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COLD WAR:

WHEN DID IT START?

WHY DID IT START?

by

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Preface

I was born at the height of the Cold War and spent most of my life in the shadow of the Cold War years. Like many, I remember the space race and learned about the Cuban missile crises and nuclear holocaust. But why did this confrontation begin? Many people have grown up thinking that it was just the two biggest kids on the block syndrome and it was bound to happen. But that answer is obviously too simplistic and still did not answer the question “why did it start?”

I am fortunate during this year to have the resources and time to research this question. Granted there is a great deal of historical information condensed into this paper, the purpose is not to look in-depth at the Russian Revolution or the Great World Wars, but to look at these events as a catalyst to shaping the Cold War.

I would like to thank my faculty Research Advisor, CDR Al (Spinner) StClair for his time and guidance on this project. His constant reminders to stay focused on the question and the reader were invaluable. I would also like to thank the professionals who work in the research staff department at the Air University Library. They were a critical source of assistance in gathering materials.

Abstract

With the Cold War over, we should look back at its root causes. One of the still puzzling question is when did the Cold War actually start? What caused WWI and WWII allies to become our greatest enemy? Were there any correlation's between the causes of the Cold War and other events that were taking place at the time? If so, how did they contribute to the war? Looking back at Russian history, and America's involvement in that history, I will show that the undeclared war between the two states that would span a century began with the Russian Revolution of 1917. I will then move forward in history to look at WWI and an in-depth look at WWII as to determine what factors caused the Americans and Russians to take the courses of action they did to forge the Cold War.

Chapter 1

Cold War Beginnings

*For I dipt into the future, far as human eye could see,
Saw the Vision of the world, and all the wonder that would be.*

—Alfred Tennyson

The fuel that kept the cold war burning for centuries was that the enemy (Russian or American depending on your perspective) acted just as their models predicted. The American distrust, and to some extent paranoia, of any system of government different than their own and the Soviet perception, and in some instances reality, of Western intervention set the stage for the Cold War. “The Soviet Union and the United States waged the Cold War in the belief that confrontation was unavoidable, that it was imposed by history. Soviet leaders were convinced that Communism would ultimately triumph in the world and that the Soviet Union was the vanguard Socialist-Communist State. They were also convinced that the Western imperialist powers were historically bound to pursue a hostile course against them. For their part, American and other Western leaders assumed that the Soviet Union was determined to enhance its power and to pursue expansionist policies by all expedient means to achieve a Soviet-led Communist world. Each side thought that it was compelled by the very existence of the other to engage in zero-sum competition, and each saw the unfolding history of the Cold War as confirming its views.”¹ The actions taken on all sides since the beginning of the 19th century

continually reinforced that their beliefs were correct. But more importantly, it reinforced that the courses of action taken in response to those beliefs were correct. So the Cold War began not with a military battle, but with distrust and content of differing governments.

WWI and the Cold War

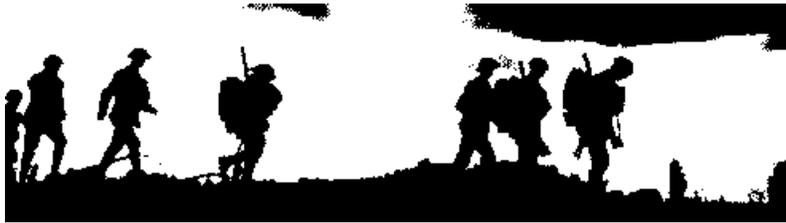


Figure 1 Depiction of WWI Soldiers

World War I could be considered as the actual birthplace of the Cold War. The seeds of the Cold War are planted during WWI. The Russian Revolution probably would not have reached such proportions unless it had been conceived from the lessons the Russian soldiers learned in the war. “The terror of the revolution was born in the methods that the Russian soldier learned during the war. The ruling mentality of the Bolsheviks was based in the military techniques of the war. For instance, the very fashions of the Russian rulers were based on the military fashions (leather jackets). Their language was militarized and the revolution, having adopted all these habits from WWI, carried them through in the revolution. The economy was militarized with laborers, peasants.”² Prior to the war, Russia was a non-industrial country consisting of mainly farming villages. The population was not interested nor trained in military affairs. WWI raised and trained a massive army. “The soldiers who came back from the war, many of them brutalized and terrorized by the war experience, continued their military methods of

behavior in the villages that were their homes.”³ Much like our veterans returning from war, they had adjustment problems of how to stop being a soldier. They could continue to be soldiers by becoming the main supporters of the new regime in the countryside. Without this support the Russian revolution may not have succeeded.

The decisions made by the allies at Versailles were an attempt to weaken Germany so they would not be able to mount an offensive in the future, but strong enough to stop the Communists revolution from spreading to Germany. Winston Churchill said that maybe we have to give Germany an army so that Bolshevism doesn't take hold in Germany. The same thing would be true of Eastern Europe as well, where there were Bolshevik uprisings in Hungary and elsewhere. It was more important to stop that revolution from spreading to the West than to cripple Germany so severely that another war would not take place. It was no secret that Lenin wanted the Communist system of government to expand west. The ruling Russian party saw the decisions made at Versailles as reinforcing their belief that the West was in fact “hostile allies.” The Western allies in turn viewed Lenin and the new Russian government with suspicion ever since they signed a separate peace treaty with Germany that ended the war on the Eastern Front. The allies did not understand nor care for the internal problems that Russia was having and her reasons for withdrawing from the conflict. Pure and simple fact was survival. The Bolsheviks had promised an end to the war and in order to stay in power would have to make good on that promise. The Germans jumped at the opportunity of ending hostilities on one front. The early peace treaty was a “win-win” situation for the Russians and Germans, but a “win-loose” for the Soviets and allies. WWI trained and

sustained the revolutionary army that placed in power a government the West did not consider dependable because of their withdrawal from the war.

