

# The Beginning of the Cold War

At the outset of World War II, the Allied nations relied on the leadership of Great Britain and France. However, France fell to the Nazis in the summer of 1940, leaving the British at war with Germany. But, by 1941, two other major powers were at war with the Axis nations. Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union and the Japanese attack on the American bases in Hawaii brought both the U.S. and the USSR into the war.

These three nations—the United States, the Soviet Union and Great Britain—and their leaders—Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, and Winston Churchill—formed a wartime alliance of grand proportions. Only through their combined efforts did the Allies achieve ultimate success against their fascist and imperialist enemies. But their decisions during the war directly affected not only its outcome, but the direction of the postwar world. Ultimately, their different views of Europe after the war caused the development of another type of conflict—one eventually labeled the *Cold War*.

Despite their common wartime goals, relations between the three Allied leaders were often strained. Typically, these men disagreed on details of strategy for pursuing the war. After the entrance of the United States into the war, Stalin demanded the U.S. and Britain establish a second front in western Europe to aid the Soviet Union's struggle against German forces in the east.

Such an invasion of western Europe did not take place, however, until the summer of 1944. Churchill and Roosevelt instead pursued the Germans by establishing a front in northern Africa to protect vital oil fields and provide a springboard site for an invasion of southern Europe in Italy. This series of campaigns, although valuable to the overall Allied war effort, was not to Stalin's liking.

A turning point in determining the future of Europe after the war was the Allied conference held in November 1943 at Tehran (the capital of Iran). Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill were in attendance. It was at that conference that Roosevelt promised Stalin that a U.S.-British invasion of western Europe would take place by the spring of 1944.

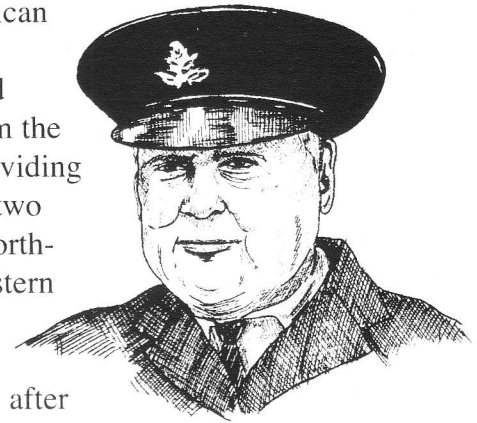
This decision proved momentous. It signaled that the final Allied campaigns in Germany would cause

British and American forces to advance from the west and Soviet forces from the east, creating a dividing line between the two armies running north-south, leaving eastern Europe occupied by Soviet troops.

Three months after the Tehran meeting, the Allied leaders met again, this time at Yalta in southern Russia. By this time, the defeat of Germany was clearly approaching. The Red Army of the Soviet Union, 11 million men strong, had occupied both eastern and much of central Europe.

A worried Roosevelt expressed concern for the political future of eastern Europe. He insisted that Stalin promise free elections in these Soviet occupied states. Stalin hedged, then promised "free and unfettered elections in Poland." (Actually, he had no intention of allowing any elections which were not friendly to the Soviet Union.)

With the defeat of Germany close at hand, the Grand Alliance of democratic America and Britain and the communist Soviet Union was already collapsing. As one conflict was ending, another was beginning.



Winston Churchill

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## Review and Write

1. What common goals did Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill share during World War II?
2. Why did the Alliance between them collapse in 1945?
3. What major problems between the Allies were discussed at the Yalta Conference?