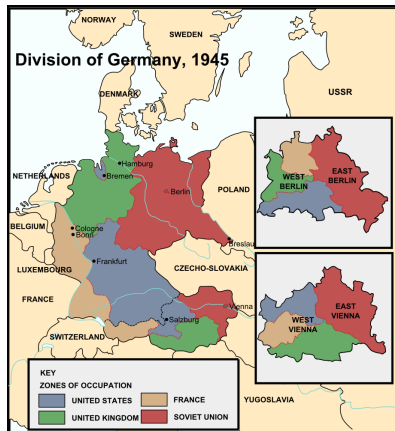


A Divided Germany

After Germany surrendered, the Big Three agreed to divide Germany into four zones, for the United States, Great Britain, France, and the Soviet Union to occupy and to govern separately.



The Big Three next met in July of 1945 in Potsdam, Germany.

The issue of free elections caused a serious split between the Soviets and Americans.

Roosevelt favored the idea of self-determination, pledging to help liberated Europe create “democratic institutions of their own choice” through free elections.

Stalin responded, “A freely elected government in any of these East European countries would be anti-Soviet, and that we cannot allow.”



(left) British Prime Minister Clement Attlee, US President Harry Truman and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin at the Potsdam Conference, July - August 1945



The Asian Theater

In 1943, U.S. forces began an island-hopping offensive against Japan, skipping across the Pacific.



At the beginning of 1945, the acquisition of Iwo Jima and Okinawa helped the Allied military power draw even closer to the main Japanese islands.

Iwo Jima had two airfields used by the Japanese to attack Allied aircraft and to support their naval forces.

Okinawa would also provide them with a base near the mainland.



The Allies were victorious in both battles, but casualties were great on both sides.

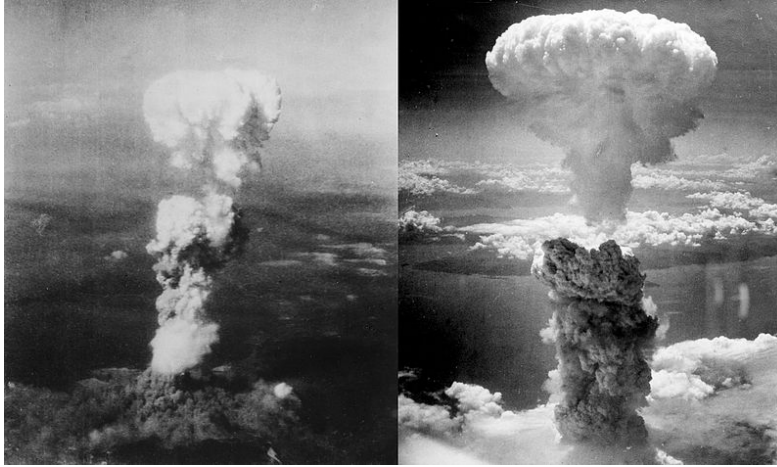


The Manhattan Project

The Americans began to fear even more losses if the war in the Pacific continued.

President Harry S. Truman had been sworn in after Roosevelt died in April.

Truman was convinced that if the US invaded Japan, American troops would suffer heavy casualties.



Scientists in America working on the Manhattan Project had secretly developed the atomic bomb. Truman made the difficult decision to use the bombs against Japan.

The first bomb was dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6.

Three days later, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki.

Both cities were leveled.

Thousands of people died immediately after the bombs were dropped.

Thousands more died in later months from radiation.

Emperor Hirohito accepted unconditional surrender terms on August 14, 1945.

World War II was finally over.

The Cold War Begins



After the world had witnessed the deadly potential of nuclear energy, other countries raced to build their own nuclear weapons.

In August 1949, the Soviet Union set off its first atomic bomb, starting an arms race with the United States that lasted for 40 years.

Western countries thought Soviet expansionist policy was part of a worldwide Communist conspiracy. The Soviets viewed Western policy as global capitalist expansionism.

In March 1946, former British prime minister Winston Churchill declared that “an iron curtain” had “descended across the continent,” dividing Europe into two hostile camps.

Stalin branded Churchill’s speech “a call to war on the USSR.”

The **Cold War** was the name given to the ideological conflict and period of political tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union following WWII.

Only months after the world’s most devastating conflict had ended, the world seemed to be bitterly divided once again, a situation that would dominate world affairs until the end of the 1980s.