The Russian Revolution



Figure 2 Lenin

In 1917, “Russian Capitalism was extremely feeble and rested upon the crutches of foreign capital. French, British, German, Belgian and other Western powers controlled 90 per cent of Russia's mines, 50 per cent of her chemical industry, more than 40 per cent of her engineering, and 42 per cent of her banking stock.”⁴ On January 12th the British foreseeing the inevitable urged Tsar Nicholas II to try and regain the confidence of his people. Nicholas did nothing, and within two months with not one garrison or regiment to defend him, he was forced out of power. The Russian Provisional Government did little to listen to her people and was a government in name only. On November 7th of the same year the Bolsheviks and their allies seized power with little resistance from the Provisional Government. The real power struggle was just beginning within the Bolsheviks and a civil war soon began. The civil war initiated by non-Russian [and one that was] financed, armed, fed and participated in by over a dozen countries or non-Russian peoples.⁵ All of whom and in varying degrees were being motivated by either a desire to seize Russian territory or to destroy the Bolshevik regime, or do both. The United States was considered to be just one of the many looters in the Russian country.⁶

In the end, the ruling party was able to place the blame for many of the Russian economic problems on the foreign interventionists and Capitalism. This memory in the minds of the Russian government and people drove them in a direction of self-preservation and isolationism. There was a brief time after the revolution when the two governments were making progress in the 1920's and early 1930's. Congress authorized \$20 million for famine relief efforts in 1921 that saved millions of Russians from starvation.⁷ This opened the door for Western businessmen such as Henry Ford and Armand Hammer to conduct trading with Russia.⁸ For a brief period it looked as though Russia was becoming an emerging democracy but its history said do not trust the West. Lenin thought Russia should be self-sufficient and that profit minded Capitalist would as in the past extract all the wealth they could and depart, leaving Russia open for conquest again.⁹ This distrust was the beginning of what would become bad political relations between the two soon to be world super powers. They would remain neither enemies nor friends for the next 20 years until war in Europe again found them allies. This WWII alliance of survival deepened the distrust between the nations.¹⁰ Neither side understanding the true reasons and implications of the others action increased the tension and hostilities. As WWII starts, the Cold War is still in its formation stages. Early in the war it is not to late to for the wartime allies to become peacetime partners. However Moscow vividly remembers the not so distant past and their perceptions and wartime actions (which were usually reactions to Western conduct) closed the door on any long-term cooperation between the Western world and the Soviet Union.

WWII and the Cold War



Figure 3 Stalin and Truman

Despite all efforts from France and Russia to appease Hitler and Nazi Germany prior to WWII, they continued their war preparations.¹¹ At the beginning of the war, Russia was not able to engage in a war with Germany, and on August 23, 1939, Stalin signed a non-aggression pact with Germany.¹² The treaty kept Russia out of the main fighting of WWII but to prepare for possible future conflict, Russia pursued the Baltic States and invaded Finland to secure its Western borders in a defensive maneuver.¹³ The invasion of Finland resulted in showing Germany how weakened the Russian army had become as a result of the failed Baltic action. Hitler took notice of the Russian failure and his quest for domination could not be satisfied by a meager piece of paper. Operation Barbarossa took Moscow by surprise as the German army advanced quickly and deep into Russian territory.¹⁴ The Russians looked towards their ally countries to mount a quick offensive on the mainland of Europe in hopes that it would cause Hitler to move forces from the East to West. The allies in turn wanted the Russians to put more pressure on the Germans in the East so the Normandy landings would be successful. However the British and Americans did not think a full-scale invasion of Europe was possible before 1943. In order to satisfy the Russians, a second front was promised to be started in North

Africa to attack the Germans in their “soft under belly.”¹⁵ The Russians viewed this nearly two year delay in opening a second front as their “hostile allies” attempt to curtail Communism by letting the German Army reduce their military capabilities. Despite the successful allied landings in Normandy in 1944, this earlier friction intensified over irreconcilable differences about postwar aims. With Stalin's takeover of Eastern Europe, the wartime alliance ended, and the Cold War seed planted in 1917 had sprouted and was beginning to grow.

The Terran Conference



Figure 4 Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill at the Terran Conference, November 28 – December 1 1943

U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet Union leader Josef Stalin met for the first time in Tehran, Iran to discuss military operations against Germany and began talks on postwar political issues.¹⁶ Stalin agreed to pressure the German forces from the East while the Western Allies prepared for their invasion, an invasion that Stalin insisted must take place soon. The Soviets also agreed to join the fight against Japan once Germany was defeated.¹⁷ The purpose of the conference was to show Germany that the allies possessed a united front against them. As the declaration stated, “No power on earth can prevent our destroying the German

armies by land, their U Boats by sea, and their war plants from the air. Our attack will be relentless and increasing. We came here with hope and determination. We leave here, friends in fact, in spirit and in purpose.”¹⁸ The postwar occupation of Germany and Eastern Europe were discussed at length, but all three leaders appeared uncertain as to the specifics of the country's reorganization. FDR played the roll of mediator, one that he would assume through the war. Trying to keep the allies focused on military operations he was reluctant to address the difficult issues. His strategy was ambiguous and his tactic was to avoid conflict.¹⁹ He did not want to get into open debate with the Soviets because he feared it would collapse the coalition. U.S. loans to Russia and the “Polish question” were major dividing points.²⁰ This was another sign that the war allies were not in agreement well before the end of the war.

