There is disagreement among historians regarding the starting point of the Cold War. While most historians trace its origins to the period immediately following World War II, others argue that it began towards the end of [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I), although tensions between the [Russian Empire](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Empire), other European countries and the United States date back to the middle of the 19th century

Prior to 1917, Russia had been led by Tsar Nicholas II.

Nicholas was the son of [Emperor Alexander III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_III_of_Russia) and [Empress Maria Feodorovna of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maria_Feodorovna_%28Dagmar_of_Denmark%29). Nicholas mother was the daughter of King [Christian IX of Denmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_IX_of_Denmark) and [Princess Louise of Hesse-Kassel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Louise_of_Hesse-Kassel).

Maternally, Nicholas was the nephew of several monarchs, including [George I of Greece](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_I_of_Greece), [Frederick VIII of Denmark](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_VIII_of_Denmark), [Alexandra, Queen consort](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexandra_of_Denmark) of the [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom) and [the Crown Princess of Hanover](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Princess_Thyra_of_Denmark).

Nicholas, Nicholas's wife Alexandra, and [Kaiser Wilhelm II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaiser_Wilhelm_II) of [Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Germany) were all first cousins of King [George V of the United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_V_of_the_United_Kingdom).



King George V (right) with his first cousin Tsar Nicholas II, Berlin, 1913. Note the close physical resemblance between the two monarchs.[[5]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicholas_II_of_Russia#cite_note-4)

Nicholas' mother, the Empress Marie, born Princess Dagmar of Denmark, was also the sister of Queen Alexandra, the consort of Edward VII, and the mother of George V. The Empress Alexandra was the daughter of Princess Alice, herself a daughter of [Queen Victoria](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_of_the_United_Kingdom), thus making Edward VII her uncle, and cousin to the Emperor Wilhelm, on her mother's side; and equally a direct descendant of Queen Victoria. The Emperor Wilhelm was a son of Queen Victoria's eldest daughter, also named Victoria, who married Crown Prince Frederick of Germany. Nicholas and Wilhelm were not each other's first cousin, but they were second cousins, once removed, as each descended from [Frederick William III](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frederick_William_III), King of Prussia, as well as third cousins, as they were both great-great-grandsons of [Tsar Paul I of Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_I_of_Russia).

Even though Tsar Nicholas II was related to the royal families of Western Europe and a friend of western countries, his reign of leadership was disastrous.

Tsar Nicholas II led the disastrous fight against the Germans in World War I. By the end of October 1916, Russia had lost between 1,600,000 and 1,800,000 soldiers, with an additional 2,000,000 prisoners of war and 1,000,000 missing, all making up a total of nearly 5,000,000 men.

Also during Tsar Nicholas II leadership in World War I, a nationwide crisis had developed in [Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia) affecting social, economic, and political relations. Gross industrial production in 1917 had decreased by over 36 percent from what it had been in 1916. In the autumn, as much as 50 percent of all enterprises were closed down in the [Urals](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Urals), the [Donbas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donbas), and other industrial centers, leading to mass unemployment. At the same time, the cost of living increased sharply. The real wages of the workers fell about 50 percent from what they had been in 1913. Russia's national debt in October 1917 had risen to 50 billion rubles. Of this, debts to foreign governments constituted more than 11 billion rubles. The country faced the threat of financial [bankruptcy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bankruptcy).[[1]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolshevik_Revolution#cite_note-cultinfo-0)

In September and October 1917, there were strikes by the [Moscow](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moscow) and [Petrograd](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petrograd) workers, the miners of the Donbas, the metalworkers of the Urals, the oil workers of [Baku](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baku), the textile workers of the [Central Industrial Region](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Industrial_Region), and the railroad workers on 44 different railway lines. In these months alone more than a million workers took part in mass [strike action](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Strike_action). Workers established control over production and distribution in many factories and plants in a [social revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_revolution).

In [World War I](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I), the US, Britain, and Russia had been allies for about 7 months from April of 1917 until the [Bolsheviks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolshevik) seized power in Russia in 1917. ~~In 1918, the Bolsheviks negotiated a separate peace with the~~ [~~Central Powers~~](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Powers) ~~at~~ [~~Brest-Litovsk~~](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Brest-Litovsk)~~. This separate peace contributed to American mistrust of the Soviets, since it left the~~ [~~Western Allies~~](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allies_of_World_War_I) ~~to fight the~~ [~~Central Powers~~](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Powers) ~~alone.~~

The Bolsheviks took power during the Great October Socialist Revolution of 1917. The Bolsheviks were a [faction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Faction_%28political%29) of the [Marxist](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marxism) [Russian Social Democratic Labour Party](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Social_Democratic_Labour_Party) which split apart from the [Menshevik](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menshevik) faction[[3]](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolsheviks#cite_note-2) at the [Second Party Congress](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2nd_Congress_of_the_RSDLP) in 1903.

The Bolsheviks, founded by [Vladimir Lenin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vladimir_Lenin) advocated a **proletarian revolution** in which the [working class](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working_class) would overthrow the [bourgeoisie](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourgeoisie).

