

US History/Truman and Cold War

Comrades

From 1942-1945, the Red Army had advanced upon the capital city of Hitler's so called "Thousand Year Reich," crushing everything in its path. The Soviets had fought their way through 1500 miles from Stalingrad to Berlin as their allies, the British and Americans, advanced from the beaches of Normandy. On April 27, 1945, advanced units of the US and Soviet armies met in the town of Torgau. There they had spent much time enjoying the company of being allies, brothers-in-arms, but never suspected what would happen after they would dethrone the man who had failed on his conquest of world domination.^[1]

Bitter Aftermath of Victory

Soviet Union

At the end of World War II, the Soviet Union controlled the largest army the world had ever known. Though the "Mother Country" lay ravaged; nearly one third of its former wealth had been destroyed. 32,000 factories were in ruin, 65,000 kilometers of railway track were now useless, and the number of citizens lost during the war are unknown but in a high margin. Of the townships lost, 17,100 were destroyed; of its villages and hamlets, 70,000 were burned to the ground; of its collective farms, 100,000 were completely demolished due to military occupation. Citizens who did survive were now starving and resorting to barbaric ways of surviving under these disastrous conditions.

The Soviet Union was basking in the glory of victory, since everywhere there was immense respect for the Red Army. From years of titanic struggle with the Wehrmacht, meaning "defensive might" in German, the Soviets were widely regarded as having borne the brunt of destroying Nazism, and "Uncle Joe" Stalin had become a popular figure in Europe and in the United States. All across Europe sizable elements of the population were seriously considering the virtues of Communism because very few wanted a return to the failed capitalism of the pre-war era. Many Europeans thought that having won the war, Stalin could now win the peace^[2]

United States

After the war, America's economy was ready to expand into markets on every continent. During the war, much of the world had built up a debt to the United States, and many ex-allies turned towards America for financial relief. Britain negotiated a loan of \$3.75 billion. Even the Soviet Union discussed with Washington about the possibility of a \$6 billion loan for desperately needed reconstruction.^[3]

During the Bretton Woods Conference on the postwar global economy in 1944, the dollar was established as the world's principal trading currency, while the pound was relegated to second place. Because the dollar was the only currency freely convertible throughout the world, many nations hoped for loans and assistance from the United States. And since the United States was the only power possessing the atom bomb, America seemed to have the advantage in both military and economy when it came to determining the future shape of the world.^[4]

Yalta Conference

In early February 1945, United States President Franklin D. Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, and Soviet leader Josef Stalin, the three leaders of the anti-Nazi alliance, met at Yalta in the U.S.S.R.^[5] Three allied leaders met at Yalta February, 1945. These three leaders, of the Allied powers, were known as the "Big Three". The "Big Three" had met before in November 1943, at the Tehran Conference. The reason the meeting was in Yalta is because Stalin could not travel too far. His doctors advised him to travel some place close, so Stalin recommended

Yalta, which is by the Black Sea.^[6] The each had goals to shape the postwar world. The Soviet Union with 21 million people dead, wanted Germany to pay reparations to fund massive rebuilding efforts. The hoped to expand their influence throughout eastern Europe and guarantee national security. The two German invasions in a quarter century was more than enough and Germany had to be permanently weakened.

The topics of the Conference included Soviet Russia's entry into the war against Japan, composition of the post-war government of Germany, voting arrangements in the new United Nations organizations, and the future of the liberated governments of Eastern Europe.^[7]

While all were important topics, the Yalta Declaration on Liberated Europe, which called for free elections and constitutional liberties in Eastern Europe, was the most controversial topic of the Yalta Conference.^[8]

Truman Doctrine

World War II changed the balance of power in the international community by reducing the influence of France and the United Kingdom, while at the same time elevating the influence of the United States and the Soviet Union, which assumed the role of the world's only two superpowers. Initially, the sentiments of the US government towards the avowedly socialist Soviet Union were friendly, but in the aftermath of the war, relations between the two powers quickly deteriorated. At the end of World War II, a number of entities were established by Allied nations to help maintain international order; the most notable of these was the United Nations. Within the framework of the UN, the United States and Britain advocated for the creation of a regulatory entity for the world's monetary system which would help avoid another worldwide depression similar to that seen during the Great Depression before the war. Talks among Allied delegates were held in 1944 which resulted in the creation of the International Monetary Fund and what would eventually become the World Bank, both of which were established to make currency exchange easier and to regulate international debt. The Soviet government was highly suspicious of these entities--it viewed them as a tool for the western world to force capitalism on socialist member-states--and it refused to support them.

This refusal of the USSR to support the IMF and the World Bank set off a diplomatic chain reaction that would eventually grow into what became known as the Cold War.