The Yalta Conference



Figure 5 FDR and Churchill at the round table in the banquet room of Livadia Palace

The Yalta conference is often cited as the beginning of the Cold War. The conference at Yalta in the Crimea (February 4-11, 1945) brought together the Big Three Allied leaders once again. With victory close at hand, Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt discussed Europe's postwar reorganization. “The main purpose of Yalta was the re-establishment of the countries conquered and destroyed by Germany. Poland was given back its independence and given its own national election in order to create a new,

independent government. The Yalta Conference also agreed to divide Germany into zones controlled by each of the three nations present.”²¹ The Soviets reaffirmed their intention to fight Japan (in two or three months) after the German surrender and in return expected to receive occupation areas in the East as well as say in the surrender of Japan.²² The Allies also agreed to install a representative government in Poland. “Later, to the surprise of the West, Stalin failed to keep his promises and he quickly prevented popular elections in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria because they were “troubled spots.” The response by the West was little more than a verbal hand slap because the Russian army now extended across Eastern Europe and could (and did) control the areas by force.”²³ Critics would soon accuse Roosevelt as “selling out” at Yalta but he and Churchill recognized the reality of Soviet power in 1945. Roosevelt would later say, “I didn’t say the result was good. I said it was the best I could do.”²⁴ Three months later, he would be dead of a massive cerebral hemorrhage and Harry Truman would be sworn in as president and be a major player in the shaping of the Cold War.

The Potsdam Conference



Figure 6 Churchill, Truman and Stalin at the Potsdam Conference, July 17 – August 2, 1945

The vague wording and tentative provisions of the Potsdam Agreement, allowing a wide range of interpretation, have been blamed for its failure.²⁵ No agreement on

Poland's western boundary was made. The Russians wanted as much buffer land between them and Germany as they could get. They were not going to let Germany invade them again through Poland as they did twice in one generation. It planned to use its new republics as shields around the Motherland and then remove anything of value that an enemy may want from those buffers.²⁶

At the Yalta Conference the Russians had the upper hand. They had the greater military in Eastern Europe and the U.S. wanted (in fact FDR thought he desperately needed) the Soviets in the war with Japan. Just five months later at Potsdam, things had changed drastically. The U.S. had a new President and a new weapon in which they were confident would bring the war with Japan to a quick end. President Truman also felt this new weapon would give him the advantage at Potsdam.²⁷ At the conference, Truman announces the existence of the atomic bomb to the allies in order to show military superiority, especially to Stalin. Four days later, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima. A second atomic device was dropped on the port city of Nagasaki three days later. Japan soon surrendered, ending World War II. The end of this war created a void that the Cold War quickly filled.

The new destructive capability demonstrated by the American military created fear in the Russian Government. Fear that was justified in the minds of the Russians based on past dealings with Western Capitalists. Before the American theory of Communist containment was a concern, the Soviets were thinking about the Capitalist containment since the Russian Revolution. The U.S. thought this Military Technological Revolution would make the Russians think twice in their conquest for Eastern Europe, and for a while it did.

When the U.S. proclaimed it would be the “trustee” of the Atomic Bomb, the Russians increased the pace of their nuclear program.²⁸ The Soviets believing their security and future depended on development of nuclear weapons placed every resource available to this endeavor. The results were that within four years the advantage held by the U.S. would be gone.²⁹ “The world had entered the Nuclear Age, a time of unprecedented danger and that nuclear threat would overshadow all the future Cold War confrontations to come.”³⁰

The end of WWII found allies re-aligning themselves as either free and Democratic or Communists. These alliances were the birth of NATO and the Warsaw Pact and would divide the world into two super power camps.

Notes

¹ Raymond L. Garthoff, *Looking Back: The Cold War in Retrospect*, p. 1

² David Barnsdale, *Was Stalin Implicit in October? A Green View on the Bolshevik Revolution*, online, Internet, Available from <http://www.barnsdle.co.uk/russ/oct.html>

³ Ibid.

⁴ Cold War International History Project, *Russia: From Revolution to Counter-Revolution, Part One*, online, Internet, Available from <http://cwihip.si.edu/default.htm>

⁵ Jorgensen & Sechooler, *The Millennial Files: A Russian Revolution, 1917*, online Internet, Available from <http://www.mmmfiles.com/20tha.htm>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Library of Congress, *Soviet Archives Exhibit*, Online Available from <http://metalab.unc.edu/expo/soviet.exhibit/entrance.html#tour>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Steven Schoenherr, *Cold War Policies*, online Internet, Available from <http://ac.acusd.edu/History/20th/coldwar1.html>

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Lawrence Aronsen, *The Origins of the Cold War, in Comparative Perspective*, p. 17 & 18

¹⁶ Cold War International History Project, *A Decade of American Foreign Policy*, Online, Internet, Available from <http://cwihip.si.edu/default.htm>

¹⁷ Ibid.

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¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Barton J. Bernstein, *Politics & Policies of the Truman Administration*, p. 18

²⁰ Ibid., p. 23

²¹ Paul Healy, *The Cold War, Yalta & Hiroshima, The Causes of the War*, online Internet, Available from <http://expert.cc.purdue.edu/~phealy/yalta.html>

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Steven Schoenherr, *Cold War Policies*, online Internet, Available from <http://ac.acusd.edu/History/20th/coldwar1.html>

²⁵ Robert James Maddox, *From War to Cold War: The Education of Harry S. Truman*, p. 97

²⁶ John Spanier and Steven Hook, *American Foreign Policy Since World War II*, p. 31

²⁷ Ibid., p. 32

²⁸ Ibid., p. 35

²⁹ Thomas G. Paterson, *The Origins of the Cold War*, p. xx

³⁰ Steven Schoenherr, *Cold War Policies*, online Internet, Available from <http://ac.acusd.edu/History/20th/coldwar1.html>

Chapter 2

Cold War Heats Up

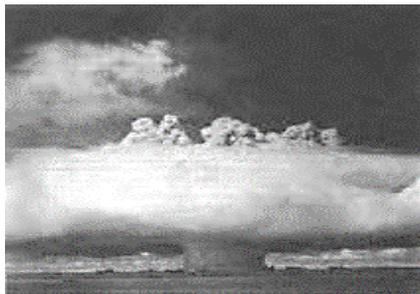


Figure 7 Operation Crossroads Nuclear Testing in 1946

The WWII alliances of survival between the West and Russia crumbled as the war drew to an end. Distrust and misperceptions on all sides created a new war, one of brinkmanship and “one-upmanship.”