As a result of the 1917 [Bolshevik Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolshevik_Revolution) in Russia, Soviet Russia found itself isolated in international diplomacy. The primary reason for this was the Bolshevik's stated goal of overthrowing capitalism wherever it existed through the revolutionary action of the organized [working class](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Working_class). It was inevitable that relations with Russian and the West would be **cold** from this beginning.

Because the Communists advocated the overthrow of capitalism, the western countries supported the [White Army](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_movement) in the [Russian Civil War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Civil_War). The White Army comprised some of the Russian forces who unsuccessfully fought the [Bolsheviks](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bolsheviks) after the [October Revolution](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/October_Revolution).

The defeated White Army of anti-Bolshevik Russians congregated in [Belgrade](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Belgrade), [Berlin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Berlin), [Paris](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paris), [Harbin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Harbin), [Istanbul](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Istanbul), and [Shanghai](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shanghai), and established military and cultural networks that lasted through the [Second World War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) (1939–45). Moreover, in the 1920s and the 1930s, the White Movement established organizations, outside of Russia, meant to [depose](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deposition_%28politics%29) the Soviet Government with [guerrilla warfare](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guerrilla_warfare).

The Communists portrayed the western support of the White Army as a war of foreign intervention against Russia.

Another reason for the cold relationship with Russia was the **Treaty of Rapallo** which was an agreement signed on April 16, 1922 between [Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Weimar_Republic)  and [Soviet Russia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_SFSR) under which each renounced all territorial and financial claims against the other. They also agreed to normalize their diplomatic relations and to "co-operate in a spirit of mutual goodwill in meeting the economic needs of both countries".

This made us distrustful of both the German and Russians and the US refused to recognize the Soviet Union until 1933.

Our relations with Russia grew colder again in 1939 grew when Germany and the Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Non-Aggression under which the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union) and [Nazi Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Germany) each pledged to remain [neutral](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neutrality) in the event that either nation were attacked by a third party.

In addition to stipulations of non-aggression, the treaty included a secret protocol dividing [Northern](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Northern_Europe) and [Eastern Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Europe) into German and Soviet spheres of influence, anticipating potential "territorial and political rearrangements" of these countries. Thereafter, [Germany and the Soviet Union invaded](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Invasion_of_Poland_%281939%29) their respective sides of [Poland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Polish_Republic), dividing the country between them. Part of eastern [Finland](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Finland) was annexed by the Soviet Union after the [Winter War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Winter_War). This was followed by Soviet [annexations](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Annexation) of [Estonia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Estonia), [Latvia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latvia), [Lithuania](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lithuania) and [Bessarabia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bessarabia). Germany and Russia were viewed as a united enemy of the United States and Britain.

This changed on June 22, 1941 when Germany launched Operation Barbarossa and attacked the Soviet Union. Even though Russia never renounced its goal of overthrowing capitalism, the fact that both Great Britain and Russia were both fighting Germany forced them into becoming very uneasy allies of the Soviets.

On June 23, 1941, the day after [Nazi Germany](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nazi_Germany) [attacked](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Barbarossa) the [Soviet Union](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union), Senator Harry S. Truman declared: *"If we see that Germany is winning we ought to help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany, and that way let them kill as many as possible, although I don't want to see Hitler victorious under any circumstances. Neither of them thinks anything of their pledged word."* This sentiment was in line with what many Americans felt at the time.

Winston Churchill was quoted as saying " If Hitler invaded hell I would make at least a favorable reference to the devil in the House of Commons." Churchill was making reference to the principle of "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." While Stalin was a monster, he was at least an enemy of Hitler.

The Western Powers made an alliance with Stalin, but they also covertly supported the Russian cadet corps, which was established to prepare the next generation of anti-Communists for the “spring campaign” - a hopeful term denoting a renewed military campaign to re-conquer Russia from the Soviet Government. Many cadets volunteered to fight for the [Russian Corps](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Corps) during the Second World War, the White Russian participation in the [Russian Liberation Movement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Liberation_Movement), a term used to describe Russians during [World War II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_II) who tried to create an anti-communist armed force which would topple the regime of [Joseph Stalin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Stalin). Such a movement included not only Russians but peoples of other nationalities living within the Soviet Union, in which case it is referred to as the Liberation Movement of the Peoples of Russia.

This uneasy alliance between the Western Powers and Russia only lasted until Germany was defeated.

Traditional cold war stories from 1945 to 1979 go here...

On December 27, 1979, 700 Soviet troops dressed in Afghan uniforms occupied major governmental, military and media buildings in Kabul . This was the start of a nine-year conflict in which the Soviet Union supported the Marxist-Leninist government of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan against the the Mujahideen Resistance. The mujahideen found support from a variety of sources including the [United States](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States), [United Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom), [Saudi Arabia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saudi_Arabia), [Pakistan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pakistan), [Egypt](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt) and other [Muslim](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muslim) nations through [the context of](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Proxy_war#Cold_War) the [Cold War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cold_War).

The last of the Soviet troops would leave in Afghanistan on February 15, 1989. Many historians argue that the Afghanistan invasion was a major cause of Russia losing the Cold War.

Brezhnev, Andropov, Chernenko, Gorbachev

Glasnost, Perestroika

animated world history maps