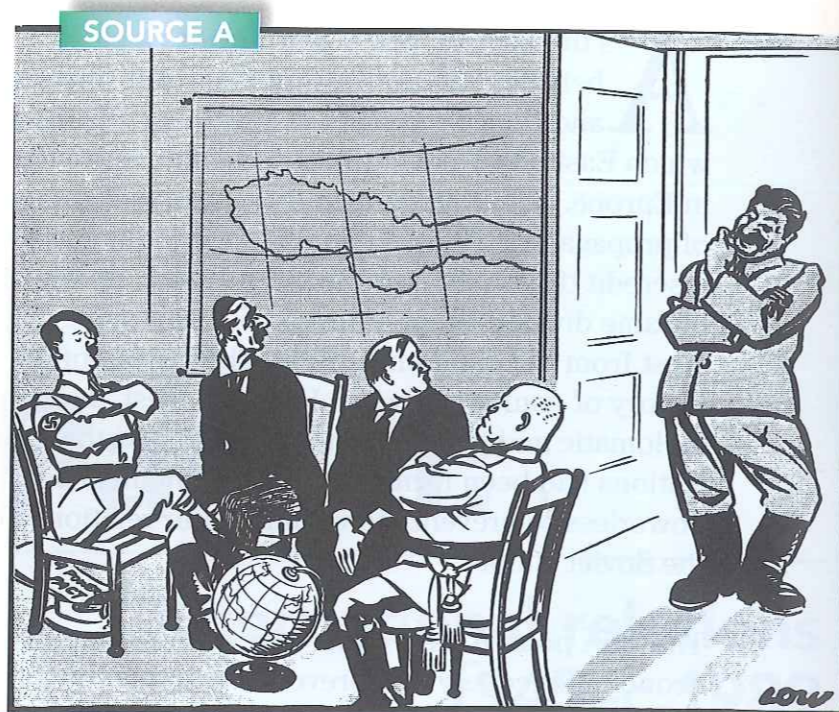
# Who was to blame for the Cold War?

After 1941 the Soviet Union and the USA were allies in the Second World War. Their alliance, however, hid the deep-seated distrust that each country had for the other. As it became clear that Nazi Germany was close to defeat, the friendship between East and West came under pressure. By 1949 relationships had deteriorated to the point where a 'Cold War' had begun, as the two sides sought to extend their influence and win diplomatic victories over their opponents. Europe itself had been divided by what Winston Churchill called an 'iron curtain'. On either side of the curtain were the American-led western powers, later allied in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, and the Soviet-dominated eastern powers, later joined together in the Warsaw Pact. For the next 40 years, their bitter rivalry dominated European politics.

## Why did the USA-USSR alliance begin to break down in 1945?

From the end of 1941, the USA and the Soviet Union fought as allies against Nazi Germany, Japan and their allies. Yet in 1945 the alliance began to break down and the two superpowers soon became bitter enemies in a conflict that is known as the 'Cold War'. How did this happen?

In fact, the wartime alliance was close to breaking point even before the defeat of Germany and Japan. The main reason for this, and for the Cold War itself, was distrust. The USA and the Soviet Union simply did not trust each other enough to be on good terms.



A cartoon from an English newspaper in September 1938. Stalin is complaining about his exclusion from the Munich talks.

## Reasons for the distrust

### 1 Different political systems

Since 1917 the Soviet Union had been a communist state. Communists based their beliefs on the writings of the German philosopher Karl Marx. He believed that the government should control all aspects of citizens' lives and that individual rights were less important than what was good for the country as a whole. Industry and agriculture should be owned by the state and any profits made should be used for the common good. So in the communist Soviet Union, there were no wealthy businessmen using their capital to take risks and make personal fortunes. There was no such thing as private profit. Nor was there political freedom. There was only one party, the Communist Party, and in elections voters chose from different

candidates in that party. There were also restrictions on freedom of speech, with newspapers and other media strictly controlled. Indeed, under Joseph Stalin, the Soviet Union was a country in which few citizens dared to criticise the government (see pages 201-5).

In contrast, the USA was a capitalist country. Industry and agriculture were in the hands of private individuals. Their major aim was to run their companies to make a personal profit. This would create jobs for individuals and provide wealth for the country as a whole through taxation. One of the major attractions for people emigrating to the USA in the early twentieth century was that it was seen as 'the land of opportunity', where immigrants such as Andrew Carnegie could acquire great personal wealth. Coupled with the right to make money was greater personal freedom than in the Soviet Union. There were free elections with a number of political parties and no control of the media by the government. Freedom of speech was considered a basic right of all American citizens.

