be, however, no agitated discussion this time, as there had been after the crisis of 1914, of the question of who was responsible for the outbreak of war. It was all too clear that Germany had taken the initiative and that others had tried, perhaps too much, but certainly very hard, to avert another great conflict. There would be no second “war guilt” debate.

Life and Death in the Third Reich

Peter Fritzschke

During World War II, the Nazis went to great efforts to murder Europe’s Jews. Historians have long investigated why. In the following selection, Peter Fritzschke argues that Nazi Germany carried out its murderous program “in order to realize its utopian project of reorganizing the continent along racial lines.”

CONSIDER: Why the Nazis focused so much on Jews; why the Nazis continued the murder of Jews even after Germany was losing the war.

Nazi Germany murdered Europe’s Jews in order to realize its utopian project of reorganizing the continent along racial lines. The Nazis did not simply consider the Jews racially different or inferior but feared them as agents of social decomposition who threatened the moral, political, and economic health of the nation and its empire. According to the Nazis, Jews would not be allowed to compromise Germany’s ability to fight a war, as had allegedly been the case in 1914–1918. Jews were also understood to be the main basis of support for Bolshevism and for international finance capitalism, a contradictory position that was no less firmly held for being illogical. This made Jews across Europe nothing less than enemy combatants to be seized and eliminated. It is important to realize that Hitler genuinely believed that Jews in Germany and everywhere else in Europe presented a direct danger to the new Reich. Without “the extermination of the Jewish people,” Himmler admitted in 1943, “we would most likely be where we were in 1916–17.”

As Germany began to lose the war, the Nazis tirelessly extended their murderous reach and spread the knowledge of the murder of the Jews so that Germans and their allies would realize that they had burned the bridges behind them. In other words, Nazi propaganda reframed the crime in conventional moral terms and suggested to perpetrators how the Allies perceived them in order to fuel the determination to fight to the bitter end. As a result, the Nazis spared no effort in the spring of 1944 to kill hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews who had survived the war until then. Over the course of the war, the murder of the Jews became an increasingly desperate policy in which the “final solution” would not follow a final victory, but rather final victory depended on the “final solution.” In the summer of 1941, it was the megalomania of Nazi imperialism which encouraged Hitler and Himmler to abandon the idea that the “final solution” had to wait until the end of the war and to implement it in the Soviet Union immediately. Soon thereafter, the realization that the world war would not be over “next spring” and that German authorities would not be able to deport the Jews whom they had impoverished and ghettoized pushed planners to contemplate killing the Jews under their control. As the war entered its third year and expanded into a world conflict, the Nazis believed that the immediate destruction of European Jews was necessary if Germany was to emerge victorious. And finally, in 1943 and 1944 the “final solution” was regarded as the only way for Germany to hold onto its crumbling position of strength. The logic of the Nazis’ anti-Semitism led them to the ultrarevolutionary “position from which there is no escape.”

In sum, World War II was not the fearsome context for pogroms and atrocities. It was something even more terrible: an existential war waged by the national Socialists in order to build a new racial order in which the cultivation of the healthy German body rested on the physical annihilation of Europe’s Jews and the destruction of non-German nations throughout eastern Europe. What we now know as the Holocaust is what made World War II so awfully different and undermined attempts to establish moral symmetry between victors and vanquished as had been the case in previous wars.

Origins of the Cold War

James L. Gormly

The period between the end of World War II and the mid-1960s was marked by the Cold War between the two superpowers emerging from World War II, the United States and the U.S.S.R. Initially American historians analyzed the Cold War with assumptions not too different from policymakers: The United States was only responding defensively to an aggressive Soviet Union intent on spreading its control and Communist ideology over the world. But by the 1960s other interpretations were being offered, most notably a revisionist position holding the Cold War to be at least in part a result of an aggressive, provocative American foreign


policy. In the following selection James Gormly describes the competing interpretations and suggests how the controversy might be analyzed.

**CONSIDER:** Whether the Cold War was inevitable or could have been avoided, how the speeches by Truman and Marshall support one side or the other; which view makes the most sense to you.