The Soviet Union believed that its control of Eastern Europe was vital to its security, and said that it was rightful for it to do so, for "we suffered at Stalingrad". As agreed at the Yalta Conference, the World War II Allies divided Germany into four zones, giving one zone each to the United Kingdom, France, the United States, and the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union's zone, known as East Germany, was later transformed into a Communist state, after an agreement on a unified Germany could not be reached. The other three zones, West Germany, were joined - at first economically through a currency reform - during the implementation of the Marshall Plan in 1948. The city of Berlin, which was surrounded by East Germany, was divided in two parts between East and West Germany. Critics correctly pointed out that the Soviet Union was little involved in the Greek Civil War, that the communists in Greece were more pro-Tito than pro-Stalin, and that the resistance movement had noncommunists as well as communist members. Nor was The Soviet Union threatening Turkey at the time. Others suggested that such aid should be channelled through the United Nations.

In 1947, Greece became the focus of the Cold War. The Greek monarchy had been supported by Great Britain since 1945. Greek Communists threatened to overthrow this regime, which was corrupt and not representative of the people. In order to "shock" the American public into accepting American involvement in order to help other peoples resist the "communist threat" and secure the strategically and economically important Middle East for US influence, President Harry Truman issued the *Truman Doctrine*. The Doctrine suggested that the US would aid nations threatened by revolutionary forces. Congress agreed and appropriated \$400 million in aid for Greece and Turkey. By 1949, the Communists in Greece were defeated. In 1952, Greece and Turkey entered the NATO.

Reconstruction of Japan

The atomic bomb allowed the United States to win World War II against Japan before a Soviet invasion. After Japan's surrender in 1945, the United States military was called in to reconstruct Japan. American General Douglas MacArthur headed the Reconstruction effort.

In 1947, a new Constitution for Japan was created. The Constitution entirely changed the role of the Emperor from an active leader to a passive symbol of the nation. The Diet, or legislature, was modeled on the British Parliament. The Constitution granted an enormous number of rights to Japanese citizens. Finally, the Constitution formally denounced all military conflict and prohibited Japan from keeping any armed forces.

The Reconstruction of Japan made other sweeping changes. For example, the Reconstruction introduced labor unions and reduced the influence of monopolistic businesses.

During the Cold War, America was determined to make an ally out of the Empire of Japan. The Reconstruction made an about-face, reversing its policy of reducing the power of large businesses. More regulations regarding the economy were made. In 1951, the US agreed to grant Japan full independence and autonomy. The treaty, however, did permit the US to maintain parts of its military in Japan. The treaty became effective in 1952.

The Rise of Communism in China

After the fall of Qing Dynasty, China was in a topsy-turvy. The nation saw the worst nightmares as the people were without an authority to rule over. She soon became rudderless giant. Many land lords took advantage of the situation and gradually the situation became worse. The period of warlordism in China lasted from 1916 to 1927 when warlords fought against each other regardless of common ideas or purpose. This was a dark period in China's history.

Meanwhile the principles of communism began to spread in the country and those ideals attracted a majority of the people. The people who belonged to the lower strata were for these principles especially for the law of equality.

The rise of Communism in China is mainly due to a man named Mao Zedong. He was poorly educated as a child but highly intelligent. Zedong left home and had become a member of the Nationalist Army as the Revolution began around 1911. He was soon introduced to and became powerfully influenced by the philosophies of Marxism.

After decades of civil war and invasion by Japan, the communists under Mao prevailed. The opposition nationalists fell and barely managed to retreat offshore to Taiwan. After decades of civil war and invasion by Japan, the communists under Mao prevailed. The opposition nationalists fell and barely managed to retreat offshore to Taiwan. Communism came to power in 1949 under the power of Mao. Communism began as a movement that paved the way for the liberation of the proletariat. Proletariat is that class of society which lives entirely from the sale of its labor and does not draw profit from any kind of capital; whose weal and woe, whose life and death, whose sole existence depends on the demand for labor – hence, on the changing state of business, on the vagaries of unbridled competition. The proletariat, or the class of proletarians, is, in a word, the working class of the 19th century.

Anarchy was to some extent controlled by Mao but he faced failure many times. Mao's initiatives did cause a kind of equality to emerge in China, but it was not one in which all the inhabitants of China benefited. Contrarily, many of them suffered extreme poverty and greatness was lost in the realms of academia, science, and technology which hindered China's ability to become a modern nation capable of interacting on the global scale.

Chinese policy changed after Deng Xiaoping took control in 1977 after Mao's death. Deng Xiaoping succeeded him although he possessed different views than those of Mao's – especially in regards to economic matters. Deng Xiaoping believed that it was necessary for China to embrace a more free market system so that it could recover economically.

Though he failed in developing the steel industry of the country he could implement his improvement policies in most of the other fields. China's economy began to flourish and Deng began promoting modern industrialization as well. He allowed people to once again own land and businesses which resulted in many of the government's

collective farm and industry programs to be stopped. Deng also allowed for loans to be given to some state supported businesses. He also encouraged citizens to invest in these companies and to work hard by allowing a system of incentives to be developed for hard work.

As a result of embracing slightly capitalistic principles, China was able to begin the reconstruction of its economy. Despite many governmental controls that were still in place on industry and trade, China's economy began to flourish and Deng began promoting modern industrialization as well. China has continued to stay true to being a socialist state because it still regulates lending, especially to private companies which still often find it difficult to obtain credit or a loan for their ventures.