### 2 A history of mistrust

Although having different political systems does not mean that countries have to become enemies, the basic mistrust that the Soviet Union and the USA had for each other made the breakdown of the wartime alliance inevitable. The problem was that both sides thought that their political system was the way that all governments should run their countries. The USA bitterly opposed communism and thought that the Soviet Union was trying to spread its beliefs across the world. It was joined in this thinking by capitalist countries of western Europe, particularly Britain and France. These countries therefore took steps to stop the spread of communism wherever they saw it developing. Most Soviet politicians believed, however, that they were under threat from the West and that any measures they took were merely defensive, to protect

CAPITALISM	COMMUNISM
<p>Wealthy people (capitalists) invest their money in land and industry. They employ the workers and keep all the profits that are made. A democratic system is followed with a number of political parties.</p>	<p>There is a classless society with no individual profit making. Land and industry are owned by the state and profits used for the good of all. There is only one political party.</p>
<p>Capitalism versus communism – a summary.</p>	

themselves from western aggression. They pointed to a series of events in the period 1917-45 which showed that the West was out to destroy communism.

- In 1917 the Bolsheviks (later renamed Communists) took control of Russia, but they soon found themselves fighting a civil war to retain power. In 1919 the USA, Britain and France sent troops to help the Bolsheviks' opponents.
- In 1933 Adolf Hitler became chancellor in Germany. Hitler hated communism and considered the Slav people of the Soviet Union to be an inferior race. To protect his country in the late 1930s, Stalin tried to form an anti-Hitler alliance with France and Britain. But the two western countries dragged their feet and no alliance was formed. Stalin saw this as an indication of western support for Hitler because France and Britain wanted Hitler to destroy the Soviet Union. This view was reinforced when Britain's policy of appeasement resulted in Hitler acquiring parts of Czechoslovakia after the Munich Conference in September 1938. Czechoslovakia was on the Soviet border, but Stalin was not even invited to the conference.

- After Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, the USA, Britain, France and the Soviet Union fought on the same side. Stalin urged his allies to launch a 'second front' in Europe to draw German troops out of the Soviet Union. The Allies were not ready to launch such an attack until June 1944 (D-Day), but Stalin believed that they were deliberately waiting for Germany to weaken the Soviet Union before they launched their attack.

However, the most significant reasons for the outbreak of the Cold War were the events at the end of the war and the different interpretations of why they were happening.

### The Yalta Conference

In February 1945, Franklin Roosevelt of the USA, Joseph Stalin of the Soviet Union and Winston Churchill of Britain met at Yalta in the Soviet Union. The war in Europe was drawing to a conclusion and decisions had to be made about how Europe was to be organised after the war. It was decided that:

- Germany should be divided into 'zones of occupation', one controlled by the USSR, one by the USA, one by Britain and one by France. Since the German capital, Berlin, would be in the Soviet zone, it would also be divided into four similar sections.

- Once Germany was defeated, the Soviet Union would join the war against Japan.
- A United Nations Organisation would be set up to keep peace after the war.
- As east European countries were liberated from Nazi occupation, they would hold free elections to set up democratic governments.

The main area of dispute was Poland. Stalin wanted to keep the parts of Poland that he had won in the Nazi-Soviet Pact of 1939. He also wanted Poland expanded westwards by giving it parts of Germany. That would make Germany weaker and put a buffer zone between Germany and the Soviet Union. Germany had invaded the Soviet Union twice in 30 years, and Stalin wanted to make sure it did not happen again. He also wanted to make sure that Poland had a pro-Soviet government.

Stalin already had a government in exile (the Lublin Poles) ready to take over. But Roosevelt and Churchill supported another group, the strongly anti-communist 'London Poles'. These Poles had helped organise the Warsaw Uprising in August 1944, aiming to gain part of Poland before Stalin's Red Army took full control of the country. The uprising was defeated by the Nazis and nearly 300,000 Poles were killed. The Red Army was ordered not to help in the uprising. Stalin wanted to make sure that when his army cleared the Germans out of Poland, the Lublin Poles would have complete control. By January 1945 this had happened.

### SOURCE B



### SOURCE C

I didn't say it was good, I said it was the best I could do.

President Roosevelt commenting on the Yalta Agreement to one of his advisers.

Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin in discussion at Yalta.

### SOURCE D

So far there has been a worrying lack of progress made in the carrying out of the decisions we made in the conference, particularly those relating to Poland. I am frankly puzzled as to why this should be and must tell you that I do not fully understand the attitude of your government.

President Roosevelt writing to Stalin in April 1945.

