

Wrote to Stalin expressing his disappointment

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?

SOURCE E



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

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.

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.

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 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.

SOURCE G

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.

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?