The Red Scare and McCarthyism

While Communism was expanding across the World, the United States entered an era of paranoia known as the *Red Scare*. Suspicion of Communist influence in government was pandemic.

In Congress, the House of Representatives established a Committee on Un-American Activities. The Committee performed actions such as investigating entertainment companies. The entertainment industry, fearful of an investigation, often refused to hire Communist artists or anyone at all ever connected with Communism.

In the Senate, meanwhile, Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy accused certain government officials of being disloyal Communists. While a communist conspiracy involving State Department employees was eventually uncovered, the word *McCarthyism* would forever refer to a vindictive persecution of the innocent.

The Red Scare proved costly in American foreign policy. When China fell to Communism, many experts on China and the regions around it were fired. This was a problem when the Korean War (see below) rolled around. It was also a pain in the Vietnam War, as the Vietnam terrain experts had all been accused of being Communist.

Congress passed the McCarran Internal Security Act in 1950, overriding President Truman's veto. The Act created a public body known as the *Subversive Activities Control Board*; the Board was charged with monitoring and investigating Communist Activities.

At the local level, some communities banned literature that they feared would encourage Communism. Public servants lost their jobs due to unfounded accusations of disloyalty. Lives were destroyed by the Red Scare. Ironically, the career of Joseph McCarthy was also derailed during the Red Scare; in 1954, the Senate decided to formally censure him for abusing his powers and using unfair tactics in targeting innocent government officials.

Even at the height of the McCarthyist furor in the early 1950s, the anti-Communist crusade was relatively mild. Many prosecutions faltered on appeal and only a few foreign-born radicals were actually deported. Only Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were put to death; and of the roughly 150 people who went to prison, most were released within a year or two.

The Hollywood blacklist—as the broader entertainment industry blacklist is generally known—was the mid-twentieth-century list of screenwriters, actors, directors, musicians, and other U.S. entertainment professionals who were denied employment in the field because of their political beliefs or associations, real or suspected. This group became known as the Hollywood Ten.

The Korean War

After World War II, the US attempted to curb Soviet influence on the Korean Peninsula by occupying southern part of that area. The area occupied by the US became South Korea, while the other part became North Korea. North Korea soon passed into the control of the Communist Party.

In May, 1949, fighting between North and South Korean troops broke out near the border between the two nations. In an attempt to add South Korea to the Communist World, North Korea invaded South Korea in 1950. The People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union lent their support to North Korea, while the United States did the same to South Korea. On June 25, 1950 a large military force moved across the 38th parallel in the Republic of Korea. Since 1910, Korea had been divided into two by the powers of Japan's victory in 1945. The Korean war began as a civil war after the north americans had armed the South. The two parts moved along the temporary border while the antigovernment fighting began to flare into the south.

On June 27, 1950 the United Nations security Council first adopts a ceasefire resolution. When the United Nations Security Council voted to aid South Korea in stopping North Korean aggression, the United States agreed to send troops to the Korean Peninsula. General Douglas MacArthur was given the command of American troops in Korea. The United States agreed to send troops over on June 30 along with increasing aid to the French fight against Communists rebels in Indochina. July 8 is when MacArthur is placed in command. At the beginning the U.S. troops are lacking training and are out of shape. In the first few weeks of fighting the U.S. troops are pushed back to a defensive perimeter at Pusan.^[9]

By the autumn of 1950, North Korean troops were forced out of South Korea. In October, General MacArthur ordered troops to cross into North Korea. In the third week of that month, the US took the capital of North Korea, Pyongyang.

However, just six days after the United Nations forces took Pyongyang, the People's Republic of China sent a quarter million men on a series of counterattacks. In December, Chinese "volunteers" took over Pyongyang and by January 1951 they had taken the South Korean capital, Seoul.

The US intended to do whatever it took to win the Korean War. It even planned on using the atomic bomb. However, President Truman did not trust General MacArthur to follow orders when using the atomic bomb. Therefore, he asked for MacArthur's resignation; MacArthur complied.

In 1953, Dwight D. Eisenhower became President of the US. Having promised during the election campaign to end the Korean War, he fulfilled this promise by continuing negotiations with the North and South Koreans, Chinese, and the Soviet Union and using "brinkmanship" to reach an agreement acceptable to all countries involved except for South Korea, which tried to induce the US to help unite Korea.

President Harry S. Truman

Harry Truman was the 33rd President of the United States. Truman had been vice president for only 82 days when President Roosevelt died, April 12, 1945. He told reporters, "I felt like the moon, the stars, and all the planets had fallen on me." He had had very little communication with Roosevelt about world affairs or domestic politics and was uninformed about major initiatives relating to the war and the top secret Manhattan Project, which was about to test the world's first atomic bomb. Truman was much more difficult for the Secret Service to protect than the wheel chair-bound Roosevelt had been. Truman was an avid walker, regularly taking walks around Washington. Truman was President from April 12, 1945 to January 20, 1953. Deciding not to run again, he retired to Independence; at age 88, he died December 26, 1972, after a stubborn fight for life.

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