Austin Alloway

Professor D’Argenio

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The Cold War

After WWII Soviet Union had gained control of the Baltic countries, Eastern European countries, and eastern parts of Poland while America had kept control of western European countries ensure their democratic governments. This divided Europe between the communist soviet held east and the democratic west. This divide along with soviet’s power over so much land grew tension in the west as the east was afraid the west would try to enforce democratic rule and the west afraid of communist rule. It seemed that only one political type could rule over Europe and both were afraid of the other.

Though the Soviet Union had fought alongside with the west in WWII both were still very weary of the other side. After the war Stalin wanted to prop up communist rulers all along eastern Europe. Stalin saw trouble from the Czechs, Poles, and Hungarians for his treatment to them during the war. “The Communist regimes in the satellite countries could only be maintained by force and terror. (Perry, 839)”. But the west was too afraid of another war to outright challenge this spread of communism and Stalin rule.

In March 1947 President Truman had decided Stalin had to be halted an in hist Truman Doctrine declared that any nation under threat of communist rule should be helped by the United States. Thus, stopping communist growth in Greece and Turkey and threatening growth elsewhere. In 1949 NATO was formed joining America and western Europe along with Greece and Turkey against Stalin and communism in general. The Soviets then formed the Warsaw Pact joining them with their Satellite countries in western Europe. In 1949 the Soviet Union successfully tested its first Nuclear bomb starting the Arms war with the U.S. for greater military technology to intimidate each other. This arms race escalated to outer space and leading to in 1969 the United States sending a man onto the moon. This race created the most powerful and dangerous weapons ever created and for the first time put Americas homeland in danger of intercontinental ballistic Missiles.

Though no war was fought between the United States and the Soviet Union, they did fight by backing opposing side of multiple wars the first of which was the Korean war. The pro-soviet north fought with the pro-American south as communism versus democracy throughout Korea. American general MacArthur lead troops up to China, though china surprise attacked and pushed them back south. The Cuban Missile crisis was not a war but a confrontation between America and the Soviets over Nuclear launch sites in Cuba and already established US sites in Turkey. The sites in Cuba would mean the Soviets missiles could easily reach the United states. Tensions grew, and threat of nuclear war was high but in the end Khrushchev, then soviet leader, backed down. Finally, was the Vietnam war, new countries out colonial rule became easily succumbed to communism and Vietnam was one of them. A communist norther had grown south and threatened to take over the entire country. U.S. troops deployed into Korea “equipped with the most advanced chemical weapons an electric equipment available (Perry, 844)” seemed unable to break the resilient north and caused countless casualties the process. Richard Nixon negotiates with the north Vietnamese as the troops moved to Cambodia and Laos.

A peace agreement was reached, and the United States pulled out of Vietnam leaving the south to be absorbed by the Communist north. The removal of U.S. troops from Cambodia propped up communists called the Khmer Rouge who committed a genocide killing hundreds of thousands of people. While cold war was not fought directly between the United States and the Soviet Union, many people still died and with the nuclear developments from the time potential death for future wars grew to what is now unfathomable.