

HIST256

The World After 1945

2015

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The Bomb

Stalin, Churchill, Roosevelt = Big Three

- all agreed on defeating Hitler instead of Japan.
- Hitler up against: world's largest economy (USA), world's largest empire (Britain) and world's largest army (Stalin's Red Army)

Conference at Yalta - 1945

- divided world between them
- talk of League of Nations

Potsdam Conference - 3 months later, mid-1945

- Churchill re-election in 1945, lost.
- Americans had tested super-weapon, unbeknownst to Stalin.
- Soviets wanted to turn Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, etc) into Soviet 'buffer zone'. They had had the most casualties, therefore wanted 'their victory'.
- Americans saw this as a 'land grab' by Stalin.
- Fear in the West - Stalin imposing Soviet ideals with force
- Hammer & sickle flags
- The 'Eastern Block' - Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, East Germany - became the Soviet Empire. Defending Russia from the West.
- By end of 1945 Stalin's spies informed him of American testing the atomic bomb and its success. Meant to be dropped on Berlin but not completed in time - eventually dropped on Japan.

Japan's Choice - Backfired

- Japan decided to attack Americans in the Pacific, seeing it as an easier target than attacking Stalin through Siberia.
- Hitler hoped Japan would ensure the US could not enter the European war.
- But Pearl Harbour gave Roosevelt the excuse he needed to declare war on Nazi Germany, as well as Japan.
- in 2 days, 100,000 people in Japan were killed by America with regular bombs.
- 6 Aug - atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan still didn't surrender - 3 days later another dropped on Nagasaki. These events were widely celebrated in the West - little to no philosophical thought.
- the decisions were made by US Pres. Harry Truman. (had been Vice Pres. to Roosevelt until he died).
- Okinawa - last chance to the Japanese who thought the war was winnable.
- island within 350 miles of Japanese homeland
- by American design, was to be the base from which the southernmost Home Island, Kyushu, would be destroyed ahead of the expected follow-on invasion.
- one of the most brutal battles of the pacific war
- American Navy suffered greatest casualties for a single engagement.
- More than 12,000 Americans killed, 50,000 more wounded
- More than 150,000 Japanese (many civilians) killed during battle
- many Okinawa citizens committed suicide rather than live under American occupation - due to fear of American rule instilled by Japanese propaganda.
- 'if this is what it's like on Okinawa, what will it be like on main Japanese homeland, where propaganda and fear is even stronger?'

- Japanese surrender - 15 Aug
- Henry Stimson
 - said atomic bomb was more than a weapon of mass destruction, it was a psychological weapon
 - said it saved many more US casualties
- Gar Alperovitz - leading revolutionist
 - started questioning the dropping of the bomb.
 - said Truman & Stimson exaggerated
 - said the American military and navy were competent enough to take Japan out
 - said the bomb was dropped not to win the war, but to show Stalin they had the bomb and what it could do.
- Generally 99% of media coverage and politicians said it was just something that had to be done.
 - Truman and Stimson - orthodox view - terrible, but had to be done
 - Alperovitz - more critical of US leaders
 - Stalin's response in fear of being nuked - became more suspicious of Western motives.
 - Churchill, after losing re-election, went around doing speeches - famous speech: the Iron Curtain
- George Kennan - architect of Western victory
 - American diplomat known as X
 - Riga Axioms - American view that Soviet ideology was bent on world conquest
 - Adviser to Truman after war
 - Realist view of Stalin's intentions
 - His view: war to be won by containment - soviet union and communist ideology is expansionist. wait for the soviet union to collapse because of its own inner contradictions and conflicts
- Americans played to their strength = money:
 - Marshall Plan - 1947
 - Americans gave the Europeans lots of money to rebuild their economies
 - Europeans bought a lot of American goods
 - None of the countries that were involved in Marshall Plan ever went communist, despite civilian support
- Berlin Blockade
 - divided Germany and Berlin up
 - Russian, American, British and French zones
 - Stalin didn't want Americans in his zone, tried to force them out - so Americans supplied West Berlin by air
- Did Stalin actually want to start a war?
 - Wanted a buffer zone in Eastern Europe
 - NATO versus Warsaw Pact (Stalin)
- 1949 - 2 great things happened for Stalin
 1. He dropped a bomb himself
 2. Mao's communism came to power in China - Soviet Union finally had a serious ally after 30 years
- VENONA - cracking of Soviet codes 1944-48

- Kim Philby - biggest of Soviet Spies - high up in British intelligence - never caught