But Roosevelt and Churchill did not want Stalin to have a free hand in Poland. At Yalta they made him agree that some of the London Poles would be included in the government and that there would be free elections for a new government 'as soon as possible'.

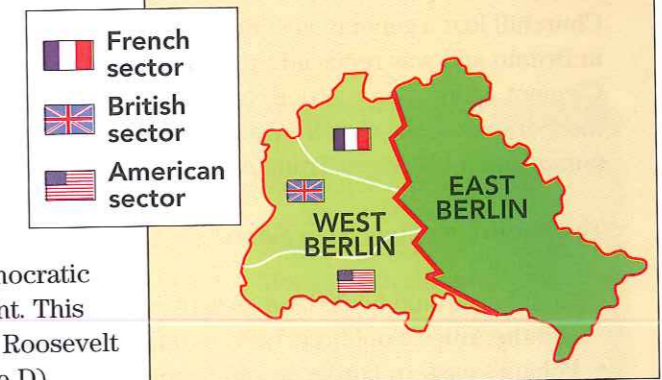
The Yalta Conference appeared to be successful, with agreements on how eastern Europe and Germany would be organised. But in reality, things were different. The London Poles had hardly any say in their government. As for elections, Stalin's idea of 'democratic government' was an elected pro-communist government. This was not what Churchill and Roosevelt had meant, and Roosevelt wrote to Stalin expressing his unhappiness (see Source D).

### The Potsdam Conference

Yalta had shown how difficult it was for the Allies to reach agreement. In July 1945 a second conference was held, at Potsdam in Germany. Here, divisions between the Soviet Union on one hand, and Britain and the USA on the other, were much more apparent.

By July 1945, Soviet troops had liberated the whole of eastern Europe from Nazi control. The USA and Britain had hoped that there would be free elections to set up democratic governments. Instead Soviet troops remained in the liberated countries.

In the USA, attitudes were beginning to harden. In April 1945, Franklin Roosevelt died and was replaced by Harry Truman. The new president was much less trusting of the Soviet Union than Roosevelt had been, and in his first month in office he had an angry exchange with the Soviet foreign minister, Molotov, in which he demanded that the Soviets carry out their obligations in the Yalta Agreement. In May, Truman claimed, 'We have to get tough with the Russians, they don't know how to behave.'



### QUESTIONS

- 1 What are the main differences between communist and capitalist countries?
- 2 Why was there so much mistrust between East and West in 1945?
- 3 Why was it so difficult to reach a satisfactory agreement at the Yalta Conference?

Truman's tough stance was continued at the Potsdam Conference. By the time the conference got under way on 17 July 1945, the Americans had successfully tested an atomic bomb. One of Truman's first actions at Potsdam was to inform Stalin and Churchill that his country now had the bomb. He was confident that it would be years before the Soviet Union had one, so the USA could get tough with the Soviet Union.

The Potsdam Conference showed that Truman was not prepared to let Stalin have things all his own way. In July, Churchill lost a general election in Britain and was replaced by the Labour leader, Clement Attlee. Since Attlee was new and inexperienced, the conference was really a personal duel between Truman and Stalin.

The following points were agreed:

- Germany would be divided as agreed at Yalta, and the Allies would receive reparations.
- Poland's eastern border would be moved west to the rivers Oder and Neisse.
- The Nazi Party was banned and its leaders were to be tried as war criminals.
- Germans living in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia would be sent back to Germany.

However, there were several major disagreements:

- The Soviet Union wanted to impose severe reparations on Germany to cripple it for years to come. Truman blocked this.
- The Soviet Union wanted to share in the occupation of Japan once it was defeated. Truman refused.
- Britain and the USA wanted a greater say in eastern Europe. They did not accept that Stalin had the right to set up pro-Soviet governments in these countries. Stalin said that this was what they had agreed at Yalta.

#### SOURCE E



"IF WE DON'T LET HIM WORK, WHO'S GOING TO KEEP HIM?"

A cartoon from a British newspaper in July 1946. The foreign ministers of the wartime allies are arguing over what should be done to Germany now that the war is over.

#### SOURCE F

From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an iron curtain has descended across the continent. Behind that line lie all the capitals of the ancient states of central and eastern Europe – Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Bucharest and Sofia. All these famous cities and the populations around them lie in the Soviet sphere and all are subject to a very high and increasing measure of control from Moscow.

An extract from Churchill's speech at Fulton, Missouri, on 5 March 1946.

The Potsdam Conference had shown how divided the former wartime allies were. This division became even more apparent in the months after the conference. The development of the atomic bomb in the USA was a major source of worry to Stalin, who feared that the USA might use the threat of the bomb to prevent the spread of communism. He ordered his scientists to work flat out to develop a Soviet atomic bomb.