With World War II officially over, the allies who once fought against a common enemy now had time to look at each other. The Russian Communists, who had by now this time warped Lenin’s dream of Communism, sought only to expand their sphere of influence. The Western countries, and the Americans in particular, enforced their policy of Communist containment. Both sides were doing what they believed was right to preserve their power and way of life.

In order to influence the Soviets and deter their expansion into Western Europe, the U.S. curtailed the lend lease program just six days after V-E Day. In addition the U.S. reconsidered the 10 billion-dollar loan that Roosevelt and Stalin discussed at Yalta.¹

In 1946 the Cold War of words also heated up. On the 5th of January, President Truman stated to his Secretary of State James Byrnes, "I'm sick of babying the Soviets" and stated that there will be no more recognition of Communist governments. In response on February 5th Stalin delivered a hostile speech aimed towards the Western leaders in which he stated that Communism and Capitalism were incompatible and WWII had been caused by "monopoly Capitalism."² The following day Churchill visits Truman and argued that the West needed a hard line response in opposition to Stalin. For many historians, this meeting is considered to be the origin of the Cold War.³

This new enemy and type of war was visualized to the American people when George Kennan, the U.S. Foreign Service's expert on Soviet affairs wrote from Moscow that "World Communism is like a malignant parasite which feeds only on diseased tissue. This is the point at which domestic and foreign policies meet. Every courageous and incisive measure to solve internal problems of our own society, to improve self-confidence, discipline, morale and community spirit of our own people, is a diplomatic victory over Moscow worth a thousand diplomatic notes and joint communiqué's."⁴ These words spread fear in the American people in an attempt to rally them against the "Communist menace" and became the foundation for the Marshall Plan and National Security Act of 1947. "Containment was not just a policy. It was a way of life."⁵

When President Truman initially took office, he thought differences with the Soviets were to be expected, but that they could be worked out. However by early 1946 "he no longer regarded disputes as inevitable results of competing national interest that could be resolved on a give-and-take basis. Now he viewed them as stemming from Communist Russia's need to extend its sphere and to weaken and divide those who stood in its way."⁶

The Marshall Plan



Figure 8 The President Signs the Economic Assistance Act of, 1948

As with the end of every war the process of “getting back to normal” is sometimes an impossible task. Europe had seen millions of people dead and wounded, cities destroyed, economies in shambles and governments collapsed. History has shown that stronger States think this is the best time to impose their will on the weak regions. At the end of WWII Europe was in ruins and the strongest one standing in the region was Russia. In order to ensure Western Europe’s survival and stop Russian expansion, the U.S. had two choices. Go to war with Russia or strengthen Western Europe’s economy and back them with American military power. Since the first option was not really an option, Truman was left with only one course of action. “The Marshall Plan was a defensive policy which aimed to shore up Western Europe and prevent the spread of aggressive Soviet expansionism.”⁷

Before his death, President Roosevelt said “we cannot succeed in building a peaceful world unless we build an economically healthy world.”⁸ The Marshall Plan was to do just that for Western Europe. It was a comprehensive plan to revitalize economic development and military defense while using Europe as the front line of Cold War defense. Congress and the American people understood when Secretary of State George

C. Marshall stated “that the United States should do whatever it is able to do to assist in the return of normal economic health in the world, without which there can be no political stability and no assured peace.”⁹ The result was the Organization for European Economic Cooperation (OEEC), which estimated the cost to recover Europe’s economy to be \$30 billion over a four-year period. It was later scaled down to 16 billion, which was thought to be more realistic, and within the country’s capability.¹⁰ To be politically correct, the original plan was offered to all European countries including the Soviet Union. In June 1947, delegates from France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union met in Paris to discuss Marshall's proposal. After several days, Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav M. Molotov walked out, stating that the Soviet government "rejects this plan as totally unsatisfactory."¹¹ In his memoirs Molotov states “at the beginning we in the foreign ministry wanted to propose that all socialist countries participate. But we quickly realized that such a decision would be incorrect. They [the United States] hoped to attract us into their coalition, but it would have been a subordinated coalition. We would have become dependent on them, but we wouldn’t really have received anything.”¹² The Soviets saw the plan as an attempt to build an anti-Soviet alliance. The Western leaders viewed this as one more refusal to support postwar stabilization efforts, and the results contributed to the growth of Cold War tensions. In addition to declining to participate in the Marshall Plan itself, the Soviet Union prevented the Eastern European countries under its control from taking part.¹³ Subsequent Soviet propaganda portrayed the plan as an American plot to subjugate Western Europe. What the Soviets didn’t know was that if they would have accepted, the plan would probably have not gotten congressional

support because it would have actually cost the estimated \$30 billion and the anti-Soviet feelings were growing in the U.S.

Surrounded by members of Congress and his cabinet, on April 3, 1948, President Truman signed the Foreign Assistance Act, the legislation establishing the Marshall Plan.¹⁴ His official statement said, "Few presidents have had the opportunity to sign legislation of such importance . . . This measure is America's answer to the challenge facing the free world today."¹⁵ The Marshall Plan was the catalyst that breached the gap that was growing between the U.S. and U.K. over post war Europe and the refusal of the U.S to give Britain specific information on nuclear weapon technology.¹⁶ It paved the way for the establishment of NATO and British involvement in the Berlin Airlift mission.

