

The Cold War

1945-1993

Intro.

The Soviet Union was created by **Communist revolutionaries** after they took over the Russian Empire in **1917**. The United States and the Soviet Union were allies during WWII. Immediately after 1945, however, they became rivals in a Cold War. The war was “cold” only in the sense that the two superpowers never fought one another directly in open warfare. However, their global competition led to **frequent crises and conflicts on every continent.**

The Roots of the Cold War

The roots of the Cold War lay in the **differences between two political and economic systems** – the **democratic, capitalist system** of the United States, and the **dictatorial communist system** of the Soviet Union. When WWII ended, the United States and the Soviet Union **each sought new opportunities to spread its system and way of life**. Each country looked with **suspicion and alarm** at attempts by the other country to spread its beliefs. Many Americans became convinced that communists were trying to **take over the world**.

Features of Capitalism

- **Private Property.** People have a right to own property (possessions, factories, farms, businesses) and to use their property as they see fit.
- **Free Enterprise.** People are free to open any business and to buy or sell any legal product. Businesses can do anything legal to attract customers – lower their prices, provide better quality, advertise, etc.

Features of Capitalism

- **Profit Motive.** The ability to make profits (what remains after the costs of businesses are paid) is an important reason why people risk their money to start a new business.
- **Supply and Demand.** The forces of supply and demand eliminate less efficient producers, and end the production of goods that people do not want to buy. (The Invisible Hand)

The Features of “Ideal” Communism

- **Role of Government.** Decisions about production, distribution and use of resources are **made by the government** for the good of all workers and not by consumer demands.
- **No Private Property.** After a revolution overthrows the elite, private property is abolished. Common ownership of the means of production (factories, farms, mines) is shared by all workers.

“Ideal” Communism continued

- **Cooperation.** Communism is based on cooperation, in which workers in society labor together and share equally in the benefits.
- **Major Goal.** The main goal is a classless society – total equality among all workers , no matter who they are or what job they perform. Then the government will “wither away.”

The Reality of Communism

In reality, the Soviet government was a **totalitarian dictatorship** controlling all aspects of life; the workers never owned the factories, benefits were not shared equally, **no opposition was allowed** and the **rights and freedoms of the people were crushed**.

Wartime Allies Become Cold War Enemies

In 1945, President **Roosevelt**, British Prime Minister Winston **Churchill** and Premier Joseph **Stalin** of the Soviet Union met at **Yalta** (a city in the Soviet Union) to plan for the future of Europe after the war.