Churchill making his speech at Fulton on 5 March 1946.

This further worried the USA, which saw an atomic bomb in the hands of the Soviet Union as a threat to world peace.

The Allies also fell out over arrangements in Germany. Britain and France accused the Soviet Union of taking too much in reparations from Germany, so as to prevent its recovery. They also wanted democratic elections in Germany, but Stalin blocked this.

The division between East and West was shown most clearly in March 1946 when Winston Churchill made his famous 'iron curtain' speech in the USA at Fulton, Missouri. President Truman had seen a copy of the speech before it was delivered and must have approved it. The speech (Source F) declared that Europe was being divided into two separate halves by Soviet policy. In the West were free, democratic states, but in the East, behind an 'iron curtain' were countries under the domination of communist parties subject to the Soviet Union. This was a clear statement of 'West versus East', and Stalin accused Churchill of trying to stir up a war against the Soviet Union.

#### How had the USSR gained control of eastern Europe by 1948?

It was a fact, however, that between 1945 and 1948 the Soviet Union made sure that every country in eastern Europe had a government that was both communist and sympathetic to the Soviet Union. As far as Stalin was concerned, this was a defensive measure aimed at creating a buffer zone between the Soviet Union and the West. The Soviet Union had been invaded from the west twice in the last 30 years; the establishment of communist governments in eastern Europe would make such an invasion more difficult.

Of course, as far as the West was concerned, and the USA in particular, the Soviet Union was not acting defensively. It was taking the first steps towards world domination. Here was clear proof that the western way of life was under threat. The spread of communism would have to be stopped.

Stalin's response to Churchill's speech, 1946.

#### SOURCE G



#### SOURCE H

Mr Churchill now takes the stand of the warmongers and he is not alone. He has friends not only in Britain, but in the United States ... As a result of the German invasion, the Soviet Union's loss of life has been several times greater than that of Britain and the USA put together. And so what can be surprising about the fact that the Soviet Union, anxious for its future safety, is trying to see to it that governments loyal to the Soviet Union should exist in the countries through which the Germans made their invasion? How can anyone who has not taken leave of his senses describe these peaceful hopes of the Soviet Union as expansionist?



### The Baltic States

At the end of the war, the Soviet Union extended its border some 500 kilometres west. It did this by formally annexing Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, which it had occupied during the war with Finland in 1939–40. It also kept control of the eastern half of Poland, which it had occupied as part of the Nazi–Soviet agreement in 1939 (although the Germans had occupied this area from 1941 to 1945).

### Poland

At the request of Britain and the USA at the end of June 1945, Stalin included a few London Poles in the new Polish government. In January 1947, however, fresh (rigged) elections saw the return of a totally communist government. The leader of the London Poles, Mikolaczyk, fled from Poland, fearing for his life.

### Romania

After the expulsion of the Nazis, a coalition government dominated by communists was set up. In February 1945 the Soviet Union forced the king of Romania to appoint a communist prime minister. By the middle of the year, communists were in control, and in 1947 the monarchy was abolished.

### Greece

Here the communists were not successful. They fought a civil war against royalists supported by Britain and the USA. Stalin stuck by his promise to the western allies not to provide support for the Greek communists, who were finally defeated in 1949.

### Bulgaria

In late 1944 a communist-dominated coalition government was set up. In November 1945 the communists won rigged elections, and in 1946 they abolished the monarchy.

### Czechoslovakia

Following the war, a coalition government ruled Czechoslovakia. From 1946 the communists were the largest party in the coalition. In 1948 the communists used the army to seize control. Many non-communists were arrested and the non-communist foreign secretary, Jan Masaryk, was murdered. Rigged elections were held in which the communists won a landslide victory. Other political parties were then banned.

### East Germany

The Soviet Union controlled the eastern section of Germany after the war. In 1949 it became a separate communist state, the German Democratic Republic (East Germany).

### Hungary

In November 1945 free elections were held and the non-communist Smallholders' Party won the most seats. In August 1947 fresh (rigged) elections were held and the communists won total control. All other political parties were then banned.

### Yugoslavia

In Yugoslavia the communist resistance had fought bravely against the Germans, and in 1945 its leader, Marshal Tito, was elected president. At first, Tito and Stalin got on well, but relations deteriorated as it became clear that Tito did not intend to follow orders from Moscow. Yugoslavia was expelled from the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform), and economic sanctions were applied against it by other communist countries. Tito countered this by taking aid from the West – much to the annoyance of Stalin.