The Marshall Plan was considered one of the great success stories to come out of WWII. "During the programs four years, participating countries saw their aggregate gross national product rise more than 30 percent and industrial production increase by 40 percent over prewar levels."¹⁷ In addition, this plan had a great positive impact on the U.S. economy that had a surplus of goods after the war. Many European countries needed raw and finished materials to rebuild and the U.S. was in the best position to provide the goods and services. The plans actual cost over the four years was just over \$12 billion, but its return to Europe and the U.S. economy surpassed the cost before the end of the program life.¹⁸

The National Security Act



Figure 9 Seal of the National Security Agency

In the National Security Act of 1947 the United States established the National Security Council (NSC) and National Security Resources Board.¹⁹ Congress specified that the duties of the NSC were “to advise the president with respect to the integration of domestic, foreign and military policies ...and to assess and appraise the objectives, commitments and risks of the United States in relation to our actual and potential military power...”²⁰ In short, the council was to examine all the instruments of power (IOP) at the disposal of the U.S. and recommend to the president the best course of action in a given situation. The National Security Act created the civilian position of Secretary of Defense and was the charter of the National Security Agency (NSA).²¹ Admiral Forrestal was one of the key contributors responsible for the formation of the NSA. “It was the Department of the Navy’s unification committee that developed the idea as a partial solution to the defense problems of World War II.”²² The National Security Act was built upon the need to respond to the growing Soviet threat. Forrestal knew it would take a lot of time for the legislation to be totally effective, but because of the rapid expansion of Communism he felt it had to be implemented very quickly.²³ The Soviets interpreted this action as purely offensive and the Cold War of escalation continued.

The Berlin Blockade



Figure 10 Berliners watch a C-54 land at Tempelhof, Berlin, 1948

In the spring of 1948, the Western allies announced plans to establish a new separate West German State and currency reform. “The victorious powers had realized that the point had been reached where they needed the help and co-operation of the vanquished if the benefits of victory were not to be lost.”²⁴ On 24 June 1948, Russia decided to test the resolve of the West by imposing a blockade of Western Berlin.²⁵ This entire chapter in history would have been prevented if the wartime allies accepted FDR’s initial proposal at Terran to divide Germany in four parts like a pie with Berlin at the center.²⁶ Because an agreement could not be reached, this was another decision that was tabled for a later date. When it could no longer be put off FDR was said to be too sick and weak to put up a fight. The acceptance of the division of Germany and Berlin geographically allowed the blockade to occur. The agreed upon division of Germany split the country in to East and West Germany. The Russians controlled East Germany while the Americans and British (and later French) controlled West Germany. Berlin was divided up similarly but the entire city lied in the Russian area of occupation. West Berlin was in fact an island democracy in the sea of Communism. Part of Stalin’s plan for the division of Germany

from the beginning was to isolate West Berlin from its support and then absorb it into the Russian Empire.²⁷

Tensions between the West and Russia continued to mount as they had major disagreements about occupation of Iran, Turkey and Greece. Finally in June 1948 the pressure reached a boiling point and Stalin ordered the blockade of West Berlin's roads and railways.²⁸ Russia had cut off West Berlin from all land accesses and was confident that they would control the entire city within a few months. The West allies had been granted access of two air routes into West Berlin from an earlier agreement. They made it clear to Stalin that any attempt to block aircraft from entering or leaving West Berlin would escalate into military conflict. The U.S. was at this time the only State power to possess the atomic bomb and could make this a creditable threat. The Soviets did not attempt to blockade the air routes because they did not think the West could support West Berlin with the supplies needed to sustain her through the winter.²⁹ "Aircraft were often met with Soviet annoyances such as balloons and spotlights [in their paths], but the West kept up its effort."³⁰ They were determined to win the first battle in the Cold War.

The U.S. government decided that the survival of West Berlin was vital to the security of Western Europe. The West would not allow West Berlin to fall under Communist rule so they launched a counter blockade of goods going into East Germany. On 28 June 1948 and for the next eleven months the Western powers airlifted everything from food and medicines to coal and chocolate into West Berlin. The workhorse during the airlift was the Douglas Skymaster C-54 transport. It was capable of carrying up to 19,000 pounds of cargo but had to be converted from a passenger aircraft to a cargo carrying aircraft.³¹ At the height the airlift aircraft were landing in West Berlin every

three minutes to supply the volume of supplies needed to sustain the city under siege. Figure 1 displays the enormous volume of supplies moved in what the Americans called “Operation Vittles.”

	Flights	Cargo (short tons)				Passengers	
		Total	Food	Coal	Other	In	Out
USA	189,963	1,783,573	296,319	1,421,119	66,135	25,263	37,486
UK	87,841	541,937	240,386	164,911	136,640	34,815	130,091
France	424	896	unk	unk	unk	Est. 10,000	
Total	278,228	2,326,406					

Table 1 Berlin Airlift Statistics³²

After the winter of 1948 had passed, East Berlin was in worse economic shape than the West.³³ The counter blockade deprived the East of needed raw materials for their industry. The result was tremendous inflation and increased unemployment in an area that was already in economic shambles after the war. In the spring of 1949 the Russians were looking for a face saving end to this bad situation so in April they announced it would lift the blockade with a condition that the four powers have a conference to discuss the re-unification of Germany.³⁴ The Western allies agreed and a date of 23 May was set for the Foreign Ministers Conference. However, prior to the meeting, the West German Parliamentary Council met and adopted a constitution for the foundation of the Republic of West Germany.³⁵ Stalin was furious when he learned of the new German government and it was feared that he might continue the blockade. But the Russians needed the borders open as much or more than the West and in the end the blockade was lifted at midnight on 12 May 1949. “The December elections, in which West Berliners had so decisively repudiated Communism, was another [factor that the Soviets were beginning to weaken.] And a third was surely the effect the counter blockade was having on the East German economy.”³⁶ The West had won this battle and was preparing for the next one

with the East. As in the past, alliances were again formed and lines were drawn East against West. The Western allies created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in preparation for the next World War.