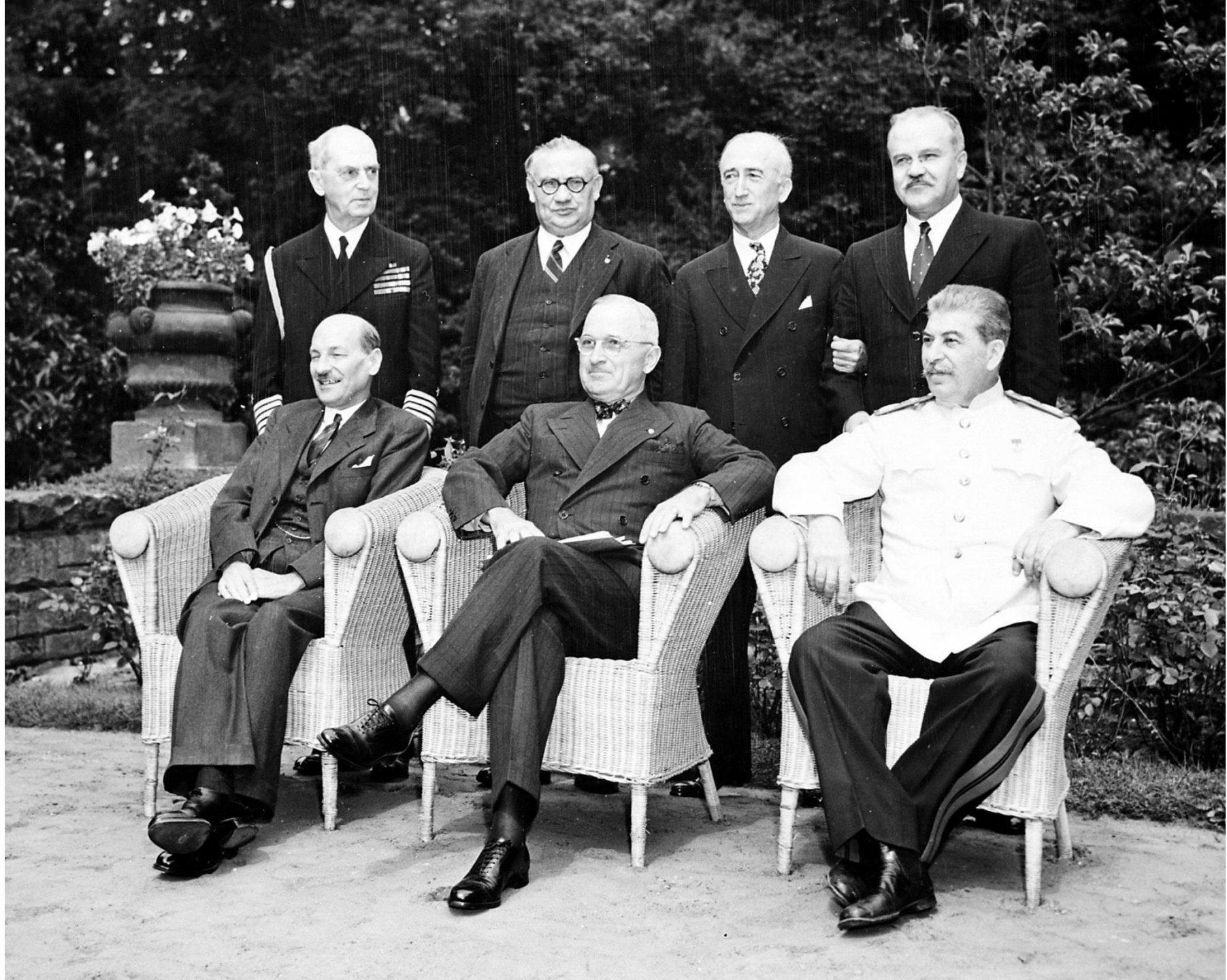
They agreed that **Germany would be divided into four separate zones**, and that the troops of the United States, Soviet Union, Britain and France would each occupy one zone.

They also **agreed to hold free elections** in all the countries liberated from Nazi rule.

Wartime Allies Become Cold War Enemies cont.

Stalin gave his pledge to withdraw Soviet troops and to allow free elections in Eastern Europe after the war.

Soon after the war ended, a second conference of allied leaders was held at **Potsdam, Germany**. Even though the U.S. and the Soviet Union had fought on the same side, **serious differences** between them began to develop at the **Potsdam Conference** over the future of Eastern Europe.



Who was to blame for starting the Cold War?

The American Viewpoint:

American leaders felt that **Eastern European countries wanted to become democratic** like the United States, but that the **Soviet Union was preventing this**.

They also believed that it would be a mistake for them to turn their back on European affairs as they had done after World War One.

Americans felt that **Stalin could not be trusted**, since he had promised elections in Poland and other countries in eastern Europe and seemed to be backing away from his promise.

Communism was seen as **a dangerous system that needed to be stopped before it spread**.

Who was to blame for starting the Cold War?

The Soviet Viewpoint

Soviet leaders believed they had a **right to control Eastern Europe**. They felt that just as the U.S. controlled Latin America through the Monroe Doctrine, the Soviet Union should have the final say over its eastern European neighbors.

Stalin believed that the **Western powers had no direct interests in Eastern Europe** and should not interfere.

Soviet leaders also believed they **could not trust the U.S. and other Western countries** because they had **delayed the invasion of France** during World War II, resulting in heavy losses suffered by the Soviet Union.

The Iron Curtain Falls on eastern Europe

In 1946, Stalin refused to allow the promised elections in Poland. The United States also refused to share the secret of the atomic bomb, and the Cold War began in earnest. The Soviet army had occupied Eastern Europe while fighting Germany and now **Stalin refused to withdraw these troops.** In stead, **Soviet officers placed local communists in power in all the governments of Eastern Europe,** making these countries “**satellites**” of the **Soviet Union.** Puppet governments.

The Iron Curtain Falls cont.

Trade and communications between Eastern and Western Europe were cut off. It seemed that an Iron Curtain had fallen, closing off eastern Europe from the democracies of the West. Travel and contact between East and West was limited, and Eastern European leaders followed the dictates of the Soviet government. The Iron Curtain remained in place for the next forty years. At various times, Soviet troops were sent to crush democratic uprisings in Hungary, Czechoslovakia and other nations in Eastern Europe.

The Iron Curtain

