

The beginning of the Cold War

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The beginning of the Cold War

The end of the Second World War did not signal a return to normality. On the contrary, it resulted in a new conflict, less bloody, but longer and more insidious: the Cold War. The Allied Powers could not agree on a Peace Treaty with a Germany which was defeated and divided into four occupied zones.

The conflicts of interest between the new world powers multiplied, and a climate of fear and suspicion reigned. The result was a long period of international tension, interspersed with dramatic crises which, from time to time, led to localised armed conflicts without actually causing a full-scale war between the United States and the USSR. From 1947 to the end of the Cold War, Europe, divided in two blocs, was at the heart of the struggle between the two superpowers. The Cold War first reached a climax with the Soviet blockade of Berlin. The explosion of the first Soviet atomic bomb in the summer of 1949 reinforced the USSR in its role as a world power. This situation confirmed the predictions of Winston Churchill who, in March 1946, had been the first Western statesman to speak of an 'Iron Curtain' dividing Europe in two.