NATO



Figure 11 Symbol of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

All indications were that the West was headed for a conflict with the Soviets. The U.S. and its allies acted to show resolve against the Communist threat and formed the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). NATO was formed to ensure the recovery and continuation of Europe as a democratic society. The alliance was formed to provide mutual defense against security threats and “to consider an attack on one is an attack on all, which will be met by the collective action of all.”³⁷ But as history has repeatedly shown, world wars can be caused in part by alliances. Europe’s recovery was considered to be of vital national interest of the U.S. and NATO was considered an important step in the recovery process.

The fact that the U.S. participated and took the lead in NATO’s creation was a sign that the days of isolationism were over. The U.S. felt that they were in a position to prevent future conflicts in Europe by its NATO status rather than be drawn into a war after it had started. “A central assumption underlying U.S. strategy was that Soviet fears of meeting NATO resistance and the promise of all-out war would deter aggression. The

policy of deterrence relied almost exclusively on American nuclear power—that is, on the ability of the Strategic Air Command (SAC) to inflict such heavy damage that an enemy would, in effect, be committing suicide if it launched an attack.”³⁸ The policy of deterrence seemed like the logical choice of action until the Soviets successfully tested their own nuclear device in 1949. The pendulum had swung back to the center and the security policy had also changed from deterrence to mutually assured destruction (MAD).

Perceptions and misperceptions again played out this chapter in the Cold War. The West insisting on the formation of NATO vital for its defense while the Soviet Union seeing the partnership as purely offensive in nature. Russia did not understand the need for such an alliance for protection against Communist rule and had to respond with its own alliance for its defensive purposes.³⁹

The Warsaw Pact



Figure 12 Iron Curtain 1946

Russia’s answer to NATO was to form the Warsaw Pact. Again this was history repeating itself in Europe as nations took sides under alliances for national security. The difference between NATO and the Warsaw Pact was that potential members of NATO were independent states that were requesting membership. The Warsaw Pact members

were puppet states of Russia and membership was not optional. The formation of the Warsaw Pact only strengthened the resolve and commitment of the new NATO nations. If there was any doubt in the NATO alliance nations if they should have become members, it was only for the brief period before the Warsaw Pact was formed. The creation of NATO and the Warsaw Pact were major milestones in the Cold War. Prior to their formation, it was a few Western allies (Britain, France, U.S.) banded together to face the threat of Communism. The new alliance transcended the Atlantic and pitted continents against each other. Both sides now possessing nuclear technology that would shape the Cold War for the next 40 years.

China



Figure 13 First Party Secretary Khrushchev and Chairman Mao Zedong in Beijing, October 4, 1954 (Russia State Archive of Film and Photo documents)

With the creation of NATO the Western allies “scored” big and were ahead in the Cold War race. That lead did not last long when in 1949 Nationalists China (supported by the U.S.) collapsed.⁴⁰ More than 500 million people came under Communist rule as a result of the defeat. As during the Russian Revolution, the U.S. found itself supporting the losing side. The results were the same as in Russia 30 years earlier, the victors (The People’s Republic of China) were bitter towards the West. They were not however a puppet of the Soviet Union either. Both the U.S. and Russia tried to get the new Chinese

government as a “friendly” partner. The U.S. knew there was major cultural and ideological differences between China and Russia and thought they would eventually clash.⁴¹ The U.S exploited these differences at every opportunity to the dislike and objection of the Soviets. The Cold War race was now tied, but this was the beginning of the race and the players were strong. This race would have many challenges and obstacles over the next 40 years and both “teams” proved to be worthy opponents.

No one item could be identified as the cause of the Cold War. The complex interactions of culture, religion, history and technology formed the perceptions of the “enemy.” As the next chapter will show, this interplay was the fuel that kept the Cold War burning hot for many years.

Notes

¹ Robert W. Tucker, *American Foreign Policy the Future of a Contradiction*, p. 27 & 31

² Robert James Maddox, *From War to Cold War: The Education of Harry S. Truman*, p. 171

³ Library of Congress, *Soviet Archives Exhibit*, Online Available from <http://metalab.unc.edu/expo/soviet.exhibit/entrance.html#tour>

⁴ George F. Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950*, p. 559

⁵ Steven Schoenherr, *Cold War Policies, The Crisis of Harry Truman*, online Internet, Available from <http://ac.acusd.edu/History/20th/coldwar1.html>

⁶ Robert James Maddox, *From War to Cold War: The Education of Harry S. Truman*, p. 177 & 178

⁷ Cold War International History Project, *Working Paper #9: New evidence on the Soviet Rejection of the Marshall Plan, 1947*, online Internet, Available from <http://cwihip.si.edu/default.htm>

⁸ Barton J. Bernstein, *Politics & Policies of the Truman Administration*, p. 79

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81

¹⁰ Charles P. Kipleberger, *Marshall Plan Days*, p. 124

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 92

¹² Cold War International History Project, *Working Paper #9: New evidence on the Soviet Rejection of the Marshall Plan, 1947*, online Internet, Available from <http://cwihip.si.edu/default.htm>

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Charles P. Kipleberger, *Marshall Plan Days*, p. 101

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¹⁵ *The Marshall plan*, online Internet, Available from <http://www.usis.usemb.se/topical/pol/marshall/mp-toc.htm>

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Harry Howe Ransom, *Can American Democracy survive Cold War?*, p. 28

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid., p. 31

²² *The National Security Act of 1947*, online Internet, Available from <http://www.turman.edu/academics/studentresearch/nsa1947.html>