Those who place the major responsibility for the Cold War on the Soviet Union argue that Stalin, as dictator and leader of a totalitarian system, easily could have moderated the nation's interests to meet U.S. objections and ensure peace. According to this view, if the generalissimo was not an expansionist wanting to overrun central and Western Europe, he should have articulated the defensive and limited nature of his goals to the Truman administration and the American public. Instead, the Russians would not accept the U.S. vision for a stable and prosperous world or trust that Washington accepted the legitimacy of the Soviet Union and recognized its need for some degree of influence over regions along its borders. Moscow needed "a hostile international environment" to maintain control and the integrity of the Soviet state. Thus, Stalin was either an expansionist or unwilling to communicate his aims, and the United States, supported by Britain, had no other option than to react aggressively...

Other analysts place a large amount of the blame on the United States and its unwillingness to accept expressed Soviet needs and to articulate to the Russians and Stalin that Washington trusted them and recognized the legitimacy of their system and state. Some explain U.S. behavior as an outgrowth of the American Open Door ideology, which sought to ensure for the nation's businesses access to world markets. Still others credit U.S. actions to a general arrogance of power that translated the country's tremendous economic and military strength and accomplishments into a moral, ideological superiority. According to this theory, many Soviets feared that the West still hoped to destroy their state. To convince them that America intended to be a friend and thereby avoid the Cold War, the United States should have shelved its presumptuousness and global goals and demonstrated an affirmation of the Soviet Union's right to rule and enjoy the fruits of its victory. To ease fears and mistrust, Washington needed to recognize Russia's new borders, its diplomatic equality, and its spheres of influence in Eastern Europe. Instead, the U.S. government continued to follow the path suggested by Ambassador Harriman, who stated that the administration should supply assistance to the Soviets only if they "played the international game with us in accordance with our standards."...

Given the situation, the belief that U.S. actions divided the world into two camps and necessitated a rapid Sovietization of Eastern Europe seems as logical as the view that Russian expansionism forced the United States to institute its containment policy. To evaluate and assess either theory fully and to determine if the Cold War international system could have been avoided requires an examination of Soviet records, but, even without such information, and using existing American and British documents, one can conclude that U.S. policymakers made few efforts after the Potsdam Conference to reassure Moscow that mutual cooperation was possible and that Washington had no intention of seeking the destruction of the Soviet state.

The Collapse of European Empires

**John Springhall**

During the years after the end of World War II, Western powers rapidly lost almost all of their overseas holdings. Various explanations for this development, from the weakness of the colonial state to the strength of the struggle for liberation, have been proposed. In the following selection, John Springhall analyzes the main interpretations of the collapse of European Empires after 1945.

**CONSIDER:** The differences between the "nationalist," the "international," and the "metropolitan" explanations; the legacy of colonial rule.

One of the problems in writing about decolonization is that we know the end of the story. Whether self-government is seen as either the result of deliberate preparation/abrupt withdrawal by a colonial state ('colonization') or as a triumph wrested from the colonizers by nationalist movements ('liberation struggle'), the story allows itself to be read backwards in order to privilege the process of ending colonial rule over anything else that was happening in the postwar years. Firstly, those favouring a nationalist or — to use Euro-centric terminology — 'peripheral' explanation (Easton, 1964; Grimal, 1978; Low, 1993) emphasize that indigenous upheavals invariably set the pace for decolonization, while the disappearance of collaborative elites also made continued European colonial rule unworkable (see Chapter 8).

Secondly, those historians who favour the international explanation of imperial disengagement (McIntyre, 1977; Lapping, 1985) point out that, in the new bipolar world after 1945, both the United States and the Soviet Union were hostile to old-style imperialism, although for differ-

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The Wretched of the Earth

Frantz Fanon

When discussing colonialism in the decades following World War II, most historians focus on its political and economic consequences. Some observers, however, point to the deeper psychological consequences of colonialism. The best known of these observers was Frantz Fanon (1925–1961), a French psychiatrist from the French West Indies whose writings supported the Algerian rebels in their struggle for independence from France after World War II. In his book The Wretched of the Earth (1961), Fanon argues that colonialism had its greatest impact on the people physically involved in it: the foreign occupiers (settlers) and the colonized (natives). In the following excerpt from that book, Fanon emphasizes the great physical and psychological gap between these two groups.