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Eric Morris, *Blockade*, p.122

²⁵ Ibid., p. 85

²⁶ Ibid., p. 42

²⁷ Paul Healy, *The Cold War, The Foreign Policy of the Cold War*, online, Internet, Available from <http://expert.cc.purdue.edu/~phealy/yalta.html>

²⁸ Frank Donovan, *Bridge in the Sky*, p. 37

²⁹ Ibid., p. 59

³⁰ Paul Healy, *The Cold War, The Foreign Policy of the Cold War*, online, Internet, Available from <http://expert.cc.purdue.edu/~phealy/yalta.html>

³¹ Frank Donovan, *Bridge in the Sky*, p. 53

³² United States Air Force, *USAFE 50th Anniversary of the Berlin Airlift*, online, Internet, Available from <http://www.usafe.af.mil/berlin>

³³ Eric Morris, *Blockade*, p. 138 & 139

³⁴ Ibid., p. 144

³⁵ Ibid., p. 145

³⁶ Frank Donovan, *Bridge in the Sky*, p. 195

³⁷ *NATO Web-archive, Non-Military Cooperation*, online Internet, Available from <http://www.nato.int/docu/basic.txt/bt-a3.htm>

³⁸ John Spanier and Steven Hook, *American Foreign Policy Since WWII*, p. 53

³⁹ Paul Healy, *The Cold War, The Foreign Policy of the Cold War*, online, Internet, Available from <http://expert.cc.purdue.edu/~phealy/foreign.html>

⁴⁰ CNN Cold War, *Episode 15: China*, On-line, Internet, 4 November 1996, Available from <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/>

⁴¹ Ibid.

Chapter 3

Cold War Causes

We must make the best of mankind as they are, since we cannot have them as we wish.

—George Washington

The formation of the new alliances of NATO and the Warsaw Pact, and other world events, divided the world into Western and Eastern philosophy. The continuation of the Cold War came from the disagreements and settlements for postwar Europe. Each superpower, the United States, Britain, France and Russia had their own idea of how postwar Europe should look, and many of their ideas were very different. The Cold War was created and grew not from one isolated event, but from the different ideologies and interests between the Soviet Union and the West. How did these nations interplay to sustain the war for so many years?

The Russians



Figure 14 The Russian Flag

In the view of the U.S. and the West the Cold War was the fault of the Russian Communist policy of expansion and world conquest. The Russians could not be trusted ever since they pulled out of WWI. Their actions in WWII of signing the non-aggression pacts with Germany and Japan early on in the war proved they could not be trusted. “During the war Allied relations were often marred by suspicions and doubts rooted in the hostility of earlier years.”¹ Their actions during the close of the war in Poland and Eastern Europe enforced the Western belief that the goal of Communism was world domination. The West looked at the Russians through their “lens” and did not understand Russian history that had a great influence on their present day actions. “Paranoia in Russia and the Soviet Union is not surprising. Russia has been overrun or attacked by the Swedes, the Mongols, the Poles, and Napoleon. And all this only up until 1812. In the 20th century Russia has fought off devastating and deadly attacks from Germany in both World Wars.”² The Soviet action was usually in response to Western action that was in reaction to Soviet action and so on. It was in effect a large-scale version of “keeping up with the Jones’s” but with national security and pride at stake.

The Americans



Figure 15 The American Flag

The U.S. and Western powers had their own beliefs of Soviet government policy that were incorrect, but since the Russians were so secretive the West lacking accurate information filled in the gaps as best they could. The gaps were filled in with the only

information they had which was Leninism. Communism Lenin style did call for the conquest of the world during his time. This policy had changed to one of security and preservation after WWII. Russia's actions after WWII were in her views necessary for national security and to ensure she would not be invaded for a third time in one century. The U.S. not understanding this reason (after all how many times had America been invaded by a foreign power) applied one that made sense to them, Communist world domination. This reason was easily accepted because of the British influence on American policy in Europe.

The British

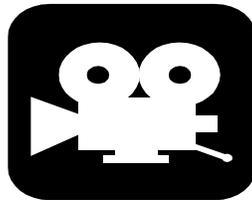


Figure 16 The British Flag

Prior to the end of WWII Russia stood in the way of the British trying to re-establish her position as a world empire. Britain obtained and maintained her wealth and power through her many colonies. Russia was also interested in acquiring satellite states but for protection more than for wealth. As Anthony Eden, the British Foreign Minister explained, “Russia was determined on one thing above all others, that Germany would not again disturb the peace of Europe...Stalin was determined to smash Germany so that it would never again be able to make war.”³ The war to end all wars did not and at the end of WWII it looked as though a third conflict was rising from the ashes. After WWII the disputes between the Soviets and Western powers led the British Prime Minister to warn the world that an “iron curtain” was descending throughout the middle of Europe.⁴

After the war, Britain could not face the fact that its position in the world order was weakened. One it did, it perceived a threat now faced from the Soviets. “At the outset it was believed that in the post-war world Britain must either have some powerful ally (or allies) or cease to be a world power; the Empire in short could only be a world force as part of wider organization of international cooperation.”⁵ In order for the British to carry out their agenda they had to ensure the allied cooperation with Russia ended after the war. Churchill often warned Roosevelt and Truman of the dangers of Soviet expansionism and made the U.S. very suspicious of the Russians. When the Russians did not provide a good explanation for their actions, the British usually would with their “spin” on it.

The Media



A new powerful player entered the Cold War during WWII. This player had the power to reach millions of people and help form their opinions. Sun Tuz and Clausewitz as well as other leaders recognized the need for the support of the people in military actions. The political leaders of both East and West manipulated the media for their aims. Newspaper and magazine articles, as well as movies of the times portrayed the Russians as evil spies who aspired to take over the world. These view, even if not accurate sold many papers and movie tickets, so in the best traditions of Capitalism the media fueled the Cold War fears of the nation to increase their profit margin.

Russian propaganda had much tighter control over the national media. The government run newspapers, radio and television stations told of the Western atomic war making capabilities and eluded that Russia was the target of this might.⁶ Russia needed the public support (by fear or otherwise) in order for her people to willfully make scarifies so her military and technology could be increased. The Russian media portrayed the West as power hungry Capitalists only interested in increasing their wealth through aggressive measures if necessary. The fact that this was the only information the people received, and remembering their history, the Russian people believed the media accounts.

The media on all sides was a tool used by the governments to gain and maintain public support for this new war. As the future and past has told, without public support militaries, governments, and nations will not survive in the long run.

So when and why did the Cold War start? The next chapter builds on the information previously presented to answer these critical questions and to show how the past can help us learn to shape the future.

Notes

¹ Barton J. Bernstein, *Politics & Policies of the Truman Administration*, p. 17

² Albert StClair, *Origins of the Cold War and Opportunities to prevent or End it Early*, p. v

³ Barton J. Bernstein, *Politics & Policies of the Truman Administration*, p. 21 & 22

⁴Library of Congress, *Soviet Archives Exhibit*, Online Available from, <http://metalab.unc.edu/expo/soviet.exhibit/entrance.html#tour>

⁵ John Kent, *British Imperial Strategy and the Origins of the Cold War 1944-1949*, p. 1

⁶ Robert James Maddox, *From War to Cold War: The Education of harry S. Truman*, p. 151

Chapter 4

Conclusion

I trust the experience of error will enable us to act better in the future.

—George Washington

When Did the Cold War Start?

There is no doubt that by the end of WWII the Cold War was dividing the world between the Eastern Communist powers and Western Democratic governments. But as history and this paper have shown, the 1940's were not the beginning of the Cold War but merely the period of time that gave a label to the actions that were ongoing since the turn of the century.

The beginnings of the Cold War can be traced back to the origins of WWI. It was this conflict that trained the mostly peasant farmers of Russia to be soldiers. When Russia withdrew from the war, these soldiers were dissatisfied with their form of government, and having the training to conduct a successful revolution, did so. The actions by the Russians and reactions by the West all have their basis in WWI. For these reasons the origins of the Cold War can be said to have taken place with the world events and the beginning of WWI.

Why Did the Cold War Start?

As simple as it may sound, the Cold War started because of mistrust, misperceptions and individual leader decisions. But the most obvious reason was fear and a lack of information and knowledge. “Fear is the feeling of insecurity and danger found in an unfamiliar situation. It is present in the absence of awareness. What can not be seen will be feared. McCarthy's entire claim was based on the absence of evidence.”¹ Each side (or in some cases individual person) using their “lens” and interpreted the others actions as it fit into their world. Neither had a true understanding of the others culture, religion(s), history and beliefs, which would have helped to ascertain the true behavior. “The prevailing Western view was wrong in attributing a master plan to the Kremlin, in believing that Communist ideology impelled Soviet leaders to expand their power, in exaggerating Communist abilities to subvert a Free World, and in thinking that Soviet officials viewed military power as an ultimate recourse. Moreover, the actions of each side were sufficiently consistent with the ideological expectations of the other side to sustain their respective worldviews for many years.”²

The treatment by foreign powers and governments in Russia at the beginning of the 19th century shaped the Russian perception of the outside world. This treatment by the West was due largely in part because of the Russian withdrawal in WWI. The West saw an opportunity to “colonize” Russia after being victorious because she was weak and in a state of revolution. Russia saw this as another invasion and even though a war of weapons was not fought, Russian perception of Western interest was formed. Her actions in WWII and until the collapse of the Wall were taken for security of the country and people from the aggressive West. Official diplomatic ties between Russia and the U.S.

were not established until 1933. But by this time, perceptions of the other had already been formed and would not be easily changed.

During the period from after WWI to the end of the Cold War, the cloud of secrecy surrounding the others capabilities fueled the arms and space race. Both sides felt they had to protect themselves from the aggressor and if they did not build a formidable military and allies, they would surely be attacked. The underlying need for national security and interpreting the others action as aggressive (not defensive) kept the world arms manufactures in a growth industry.

How Can These Lessons be Applied to Future Conflicts?

Simply put by Sun Tuz “know your enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.”³ It is not good enough the get perfect information if the information is interpreted incorrectly. For example, the West interpreted the Russian actions in Eastern Europe at the end of WWII as aggressive Communist expansion. The Russians saw it as national security so they would not have to fight a third war with Germany. The West responded with the formation of NATO and deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe. Russia replied with the Warsaw Pact and began to act like the Western enemies and “colonize” other countries. This dangerous game of “one-up-man-ship” may have been avoided if each would have truly understood the other. The contextual elements of culture, religion, and history effect how the other thinks, acts and reacts. If each side would have truly understood the reasons behind the others actions their reactions would have been different. Because during the Cold War the world fit nicely into “us and them” categories and could be easily explained, it was comfortable and acceptable.

In the future before we go spending billions of dollars on national defense against our enemies we must ensure they truly are enemies. Actions of any powerful nation always have global wide reactions. We must ensure the actions are understood correctly and not misperceived. On the opposite side, we must not misperceive the actions of other nations. This will be a near impossible task as every culture perceives and reacts differently. Until the nations of the world learn open communication and trust we are likely to see another cold and possibly hot war.

Notes

¹ Paul Healy, *The Cold War*, online, Internet, Available from <http://expert.cc.purdue.edu/~phealy/yalta.html>

² Raymond L. Garthoff, *Looking Back: The Cold War in Retrospect*, p. 1.

³ Sun Tuz, *The Art of War*, edited by Samuel B. Griffith, p.84.

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